

Daniel's resolution

Daniel 1:1 – 28

Key verse Daniel 1:8

Yesterday morning, we learned about Jesus' calling on Peter. Fish was Peter's hope. When he caught lots of fish, he was so happy but when he caught nothing, he was so depressed. But Jesus intentionally got into his boat and helped him to catch lots of fish and called him a fisher of men. This morning, we are going to learn about Daniel's resolution. Daniel was a hopeless man living as a captive. But God intentionally got into his life and became his hope. When Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, from that moment, God began to use him in his kingdom work. I pray if you have already a clear resolution, this message may refresh your resolution. If you do not have a resolution like me, through this message God may bless us to make a resolution before God.

1. Daniel's situation

Read verses 1 and 2. "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god" Who is Jehoiakim? Why did Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attack Judah? Jehoiakim (Jehoia Kim?) was the second son of King Josiah. King Josiah was a good king. But his son Jehoiakim was a bad king. He did not take God's words seriously. One day when the prophet told him about God's judgement, he was very upset that he burned the Scripture (Jeremiah 36). Then, as God warned him, three years later, in 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem. Jehoiakim surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and paid him the temple articles along with people. Daniel was one of those who were carried off as captives to Babylon.

According to the web, the distance between Jerusalem and Babylon is around 900 miles. I am pretty sure Babylon did not take captives by train or SUV. Ezra 7:9 shows that it took four months to travel between Jerusalem and Babylon. After arriving at Babylon, what was waiting for him? It was not a gracious SBC or hot tub but a miserable slave life.

It seems God really abandoned his people Judah and Daniel. But that was not true. God had a different plan. God put his people under Nebuchadnezzar only for a while (70 years). During that time, God wanted Judah to become humble, cry out to God, and seek God earnestly. God also used Nebuchadnezzar to prepare for Daniel in his kingdom work.

Read verses 3 – 4. "Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians." Babylon was a huge country but with so many different colonies. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, wanted to manage his kingdom

effectively. So he ordered his chief official to create a Babylonian government scholarship program. The candidates should be only from foreign countries including Judah. The benefits are to learn Babylon language and literature and provide a secure palace job after graduation. But the qualification was very high. It checks family background, any handicapped, handsome (like me), willing to learn, smart, quick to catch. How many can really meet such requirements? None. As we see later, by God's grace, Daniel was chosen with his three friends. What a lucky Daniel was! He did not need to work as a slave any more. He could achieve a Babylonian Dream! (get a secure job, buy a nice house and car, marry, 2.5 kids ...). Up to this point, everything was perfect.

But the problem began in verse 5. Look at verse 5. "The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service" Nebuchadnezzar wanted his young men to be healthy and strong. So he did a favor: assigning them a daily amount of food and wine from his table. Eating the king's food and wine is a great honor and privilege. Also how delicious it would be! (US choice steak, Italian Spaghetti, Three brothers' Pizza, Korean Kimchi, Vietnamese pho noodle). However, Daniel did something extraordinary.

2. Daniel's resolution

Look at verse 8a. "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine". While other people chose to eat the king's food, Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine. Resolve means "determine firmly". I was wondering why Daniel used a word of "resolve" not "decide". I found one major difference between a decision and a resolution? A decision can change when the situation changes. But a resolution is like a vow that no matter what happens (key point), this is what you will do. Daniel determined firmly not to eat the royal food no matter what happened to him.

Why did he resolve not to eat the royal food and wine? Was he vegetarian? No. Verse 8a again. "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine". Defile means "make unclean" or "corrupt the purity". Several web references show that back then, the king's food and wine were related to idol worship food (Exodus 32/34). The law of Moses prohibited any food sacrificed to idols. The king said "eat it" but God said "do not eat it". So this was not just a matter of food. It was a matter of choosing a real king: Nebuchadnezzar or God. It would also reveal what was in Daniel's heart. What are you going to do when you are in Daniel's shoes? Daniel chose God. He decided not to corrupt his identity as God's people.

