

# Dr. Wendy L. Widder, Daniel, Session 4, Daniel 1

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This is Dr. Wendy Widder in her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 4, Daniel 1.

We're going to be looking at Daniel 1 in this lecture.

In a minute, I want to read the chapter for you. The biblical text was primarily written to be heard, to be listened to. Back when the original audience would have had this, they would not have had their own copies.

It would have been probably only well-educated scribes who had access to it. So, people listened to it. They memorized it.

They heard it repeatedly. So, a lot of the features of a text are meant to be heard. So that's one reason I like to read the text when I teach it.

But before I do, I just want to say a couple of things about reading biblical narratives, reading stories in the Bible, or history in the Bible. Sometimes we come to the Bible and we think of it as a list of historical events that happened. It's just telling us the history of Israel.

Some people come to the Bible as if it's a science book. It tells us how God did certain things. Some people come to it as if it's just a bunch of good stories.

There are lots of different ways that people come to the biblical text. But what I want us to understand as we start this is that a biblical story, regardless of whether it's history or not, regardless of your position on that, is not just a listing of events. It is a carefully crafted piece of literature intended to convey probably one or two main points.

In the case of the Bible, they're theological. So, the Bible is history, historical. It is literature, and it's theology.

So, it's all three of those things all in one book. As theology, what we mean by that is that it's a word about God. It is a self-revelation of God to himself, about himself to his people.

Sometimes we get lost in that idea and we start to think it's about the people in the Bible. It's about heroes and villains or the events that happened. It is about those people, but it's really about God's acts in history through the lives of people.

So, is it historical? Sure, it represents historical events, but that's not its main point. Its purpose is not to teach us history. Its purpose would be to show us how God works through history, and it does that in carefully crafted stories.

So, a definition that I like to keep in my head when I'm studying biblical narrative and thinking about how to read the Bible is that the biblical writers, that is, the human authors who wrote it with God superintending, that the biblical writers talk about historical events creatively shaped through literary techniques in order to communicate God's self-revelation. So that gives us the historical piece, the literature piece, but the focus is that this is a book designed to teach us about God. It's God's revelation to us.

So, we want to allow the Bible to be good literature. It is good literature. It's great literature.

We want to allow it to be well-crafted stories and milk those stories for all that we can. But we have to remember that it is teaching us about God. It is revelation.

It is God's self-revelation. All right, so let's read chapter one, Daniel chapter one. I'm reading out of the English Standard Version.

I normally, when I study, like to use either this version or New American Standard Version because they tend to help me see better what the original Hebrew is. They're not always the most readable translations. For that I would go for NIV perhaps.

But when I'm trying to get what the original words were and maybe how the author crafted them together, I like to use something like the ESV or the NASV. And I happen to have ESV. All right, Daniel one.

**1** In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, 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 placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. **3** Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, **4** youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. **5** The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time, they were to stand before the king. **6** Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. **7** And the chief of the eunuchs gave them 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 king's food or with the wine that he drank. Therefore, he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. **9** And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, **10** and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king." **11** Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, **12** "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. **13** Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." **14** So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. **15** At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. **16** So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

**17** As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. **18** At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. **19** And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. **20** And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. **21** And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Alright, so in chapter one, Daniel and his friends are taken into captivity. The chapter starts with this historical setting. So, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah.

So, if you remember a couple of lectures ago, we were looking at the setting of the Book of Daniel based on the timeline of the Bible and how it falls in Jewish history. And when we got to, we'll just do a condensed version here. When we got to about here, this was 609 BC, King Josiah is king of the southern kingdom and he is en route to help the Assyrians fight against the Babylonians, or fight the Babylonians.

And he's killed by Pharaoh on the way. His son Jehoahaz was king for three months until Pharaoh deposed him and made Josiah's second king son. So, let's keep track here.

So, Josiah dies, and his son Jehoahaz comes to the throne for just three months until Pharaoh Necho deposes him, and Josiah's second son becomes king. So, not him, we go to son number two, Jehoiakim. Is that right? Yes, Jehoiakim is the new king, and he was an Egyptian vassal, or the southern kingdom when Nebuchadnezzar routed the Egyptians.

