

"RESOLVED"

Daniel 1:3-13

Compromise was the order for the day as far as Nebuchadnezzar was concerned. These young, gifted, Jewish teenagers needed to be assimilated into the Babylonian culture. I want you to pay close attention to what was taking place then and see if you can see any parallels to today.

Think about it. Look around. Pay close attention. The pressure to compromise with our culture is both cunning and devastating. Daniel has a word for us today.

Resist any attempt to pressure you into violating God's will, God's Word, and God's way!

Daniel 1:1–2... In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

Jehoiakim was the king of Judah. He led the Jews to embrace false worship and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. God's judgment was imminent, and it was prophesied years earlier:

Isaiah 39:5–7... Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts, **6** 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the LORD. **7** 'And *some* of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.' "

Jeremiah 25:8–12... "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Because you have not obeyed My words, **9** behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' declares the LORD, 'and *I will send* to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. **10** 'Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. **11** 'This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. **12** 'Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.

Nebuchadnezzar plays a prominent role in Daniel's book. He was an exceedingly arrogant man, and the conquests he made were understood by him to be proof of his superiority and the superiority of his false gods. It was in demonstration of that conviction that he brought the gold and silver articles that had been dedicated to the service of Jehovah to Babylon and placed them in the treasure house of his gods.¹

These special young men were mentioned as being in two places. Judah was in the southern kingdom. They had 19 kings who ruled over them for a period of 3½ centuries. *[8 of those kings were good and 11 of them were bad.]* Daniel and his friends were raised in Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom.

The other place mentioned was Babylon. In the Bible, it is always a symbol for evil and a pagan world system. What started with the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 comes to a climax in Revelation 17-18 as the entire world system

¹ James Montgomery Boice, [*Daniel: An Expositional Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 15.

is finally destroyed at the Second Coming of Christ. In Daniel's day the Babylonian Empire ruled the world. What was Nebuchadnezzar's plan to assimilate these young, Jewish teenagers into the Babylonian system?

ISOLATION

Nebuchadnezzar ripped them away from their families, from their faith, and from their own nation. He then transported them to a new land, with a new language, and a strange new religion. They would be extremely vulnerable. They were separated from all that was familiar, making them far more susceptible to the "new ideas" they would encounter. This Babylonian strategy would increase the likelihood of the *deconstruction* of their Jewish faith and their conversion to the worldview of Babylon.²

Don't you see? Satan uses the same kind of strategy today. Parents send their children off to a secular college or university. Isolated from their family, their church, and from Christian friends, they are quickly seduced by so-called intellectual elites and many of them will end up walking away from Christ and from a biblical worldview!

The second phase of the Babylonian king's devious plan involved:

INDOCTRINATION

The selection process for determining which Jewish young men would become a part of the program was meticulous. . .

- **They had to be young (14-17 years old).**
- **They had to have no defects.**
- **They had to be strong, healthy, and good looking.**
- **They had to be super smart.**
- **They had to have great poise and social graces.**

² Daniel L. Akin, [*Exalting Jesus in Daniel*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 7.

Once the selection was made, the process of indoctrination kicked into high gear:

Daniel 1:3-4... Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, 4 youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every *branch of* wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and *he ordered him* to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

Nebuchadnezzar was not interested in putting these sharp young Jews to work; he wanted these them to be Babylonians!

Satan's game plan hasn't changed much at all. He just keeps repackaging it to fit new generations. He wants believers to be "*conformed to this world.*"

Romans 12:1–2... Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. **2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

1 John 2:15–17... Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. **17** The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Sad to say, too many Christians give in to the Satan's pressure-packed push and lose their power, their joy, and their testimony.

Nebuchadnezzar's diabolical plan to assimilate these young guys into the corrupt and godless Babylonian system also included. . .

- Teaching them the literature and language
- Getting them used to his lavish lifestyle (food and drink)
- Changing their identity (giving them new names)

Daniel 1:5–6... The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and *appointed that they should be educated three years*, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. 6 Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 Then the commander of the officials assigned *new names* to them; and to Daniel he assigned *the name* Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

What good fortune these young men *appeared* to have when they were given food and drink from the best the king had to offer. No doubt these provisions were appealing. Hey, wait a minute. God had expressly forbidden the eating of meat sacrificed to idols among other things. These boys must have experienced crushing pressure to compromise! Would they obey the Lord or compromise? To get at the heart of their identity, their names were changed.

Daniel's name meant "*God is my Judge.*" His name was changed to Belteshazzar after the Babylonian god "Bel."

Hananiah's name meant "*God is gracious.*" His name was changed to Shadrach which means "illuminated by the sun god."

Mishael's name meant "*Who is like God?*" His name was changed to Meshach which means "who is like Venus?" This was the goddess of sensual love.

Azariah's name meant "*The Lord is my helper.*" His name was changed to Abednego meaning the "servant of Nebo." This was the god of wisdom.

Changing names today is not a big deal. In the ancient world, however, it was huge. One's name went to the heart of their identity and the core of who they were.³

Daniel 1:8–10... 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. 9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, 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."

The time had come for a definite decision. Pressure mounted from Ashpenaz (Nebuchadnezzar's official) and the other Hebrew young people who were willing to compromise. What would Daniel and his three friends do? The dietary laws as established in Leviticus were clear. But what is the value of these laws when one is in Babylon. When in Babylon, do as the Babylonians. Not so with these four. Their hearts were fully devoted to the one true God whether they were in Israel or in Babylon. Compromise was out of the question. Whatever the price they would pay it!

THEY WERE COMMITTED.

Ashpenaz had to make sure these young, promising Hebrews were healthy when they were presented to the king otherwise, he would pay with his own life. To their credit, these four young men set their jaw and dared to be different. Their resolve to honor the Lord and to obey Him serves as a sterling example for every believer within the sound of my voice. Are you committed to the Lord? Do you, as a way of life, deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ?

³ Daniel L. Akin, [*Exalting Jesus in Daniel*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 9.

I love what Robert Morehead wrote. . .

"My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few, my guide is reliable, my mission is clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in a maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, let up, or slow up till I've preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for Christ."

THEY HAD CONVICTIONS.

What is a conviction? Josh McDowell wrote. . .

"A conviction goes beyond having a personal preference about something. It goes deeper than a subjective opinion. Having convictions is being so thoroughly convinced that something is absolutely true that you take a stand for it regardless of the consequences." (Beyond Beliefs to Convictions, p. 22)

Daniel and his buddies had deep convictions about right and wrong.

Daniel 1:11–13... 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 exhibits a wisdom far beyond his years, a wisdom that could have only come from God. It appears there are only two options.

Option 1: They defile themselves.

Option 2: Their friend Ashpenaz loses his head.

Daniel proposes a third solution (**1:12-13**). Daniel asks for a test—one that essentially puts God to the test. He believes and trusts God to honor their convictions and commitments to obeying his Word.⁴ Daniel knew that defilement would only further distance him from his Lord. He would risk it all to keep that from happening. The choice was worth it. I appreciate Chuck Swindoll’s summary of these verses:

In a world filled with people who rebel against the divine King, it is inevitable that believers of all ages will face situations in which their convictions will be challenged. We who are parents need to prepare our children for those occasions by both teaching them God’s truth and modeling integrity. And all of us who are Christians need to personally commit ourselves to living God’s way regardless of the temptations to live otherwise. (*God’s Pattern for the Future*, p.17)⁵

“I AM RESOLVED”—the hymn

⁴ Daniel L. Akin, [*Exalting Jesus in Daniel*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 11.

⁵ Daniel L. Akin, [*Exalting Jesus in Daniel*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 11–12.