

The United Benefice of St Michael on Greenhill, Lichfield
with St John, Wall

Bible Study July 22nd 2020

The Book of Daniel

Session 1: Food and Power

Opening prayer

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy scriptures
to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace
and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Daniel 1.1-21

In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ²The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power, as well as some of the vessels of the house of God. These he brought to the land of Shinar, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his gods.

³ Then the king commanded his palace master Ashpenaz to bring some of the Israelites of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴young men without physical defect and handsome, versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace; they were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁵The king assigned them a daily portion of the royal rations of food and wine. They were to be educated for three years, so that at the end of that time they could be stationed in the king's court. ⁶Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, from the tribe of Judah. ⁷The palace master gave them other names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

⁸ But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself. ⁹Now God allowed Daniel to receive favour and compassion from the palace master. ¹⁰The palace master said to Daniel, 'I am afraid of my lord the king; he has appointed your food and your drink. If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of your own age, you would endanger my head with the king.' ¹¹Then Daniel asked the guard whom the palace master had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: ¹²'Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³You can then compare our appearance with

the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe.’¹⁴ So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days.¹⁵ At the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations.¹⁶ So the guard continued to withdraw their royal rations and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom; Daniel also had insight into all visions and dreams.

¹⁸ At the end of the time that the king had set for them to be brought in, the palace master brought them into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar,¹⁹ and the king spoke with them. And among them all, no one was found to compare with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they were stationed in the king’s court.²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.²¹ And Daniel continued there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Things to think about

Daniel is to be read as a book that reflects the domination of the Jewish people by Babylonians, Persians and Greeks. Daniel directs its severe judgment towards human rulers, especially those who colonise and dominate others. It is an assumption of the book that people of faith will inevitably find themselves in opposition to the state and its commonly demanded political loyalties and often idolatrous patriotism. Speaking out against these things has often been regarded as treason.

Questions

- 1 Where are people resisting the political norm today to make minority voices heard? What should be our response?
- 2 Can you be loyal to the state and to the rule of God?
- 3 What does the first chapter of Daniel have to say to us about our choices regarding the food we eat, the clothes we wear and the other “necessities” of life?

Closing Prayer

Merciful God,
you have prepared for those who love you
such good things as pass our understanding:
pour into our hearts such love toward you
that we, loving you in all things and above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen