

GOD IS MY JUDGE (Part 2)

Daniel 1:3-21

AiM 2/13/2026

We have the joy of continuing our study of the Book of Daniel tonight.

- Handout and Corrections
 - There is a new handout for those who were not here last week (or if you forgot your handout).
 - But if you're using the same one, just wanted to point out a couple corrections (under the *Biblical Affirmations of Daniel's Historicity*):
 - The Hebrews reference should be **Hebrews 11:32-34**
 - The Matthew reference should be **Matthew 24:15-16**

Please turn your Bibles and your attention to Daniel 1. [Read vv. 3-21].

Now, I want to briefly walk through a quick review.

Last time, in vv. 3-7, we considered how Nebuchadnezzar intentionally plundered the *human resources* of Judah, seeking the best of the best.

But he strategically targeted "*youths*" – teenagers who showed remarkable giftedness, intelligence, social poise, and physical beauty.

But the key question is: *why youths? Why teenagers?*

Because Nebuchadnezzar wanted to *indoctrinate* them!

He took these teenagers away from their families and homelands and enrolled them in a special training program.

But this training program had one purpose – **re-program** these gifted teenagers with the Babylonian worldview.

Why? So that at the end of the program, they might serve the King (v. 5).

The theological nature of Nebuchadnezzar's tactics become clear as the story unfolds, but we observed 4 main tactics that he used (*jot them down*):

- 1. Flattery**
- 2. Formal Education**
- 3. Food (lifestyle)**
- 4. A Forced Name-change**

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to strip these 14-year-olds of their Jewish identity and God – he wanted them **fully immersed** in the Babylonian worldview.

But as we saw last time, Daniel was not asleep to what was going on.

That was the first of 12 marks that we are going to consider from Daniel's example.

12 Exemplary Marks of Living with Uncompromising Convictions (1:8-17):

And you'll recall that the first one, which we covered last week, was this:

1. A Realization of the World's Strategies.

Although he was only about 14 years old, Daniel was not naïve to the world's strategies to deconstruct his faith and dethrone God.

Daniel was suspicious of the game that was being played, and he clearly didn't trust his own heart to be immersed by the game...

He was paying attention to how his heart was responding to the world around him.

He was not blindsided by Nebuchadnezzar's tactics.

And you need to understand that Nebuchadnezzar's tactics serve as a timely illustration of how the world attacks believers in every age.

You see, the world wants you to be **fully immersed**.

The world wants you to adopt its worldview, its **wardrobe**, its jokes, its movies, its priorities...

And the dangerous thing for believer is this....Satan wants you to rationalize your way there...

He wants you to imagine that you can be friends with God and also be immersed in the world's system.

But as James so strongly says, "***you adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?***" (Jas. 4:4).

The world wants you to be fully immersed.

But if it can't 'fully immerse you', the next line of attack is this: *whatever you do, **don't go against the current!***

Don't take stands, don't call out sin, don't walk away from unwholesome conversations, don't *you dare make things awkward!*

*And don't you dare **judge!***

You see, the world does not want you pricking its conscience. It will always respond to that with threats.

That's the world you're living in.

A world that does not value **integrity**.

And you need to be so awake to that threat. It will attack you in ways that will blindside you if you're spiritually asleep.

Daniel's example will give us some key principles to live *in* the world with an **uncompromising integrity**.

Let's talk about Integrity for just a moment.

Because we need to value integrity as God does!

Dr. Cordle highlighted this word **integrity** in what he shared at Mark's 25th the other night and it was powerful.

- Dictionary description:
 - **Integrity**: a firm adherence to a code of moral or ethical values; incorruptibility.

It also includes these related senses: *an unimpaired condition; soundness; the quality or state of being complete or undivided; wholeness.*

- You math people, in English, **integrity** comes from the word **integer** – which is a **whole number**.
 - A whole number that is not *divided*. Not *fractional*. Not *fragmented*.
 - That's the idea of a life of **integrity**. A life that is not divided between what others see and how you live in secret.
 - A life that is not fragmented with areas of unconfessed sin.
 - A life that is whole. Complete. Not double-minded. Not a hypocrite.
- Jerry Wragg ~ “Integrity means being the same person on the inside that we are on the outside”. (G&G p. 5).

As believers, this is what we MUST desire and strive after – to have our souls *whole* (uncompromised) before God.

And this matters because of where you will spend **ETERNITY!**

Jesus said, “Blessed are the **pure in heart...why?...for they shall SEE GOD!**” (Matt. 5:8).

