



# Church of God Sunday School

## DANIEL IN A STRANGE LAND

Daniel 1:1-20; 2 Kings 24:1-6

In the third year of wicked Jehoiakim's reign, God sent the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar (*neb-u-kuhd-NEH-zuhr*), and his army "against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD." Over and over God had sent warnings through His prophets of what would happen if the people continued to worship idols. But they would not listen!

The king of Babylon entered the city of Jerusalem and took many of the vessels that were in the temple of God. He put them in the house of his god. He also captured "certain of the children of Israel" and took them away to the land of Babylon. These were sons of the king and of princes.

The young men that were taken were to be strong, healthy, intelligent, and handsome. They were to have no flaws in them. They would be educated and trained in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar. The king wanted them to be taught the Babylonian language and to learn the ways and laws of the Babylonians.

The king ordered that these young men eat the same food and wine that were served at his own table. (It was customary at that time for all the officers of the court to eat from the king's table.) Then, at the end of three years, all the young men were to appear before King Nebuchadnezzar.

Among this group of young men were four friends: Daniel, Hananiah (*han-uh-NI-uh*), Mishael (*MISH-ay-el*), and Azariah (*az-uh-RI-uh*). When they were brought to Babylon, their names were changed. Daniel was called *Beltshazzar* (*bel-tih-SHAZ-ahr*). Hananiah was called *Shadrach*. Mishael was called *Meshach*. Azariah was called *Abednego*. (These were names from the idols of Babylon. These name changes were, no doubt, an attempt to influence the young men away from the true God.)



When Daniel heard that they were to eat food from the king's table, he "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat . . . [or] wine." (This food was not prepared according to the Law of Moses. Also, the food on the tables of heathen kings was often first offered to their gods as a sacrifice. Wine, too, was poured out as an offering to their false gods.) Daniel "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" with this food and wine!

Nebuchadnezzar had placed the prince of eunuchs, Ashpenaz (*ASH-peh-naz*), in charge of all the young men. Although Ashpenaz loved Daniel, he was afraid that he would be punished if Daniel and his friends did not eat and drink from the king's table.

Daniel spoke to Melzar, an officer under Ashpenaz who was also in charge of the young men. He asked Melzar to allow them to have a simple diet of water and "pulse" (vegetables) for ten days as a test. Then, Melzar could see whether or not they continued to be healthy.

Melzar gave Daniel and his friends the kind of food Daniel requested. At the end of the ten days, the four young men looked healthier than all the young men who had feasted on the rich food and drink provided by the king. So, Melzar continued to provide Daniel and his three friends with pulse and water.

God blessed these four young men. He gave them "skill in all learning and wisdom." God also gave Daniel understanding of all visions and dreams.

At the end of the three years, all of the young men were brought before King Nebuchadnezzar. He examined them to see what they had learned. In wisdom and understanding, Nebuchadnezzar found Daniel and his three friends to be "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers" in his kingdom. So, the king appointed them to be his counselors. God had rewarded the obedience and faithfulness of these four young men!

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank . . . ."*  
—Daniel 1:8  
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