I'm condensing a whole lot of history here. Let me slow down. Jehoiakim was a Babylonian vassal under Nebuchadnezzar for three years, and then he rebelled. When he rebelled against Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem, which would have been about 598-597 BC, and that's recorded in 2 Kings.

So, in 598-597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's wrath comes down on Jehoiakim for rebelling, this is in 2 Kings 24. It appears that Jehoiakim died somewhere along the way here, and we aren't exactly told what happened to him, but suddenly, his son Jehoiachin is king in the text. So, he dies, he's the king, and he's taken off to Babylon in exile.

He surrenders within three months after he becomes king. So off he goes to Babylon. So now we still need a king over here.

So now we get son number three, who is going to be king, and this is Zedekiah, he's the new king. So, Josiah was in 609, he dies, son number one becomes king, he's deposed, son number two is made king, he dies, his son becomes king, he's taken off to exile, and Josiah's third son becomes king. Jerusalem will actually fall under Zedekiah so we're nearing the end here of the kings.

In terms of geography, the Mediterranean Sea, the Nile River, so Egypt, here's the land between, Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, is the Persian Gulf, is the Tigris and the Euphrates, so we're over here in Babylon. Remember, we have this power struggle, so we have Babylon and Egypt, and every time they have a conflict, Israel's in the middle. You might say, well, why don't they go this way? Well, this is all desert.

So, all the traveling goes like this, right through Israel. So, the history of Israel is dependent on, in a lot of ways, these power struggles between the empires. They're kind of at the mercy of the reigning king or reigning power of the day.

So, in the first verse of Daniel 1, that's where we're at. We are in this power struggle between these two, and Jehoiakim disappears, but he's besieged. Jerusalem is besieged by Nebuchadnezzar.

In terms of chronology, this is 605. So, the third year of Jehoiakim is 605 BC. That's a historical difficulty for us.

And so, here's the problem with the third year of Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar, who is the Babylonian king, let me get rid of all these dead kings. We'll stick with Jehoiakim and Nebuchadnezzar.

605 BC, this is Jehoiakim's third year. Nebuchadnezzar comes to the throne in Babylon when his father, Nabopolassar, whom you don't need to remember, dies. Hang on, let me sort out my notes here.

So, for this siege to have happened in 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's army would have had to have been in Syria-Palestine. It's difficult with chronology because, according to Babylonian records, we don't actually see Nebuchadnezzar here at that time. And it doesn't mention that he besieged or conquered Jerusalem.

His father dies. He's actually the general of the army. And his father is still king.

He's second in command while he's trouncing around here in Syria-Palestine. His father dies while he's on this campaign, and he hustles home for the coronation. And there's a very small window of time in which this historical siege could have happened.

It's possible that the author of Daniel is consolidating events, squashing a whole bunch of history together. Another possibility is that we can use different ways of recording time, Ascension years, and regnal years. So, in Daniel 1:1, we're told that it's Jehoiakim's third year.

So, Daniel 1.1 is set in 605 BC, which is the third year of Jehoiakim. We seem to have difficulty with this because if you are back in Jeremiah 25, verse 1, Jeremiah 25 refers to Jehoiakim's fourth year as being Nebuchadnezzar's first year. So, if Jehoiakim's fourth year is Nebuchadnezzar's first year, what we have here is Nebuchadnezzar presumably besieging something before he's a king.

And the book of Daniel calls him Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. So, this is an inconsistency that we have a little bit of trouble sorting out. One of the ways that scholars tend to sort this out is to say that there are different ways to account for Ascension years or for a king's rise to the throne.

So, we have a Babylonian system, which is what we think we see in Daniel 1:1. And in the Babylonian system, you have a king's Ascension to the throne is one year. And then his official first year is really his second year on the throne. And then we have his second year and his third year.