Proverbs 11:20 tells us that God **delights** in **integrity**, but the crooked in heart an abomination to Him.

As Pastor Jerry as said elsewhere, *who you are before God is who you really are and nothing more.*

The great missionary George Muller once wrote this thought down:

"I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord...but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner [life] might be nourished."

Is that your first and great priority in life? To have your soul happy in the Lord?

Not to be so busy with activity (even ministry activity) that you neglect **loving** the Lord **personally**.

To so delight in your relationship with Him that you never want to breach that!

I fear that far too many people (including believers) have grown complacent with compromised souls.

Unhappy souls. A breached relationship with Christ.

I want us to flee from that, and like Muller, make it our first and primary business to have our souls happy in our relationship with the Lord!

How will we cultivate that?

Daniel's example in this passage helps us so much.

Because what we find here is that Daniel and his friends were faced with a moral **dilemma** that threatened to compromise their **integrity**.

And I want you to notice what the dilemma was *not*.

The dilemma was not the **flattery** and the **formal education**.

I'm sure that had its challenges, but that wasn't the crux of the dilemma.

Notice also that the dilemma was not even in the **forced name change** – I’m sure that was hard, but it did not constitute a crisis of integrity for them.

They could go along with that because it didn’t change anything for them.

The dilemma came in the **food**.¹

V.5 – *“The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king’s choice food and from the wine which he drank...”*

Why was this the dilemma?

Because, as we will see in a moment, this was direct demand for them to **change their lifestyle** in a way that violated their consciences.

So, it was here that Daniel drew a firm line.

And he shows us that a believer can respond to things like **flattery** by remaining humble before God.

A believer can go through **formal education** and remain faithful.

A believer can even let the world do something like **change their name**...that doesn’t compromise my identity and conscience.

But when the world demands a **lifestyle change** in a way the violates a **biblically-informed conscience**, a believer must take a stand.

And let’s unpack how Daniel took his stand.

This brings us to our 2nd observation about Daniel tonight.

A 2nd mark of living with uncompromising convictions here in v. 8.

2. A Resolve in the Inner Self (8a) ~ “...Daniel set in his heart...”

Notice v. 8 (by the way most of our time will focus on this verse):

¹ I was very helped by Pastor Todd Dykstra’s observations along these lines in his sermon on this passage and his course notes (see pp. 49-50).

But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

I want you to ponder deeply that first phrase: "**Daniel made up his mind...**"

The idea here is a **making a firm decision – a resolve.**

This is a **binding of the conscience** to a standard that you refuse to violate.

Placing yourself under obligation to something.

Fundamentally it is a moment of humility.

This is that idea of having convictions that have an **overriding power** in our lives.

Meaning that they **override** the influence of our fears, our feelings, our friends, and our flesh.

And notice where this must begin: *in the **inner self**. The heart. The mind.*

And I love the word used here in this phrase Daniel "*made up his mind*".

Listen to how some other translation color this in.

- Daniel **resolved** (ESV) (there's that word from our retreat)
- ...**Purposed in his heart** (KJV)
- I love how the LSB translates it ...**set in his heart** (LSB)

In fact, I think the LSB captures a great interplay of words that's going on here because this word is the same word used twice in v. 7

Notice v 7: "Then the commander **set** new names for them...for Daniel he **set** the name Belteshazzar..."

Then notice v. 8: **BUT Daniel set in his heart!**

Pastor Todd Dykstra said this: *“The commander imposed and “set” his agenda on these captives, but Daniel had his own “setting” that he had done.”*²

Is this how you live?

*While the world **sets** its agenda against you, how have you **set** your heart ?*

And you need to understand this is the first step. If you haven't **set** your heart, you've already lost the battle.

That's why I say this is a **resolve in the inner-self**.

And that kind of resolve in the inner-self will produce something that we can observe as a third mark tonight:

3. A Revulsion to a Violated Conscience (8b) ~ “...to not defile himself...”

A disgust or a dread of having a compromised conscience.

Notice again v. 8:

*But Daniel made up his mind **that he would not defile himself** with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank...*

Notice what it was that Daniel had made up his mind about – *that he would not defile himself*.

He would not cross a line that would breach his conscience.

Daniel was controlled by a holy dread of not being pure, whole, and clean conscience.

Clearly, he knew what that would do to his relationship with the Lord and so he dreaded it.

He had a revulsion – an allergic reaction – to a violated conscience.