How could he make such a resolution? He was only a teenager: around 15 or 16 years old. No one advised him to do so. But I think Daniel really honored God. Daniel means "God is my judge". Daniel knew his country was invaded not because his country's military power was weak but because God put them under the power of Nebuchadnezzar. Also at the same time, he must have been so thankful to God. He could die in battles. But God saved his life from any harms. So even though he knew what it meant not to eat the royal food and wine (he might lose his future security or be in jail), but he resolved to obey God.

Those who choose God as a real king do the same decision in Bible times and today. I think everyone knows the hotel, the Holiday Inn. Kemmons Wilson, devout Christian. When he began his hotel business, he realized luxurious hotels were too expensive and cheap hotels were too bad in sleeping. So he started reasonable priced but comfortable hotel, that is the Holiday Inn. When his business went well, many other rivals copied his ideas and soon he began to lose profits. Then his board members suggested him to have bars, nightclubs, and casino at the hotel basement. When people travel, they feel lonely and look for something exciting. It was a pretty good suggestion to attract customers. But he refused the suggestion because having bars and night clubs was against his biblical principle. As a result, some of his senior assistants left him and his company lost profits for a while. However, God blessed his decision, today his hotel chain is one of the largest hotel chains in whole world.

When Daniel made a resolution, how did God bless him? Verse 8b “he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.” God gave Daniel a courage to share his plan with the chief official. The chief official was supposed to be upset. But he was kind and willing to help Daniel. Verse 9 says God caused him to show favor and compassion on Daniel. However, the chief official was afraid of the king. Then, Daniel suggested him to test him for 10 days with only vegetables and water (no dressing). After 10 days later, what happened to Daniel? Verse 15, “At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food “. Daniel’s face was more shining than any others. His body had more muscles than before. Since he did not eat meats, he was supposed to be skinny. But God made his healthier and stronger. I heard “The Daniel’s diet” began from this story. Then, the chief official allowed Daniel and his three friends to eat vegetables instead of the king’s food. In the meantime, God blessed also Daniel to be A++ student in his class. Especially, God gave him an extra spiritual gift of understanding visions and dreams of all kinds. This gift came only from God.

Now the three years passed. What did King Nebuchadnezzar find in Daniel? Look at verses 20 - 21. “In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.” King Nebuchadnezzar found that Daniel was even 10 times (even 1 or 2 times would be enough) better than all the intelligent people in his kingdom. He was still a teenager. But he became a man of wisdom. So the king hired Daniel right away and Daniel remained in the palace until the first year of King Cyrus. 539 BC (602 - 539: 63 years). During his 63 years of work, he revealed the glory of God to the Gentile kings. Who is King Cyrus? He is the one who began to return captives to Judah. Daniel had no idea of God’s plan when he came to Babylon as a captive. Also Nebuchadnezzar had no idea how God used his plan for God’s salvation plan. Also as we see here, God used Daniel very preciously in his kingdom work.

Last one and half months, God blessed me to meditate this passage. I felt God expected me to make one resolution through this passage. But I did not know what kind of resolution I should make this time. I wondered should I make a resolution of going fishing every day like M. Elijah? Or pioneering one campus? Or write testimony at least 5 pages each week, and so on. Then I

realized after receiving the Green Card 4 years ago, I told myself "I suffered a lot in the past. Let me take some break. Let me have some fun of this world". But since then my spirit has been down. Also I have worried about my future (retirement plan, health, children education, \$, and so on). For the last 15 years in America, God showed that he is a real God. I repent I did not sincerely serve God as my real king. I want to rededicate myself to God.

As a conclusion, in Daniel's time, there were many other young men who were chosen by king of Babylon. Probably they lived in a good life. But we do not know their names. However, we know Daniel because he resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine. From that moment, God began to use him in his kingdom work. There are many captives out there to the power of sin today. When we make a resolution before God, God can use us also to bring many captives back to God's kingdom. May God bless us to choose God as our real king. May God bless us to be a Daniel today. May God use us also to raise up many Daniels.