So, his Ascension year counts as a separate year, year one, year two, year three. This is the Babylonian system of calculating regnal years. The Judean system, which we think we have reflected in Jeremiah, does it a little bit differently.

So, in the Judean way of counting years, the Ascension year is the same as the first year. So, they come to the throne, and that's also year one, year two, and year three. And then, by the time you get here, you're in year four.

So, two different systems of accounting for years on the throne are represented in the Book of Daniel or represented in the Book of Jeremiah. So, when we say it was Jehoiakim's third year, that's the Babylonian system. When Jeremiah talks about his fourth year, that's the Judean system.

So, it's talking about the same year on the throne, just different ways of communicating it. So that's typically the way people explain this date difficulty. So the third year of Jehoiakim in 605 coincides with the Ascension year of Nebuchadnezzar.

Again, the difficulty is the lack of historical evidence for a 605 siege of Jerusalem. There just really isn't anything in the Babylonian records that puts Nebuchadnezzar there at that time. It's a pretty tight chronology for him to be in.

We know he was in Syria-Palestine in early 605, but there's no mention in the record of Jerusalem or Jehoiakim. His father dies that year, and he hustles home for his own coronation. Between the timing of a campaign in Syria-Palestine in 605 and his coronation in 605, it's a pretty tight window.

However, you could say that Daniel 1.1 doesn't actually require that Nebuchadnezzar be present. He can be king, and if his troops have invaded, you wouldn't have to say Nebuchadnezzar's troops invaded; it's Nebuchadnezzar who's invaded. It also doesn't require a formal military siege.

The word that's used there in Hebrew could just mean showed hostility. This is an argument that was made by a scholar from the 80s and also by Tremper Longman, who found this convincing. So, in this case, Nebuchadnezzar could have persuaded what would have been Jehoiachin at that point to surrender without actually attacking him.

So, the acts of hostility, whatever exactly they were, could have been enough to persuade him to give in without violence to his people. So, Daniel 1:1 could be referring to a shift of loyalty. So Jehoiachin decides he's going to be loyal to Nebuchadnezzar instead of glancing longingly toward the Egyptian vassalage.

Another thing is that the third year is not, maybe that this reference to the third year of Jehoiachin is not a reference to the third year of his reign or even the third year of his vassalage, but it could be a reference to the third year after he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar in 601 to assert Judean independence. If that's the case, then this

siege described in Daniel 1 is the same one that's described in 2 Kings that happened in 597. So, there are different ways of dealing with this, which is what's called historical difficulty.

At the end of the day, it doesn't affect the point of the chapter, but it is one of those things that you have to sort of think your way through and sort out different possibilities for what the text might mean. One thing that's actually attractive about arguing is that the third year of Jehoiachin represents the third year after he rebelled. So, he rebelled in 601, three years later, 597, 598, when Nebuchadnezzar came and actually took people captive again, that would be 598, and that would be the same siege that there's a lot of historical material for.

It's interesting that in the book of Daniel, there are a lot of references to the first and third years. So, here we are in the third year of Jehoiachin. When we get to Daniel 7 and Daniel 8, we have the first year of Belshazzar and the third year of Belshazzar.

We have the first year of Cyrus, the first year of Darius Mede, and the third year of Cyrus. So Goldingay has actually made an argument that it might be the text's way of referring to early in the king's reign, or at the beginning of the king's reign, and not too far into the king's reign. So rather than being an exact date, it could be sort of a literary way of just saying, eh, near the beginning, eh, after he's been king for a while.

That's possible. So, we see that pattern in Daniel of first and third, third, first. So that's possible. That's what's going on here.

The other possibility is that Daniel 1:1 is condensing this deportation of captives, the one in 587, and then the last one in, or sorry, 597, and then 587. So, you could have three different deportations that the author of Daniel 1 might just be putting all in one lump. He's not concerned about when and how they all happened.

He's just concerned that Jerusalem's fallen. And the people have gone into captivity. Regardless of whatever the exact year is, and what it might mean by Jehoiakim's third year, Daniel 1.1 sets the beginning point for the events of the book.