² (cf. Dykstra notes, p. 49):

And here we find that Daniel's conscience was bound (sensitized) to God's Word – God's previous revelation to His people.

It was because of God's clear instructions to His people regarding clean and unclean foods that Daniel knew this *diet* would **defile** him.

This word **defile** is a religious term that means to *morally pollute or stain oneself, to make oneself unholy or impure.*³

There are two main biblical reasons this food would have constituted a compromise of integrity for Daniel and his friends.

- a) The Word of God (cf. Lev 3:17; 11; 17:10-14; Lev. 11; Deut. 14)
- b) The Worship of God (cf. Ex 34:14-15; Num 25:1-2)

First, the diet would have included foods that were unclean according to God's Law to Moses (specifically you can see **Lev. 11** and **Deut. 14**).

Dykstra comments: "The food provided by the king did not meet the requirements of the Mosaic Law in a number of ways:

- It would have been prepared by Gentiles – thus, the meat would not have been drained properly of its blood (cf. Lev 3:17; 17:10-14).
- It would have likely included meat from forbidden animals (horse, pork)." ⁴

Now, it's not that the food itself was inherently sinful.

Jesus would say in Matt. 15:11: "*It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.*"

Rather, that it was something God had a Law against and it was a law that had to do with proper **worship**.

And that is the second reason this food would have defiled Daniel: **The Worship of God.**

³ (cf. Dykstra notes, p. 49):

⁴ (cf. Dykstra notes, p. 49):

You have to understand that in these ancient cultures, **food** (especially the royal food) had likely been offered to pagan gods as an act of worship.

And here's what we see – Daniel was not *indifferent* to the seriousness of worship!

He understood that partaking of this food without taking a stand would have been understood as an endorsement of the false gods of Babylon.⁵

He wanted to bear witness to the true and living God with his testimony.

[IMP.]

Think of things in our culture, we need to beware of that may yield an endorsement of something antithetical to the living God.

We can think of big things like wokeness and LGBTQ weddings and pronouns...

But how about more subtle things like, laughing at sinful jokes, wearing immodest clothing, watching sinful movies, listening to sinful music...

It is always theological. It is ALWAYS about WORSHIP.

Are you endorsing worship of idols?

Or do you want your life to be clear life of worship to the true and living God?

And I think this it is significant to know that God's Laws of unclean foods had to do with the ability to enter before His presence or not!

And so, Daniel's **resolve** shows what he valued – *enjoyment of the presence of God!*

He did not want to be unclean and unable to enjoy God's presence!⁶

⁵ Stephen R. Miller, [Daniel](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 67.

⁶ (cf. Dykstra notes, p. 49):

That is why Daniel had a **revulsion** to a violated conscience.

Listen, beloved young adults, you must inform your conscience with God's Word and then be sensitive to it!

Don't violate it. Dread violating!

Don't ignore it when it sounds off! That is God's GIFT! A means of grace to prevent you from sinning.

[Illus.]

- Think of your conscience like an **alarm clock**.
- What's the purpose of an alarm clock?
 - o To wake you up!
 - o In that sense, it is there to make you "change your behavior": *stop sleeping and wake up!*
- You have daily responsibilities and relationships that you must tend to – your alarm clock helps you with that!
- But what happens if you just keep hitting snooze and ignoring your alarm clock?
- You will oversleep fail your responsibilities and relationships.
- Worse yet, perhaps your alarm clock is like mine – you hit snooze enough times and it will actually stop sounding off
- It's very similar with our consciences. The more we hit "snooze" and ignore it, the quieter its alarm will seem until it eventually it shuts off.
- Don't let habitual sins grow so calcified in your life that your conscience is desensitized and stops alarming you of the danger.
- Wake up NOW while you can!
- And cultivate a revulsion for a violated conscience because you cherish your relationship with God!

Let's consider a 4th characteristic of Daniel's integrity on display at the end of verse 8 – let's say it this way – Daniel had 4thly:

4. A Respect for Human Authority (8c) ~ "...he sought permission..."

Notice what Daniel does at the end of v. 8:

*But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; **so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.***

Daniel was resolved and decisive – but he was not belligerent or rude.

The text says "*he sought permission*".

He doesn't complain or start a protest or a revolution or a mutiny...he seeks permission to not partake in the required diet.

And he was clear in his request that the reason he was seeking permission was because of conscience!

That's the right first step.

But I want you to know that while he was seeking permission, he was not *negotiating* with the commander.

He was already fully resolved in his heart, and we will see in a moment that he was not going to budge – regardless of the cost.