Specifically for the narrative stories in chapters one through six. Daniel 1.21, which is the reference to the Daniel served, Daniel was there in the court until the first year of Cyrus. That gives us the endpoint.

And really, that's the length of the enforced exile. So, what I mean by that is Babylon started taking people captive, say, 605, and they allowed them to leave when Cyrus became king in 539 when the Persians took over. That's the length of the enforced exile, when the people are no longer free in their land, and then they're allowed to go back to their land in 539.

So that's possibly what's going on with the dates in Daniel 1. So, in the third year of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came and besieged it. The Lord gave Jehoiakim with some of the vessels of the house of God. These vessels from the house of God will reappear in chapter five when Belshazzar enters the picture.

It's going to get him into a lot of trouble. And honestly, I think for a lot of us, these vessels don't mean anything. If our churches have implements that they use for communion or whatever, they're not something that we look at as being a sacred vessel.

It's something we use. We wash them, put them away, bring them out the next month, use them, wash them, put them away. It's not something that we approach as if this is a sacred, holy object.

But for the Jews in their temple, those objects were very sacred. So much so, they're so important that the historical books chronicle where these vessels go. When you read 2 Chronicles 36 and Jeremiah 52, they're talking about people going into exile.

It talks about how many vessels went, too. So, the people went, yes, but look at all these vessels that went. On the other side of exile, the post-exilic books talk about those vessels coming back.

So, for reasons that we don't often grasp the significance of, these vessels are important to the Jewish people. In a lot of ways, they represent their hope of restoration. So, Jeremiah had promised, or he told the people, you're going to go into exile? It's going to last a lot longer than these false prophets are saying.

The vessels are going to go, and they're going to stay there. But God will return the vessels. And so, for those people, it was the only tangible thing left from their covenant relationship with God.

The temple's been destroyed, the holy city's been destroyed, but those vessels remain. And so, they're very important to these people. But God has allowed some of these vessels to be hauled off to Babylon.

Well, that's actually a very significant statement. So, the Lord gave some of the vessels into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, and he takes them to the house of his God. In the ancient world, when kings go to war against each other, it's not just a military fight.

It's a religious fight. A king represents his God, and he is going to battle on behalf of his God to expand his God's territory, to expand his God's power. This is a religious conflict.



So, when Nebuchadnezzar defeats the God of Israel, or when Nebuchadnezzar defeats Jehoiakim, it appears to everybody watching that the God of Babylon has defeated the God of Israel. That's a big deal. This is not just, we lost the battle.

Our God is not as strong as the other. Why did God let this happen? How could our God be defeated? This is a religious thing. And so, these vessels are being transferred to the house of Nebuchadnezzar's God.

Notice where Nebuchadnezzar puts them. He doesn't take them to his own house. They're not his.

As the representative of the victorious God, he's bringing the vessels of the defeated God and putting them exactly where they belong in a holy place belonging to his God. So, this transfer of vessels signifies what's at stake here in terms of religion. This is the God of Babylon.

This is Marduk defeating the God of Israel. Or it appears to be that. If you read the text carefully or listen to the text carefully, that's not what it says.

It does not say that Nebuchadnezzar defeated Jehoiakim. It says Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and besieged it and the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand with some of the vessels of the house of God. So why is it that Nebuchadnezzar won? Because God handed over his king.

God handed over his vessels. God gave them to him. So, things may look bad on the ground, and appearances may say that Israel's God has lost.

But that's not what the narrator says. The narrator says Israel's God is in control of this. He gave them over.

He's the one with control. So that is a very important statement. This is not just a king versus a king.

This is a God, capital G, versus a God, small g. It looks like the small g God has won. But the author of Daniel does not let that idea stand. Nebuchadnezzar has not won.

Marduk has not won. In verses three through seven, we meet the main characters, aside from Nebuchadnezzar. We have Ashpanezer, who is the chief of the court officials.