But this is still the right response – to seek permission. To respect human authority best you can.

That is a timely lesson for us.

Especially in our post-covid environment, there is an understructure of cynicism toward human government.

And the danger is that that can often begin to appeal to our sinful flesh.

We feel justified in being unnecessarily rebellious and belligerent toward human authorities, simply because they don't share our worldview.

Too often this reveals a heart that simply wants **autonomy** and doesn't understand the importance of **humble submission**.

But God's Word does not allow us to do that.

You can see this in key passages like Rom. 13:1-2, 7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

We are to submit to human authorities unless they require us to violate God's Word and our consciences.

Our default attitude must be one of submission, not rebellion.

Think about how that should shape the way we talk about human authorities that God has ordained!

God's Word is clear that He has placed all kings and authorities in place for His perfect purposes.

This perspective is all over the book of Daniel!

We saw this in the very first verse – God raised up Nebuchadnezzar and gave Jerusalem into his hand.

We will see this on display again in Dan. 2:20-21; 2:37-38; 4:17; 5:18-21.

Daniel understood that human authorities are ordained by God that shaped the way he dealt with them.

Daniel's example shows us that it is possible to **conscientiously disagree** and even **disobey** human authorities, **but not with a sinful, prideful attitude**.

But what kind of heart can do this?

This is a heart that **trusts** that God has ordained human authority. This is a heart that recognizes God's sovereignty! And that's a 5th mark for us tonight:

5. A Recognition of God's Sovereignty (9)

This is the theme that permeates this book – *the sovereignty of God* – and here it is on display in verse 9.

Notice v. 9:

*“Now **God granted** Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials...”*

Here what we get is Daniel's reflection and commentary on this as he writes.

We see in this verse that Daniel gained a favorable hearing with Ashpenaz the commander – he was willing to hear Daniel's request.

And we might think that it was because of the winsomeness of his approach, or the impressiveness of his appearance and intellect...

But Daniel tells us with his pen what was really going on – **it was God's doing!** It was God who **granted** favor to Daniel.

Ashpenaz is willing to listen to Daniel, but he pushes back and this shows us how serious this was – notice verse 10:

10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.”

While Ashpenaz had compassion on Daniel and clearly wished to grant him his request, his fear of Nebuchadnezzar is far greater.

And this gives us a little insight into what kind of ruler Nebuchadnezzar was.

He would behead someone who crossed him.

And this was no idle threat, as we will see in later chapters.

This also shows us how courageous Daniel's stand was!

With Ashpenaz pushing back in fear of losing his life, you might have expected Daniel to give up or negotiate – but no! Daniel stands his ground.

That's a 6th mark for us tonight:

6. A Refusal to Give In (10-11) ~ "...BUT Daniel said to the overseer"

Notice v. 11-13

- 11 **But Daniel** said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,
- 12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.
- 13 "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

Daniel is unrelenting, despite the commander's fearful plea.

Many men may have given up at this point, not wishing to 'be a problem'. But not Daniel. He drew a line and would not cross it.

He had resolved in his heart and he was refusing to give in.

But notice that still, he does not descend into rudeness or rebelliousness.

Because of Ashpenaz's fear of allowing them to do this, Daniel now appeals to the guard whom Ashpenaz had appointed over them.

And here in Daniel's appeal we can consider a 7th mark – again showcasing his trust in God that produced a respect toward others:

7. A Reasonableness in Making Requests (12-13a)

Commentator Davis (Davis, 2013: 33) notes:

"[W]e should be impressed with how Daniel handled this matter. In the face of Ashpenaz's refusal...Daniel did not throw a religious hissy fit, blowing off about Babylon's heavy-handedness and 'insensitivity.' He simply looked around for the next possible step to take to see where that

might land him. Daniel was not one of those people who believe that 'firmness of principle always involves acting stubborn and pig-headed.' It's as if Daniel is fully aware that he is under the Lord's grace."

And that's right! Here in vv. 12-13 He offers a reasonable, sound solution and presents it as a respectful request:

And that's ust a helpful, practical note that some of us need to hear from Daniel's example – he offers a **solution**.

He doesn't just point out the problem and complain – he offers a solution!

vv. 12-13 ~ "...Please test your servants for ten days [with a diet of vegetables and water]...Then let our appearance be observed..."

The Hebrew word for vegetables (זֵרַח, *zerah*) means "sown things" which may include grains and wheats and barleys.⁷

So likely, this diet was not merely "greens" but also breads and grains.

Not only was this a safe alternative morally, it was also a healthy diet for sustenance and strength.

But he doesn't just offer an alternative diet of vegetables and water – notice what he says at the end of v. 13:

*"...[let us be tested for 10 days] **and deal with your servants according to what you see...**"*

This brings us to an 8th mark in Daniel's convictional stand – and this is absolutely CRITICAL:

8. A Readiness to Pay the Price (13b) ~ "...deal with your servants according to what you see..."

True convictions are costly – and those who are truly convinced are always willing to pay the cost of standing firm.

⁷ (cf. Dykstra notes, p. 52):

And just remember the context here, Daniel about 14 years old; ripped out of his homeland, ripped away from his parents.

That would only have added to the temptations here to rationalize and open the door to compromise:

- *Consider how easy it would be to compromise and “play with” “flirt with” the world.*
- *Just think about the pressures and pleasures of this world now facing these teenagers – that was not a small thing – there would have been a pull on their flesh!*
- *Consider the temptations of no one watching, no more family, religious structure...*
- *Consider the unique temptations of sadness and suffering (I deserve ‘distractions’)*
- *Consider the ease of rationalizing under pressure (The government is mandating it...we’re going to be killed if we disobey...)*

Daniel was able to resist all those temptations and stand firm, regardless of the cost.

But that leads to something very important – and it seems basic, but this is where many of us might fail – we will put it this way in a 9th mark:

9. A Responsibility to Follow Through (14-16)

What I mean by this is that Daniel and his friends were not just talking a big game...they were committed to following through.

Notice vv. 14-16:

- 14** So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.
15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food.

16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

They were serious about living out their conviction as seen by the fact that they stuck to the diet they proposed for 10 days.

The result is of their choice diet is that they were healthier and more fit for service than all the other youths.

This was undoubtedly a blessing from God.

And here in verses 14-16, I want you to notice another mark – another lesson we can draw from Daniel and his friends in this story:

10. A Reliance on One Another (14-16).

Notice that what this band of brothers did, they did **together** (we will see this again in Dan. 2:17-18).

The gift of godly friends is such a means of God's grace to strengthen us in our convictions.

If you don't have that – you need to begin cultivate that!

And if you do have that precious gift of godly friends – embrace it!

Now let's observe what God does in the end of this story.

Instead of Daniel and his friends losing their lives, they are promoted to highest offices in the land.

Let's read vv. 17-21:

17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of* literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all *kinds of* visions and dreams.

18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.

- 19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service.
- 20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* conjurers who *were* in all his realm.
- 21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

This is a remarkable providence of God for these young men.

Daniel as his friends are found by Nebuchadnezzar to be **exceedingly gifted** – even supernaturally – and they are **promoted to the top**.

Being found more gifted and able than all his advisors, these four become the personal consultants and assistants to most powerful man on earth.

But here's what I want you to see.

This would be the 11th mark that is so vital for us to get:

11. A Redirection of Credit to God (17)

Notice what Daniel said in v. 17

*"As for these four youths, **God gave** them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams."*

Daniel gives ALL credit here in v. 17 to God!

In our next chapter, we will see how Daniel's ability to interpret dreams is from God and mightily used by God!

But we must learn, like Daniel, to always redirect credit to God!

As we close, just consider a final mark that really runs through this entire chapter:

12. A Reverence for God as the Ultimate Judge

Do you remember what Daniel's name means in Hebrew? ***God is my Judge.***

And that is the truth that clearly controlled Daniel.

Stephen Miller says,

*“Judah was nine hundred miles away; parents and friends would never know whether or not they kept God’s laws. Yet Daniel and his friends were aware of a very important fact. Other people might not know their actions, **but God would know, and someday all will give an account of themselves to him.**”*⁸

[CONC. IMP]

- Are you living like *God is your Judge*?
- You are swimming against a current of worldliness and compromise.
- You need to recognize the battle of worldviews that is always in action.
- You need to be aware of the tactics that are DAILY being deployed against you.
- The world wants you to be fully immersed.
- It does NOT want you to go against the flow and will react whenever you do!
- What do you do in the *current* of compromise?
- Beloved young adults -- are you living like *God is your judge*?
- Only that will keep you!

Kidnapped as a teenager, Daniel was uncompromising in his integrity, and we will soon learn how God would mightily use this man all the way through the end of his life and his royal service to multiple kings of two world empires.

[PRAY]

⁸ Stephen R. Miller, [Daniel](#), vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 67.