So, he's got some degree of royal authority. We're not exactly sure what he would have done, but he obeys the king's orders here to bring some of the nobility of Israel

back to Babylon. And part of the purpose of bringing these youths to Babylon is to educate them.

Now, why would they want to educate them? This is not just about going to school and learning lots of stuff so you can get a good job. This is going to school in Babylon so we can enculturate you according to our values, according to our language and literature. Why would they have done this? Well, they're taking these people captive.

One thing it could have done is to train these people to be outstanding civil servants; they'll be less likely to rebel and want to go home. They have good jobs in Babylon, right? And their homelands are probably less likely to rebel because they want their family members protected in Babylon. They're sort of diplomatic hostages, maybe.

And these youths are probably teenagers. We're not told exactly their age, but they're more teachable. They can give longer service.

And Nebuchadnezzar scoops off the cream of the crop. He wants to educate them. He wants them to be in his service.

So, he teaches them the language and literature of this host nation. And Babylonian language was likely Akkadian, which is a really difficult language to learn. I have not had to learn it, thankfully.

I'm glad. But it's a very difficult language. And the reason they would have had to learn Akkadian is that a whole lot of their cultural collection of stories and history, it's all written in Akkadian.

It's perhaps analogous to if you want to study classical history, you really have to learn Latin. You have to read it in Latin, the originals. So, these youths were taught Akkadian.

They had to master it. But in mastering the language, they're also mastering the literature. They're mastering the myths, the beliefs, the worldview of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar wants to make these youths the best servants he can. He wants them to really be brainwashed into being good Babylonians. He's taken them from their homelands.

He wants them to be good Babylonians. Another part of that is this diet that they are assigned. So, they are to have a daily portion of food and wine from the king's table.

And then they're to be educated for three years. So that's what the educational program is. At the end of that time, they were to stand before the king, or they were to serve in the king's service, and stand in the king's service.

Verse 6 says, among these, so, it tells us that there were more than just these four youths who were taken to Babylon. Among all these nobility, these royal family that were brought to Babylon, these four, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. So, we've got these four youths that we're going to follow in Chapter 1, and then the rest of the court stories are mostly about Daniel, but the three friends will show up again a couple of times.

So, there are more than just these four. Notice that these are from the tribe of Judah. These are Israelites.

These are members of God's covenant people. So, the author just sort of sticks that in there so we don't forget. And their names, the text doesn't spell this out for you. If you know Hebrew or you've spent any time studying the Old Testament, you know that these names are significant and that they have meaning.

They don't just pick a name because they liked it. They pick a name, and it's a sentence, typically in praise to their God. So, Yahweh has been gracious.

Who or what is like God? Yahweh has helped. That's what their names mean. They are given new names.

And why would they be given new names? Well, you can't have these civil servants with Hebrew names honoring their gods. So, you want to give them names that probably honor Babylonian gods, although we're not quite sure what the new names mean. But they would be a symbol of the fact that they are now subject to this different king.

They are subject to the Babylonian king, a new king, a new nation, and new gods. This was really a common court thing that would have happened when they were taken captive. It symbolizes them becoming good Babylonians.

It's a sign that they have new ownership. They belong to Babylon. So, by the end of verse 7, we have some of Yahweh's temple vessels and also some of his human vessels that are headed for the royal court.

Daniel 1 verse 8 gets us into the actual plot. All verses 1 through 7, they were set up. So now we're into the plot.

Daniel makes a decision, and he resolves not to defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank. Well, we know what Daniel did. He didn't want to defile himself with the king's food.

He wanted to not eat it. And we know why he did it, because he had deep personal convictions. But we aren't actually sure why the food would have been defiling.

So, we know he made this decision because he considered the food to have been defiling, the food and the wine. What we don't know is why the food was defiling. We have all kinds of ideas in the Old Testament about things that defiled.

There's teaching in Leviticus and Ezekiel. It has to do with things not being ritually clean and not being acceptable for use in the temple. And living in a foreign country, according to Hosea at least, all by itself was defiling.

So, everything they did would have been defiling. But Daniel's specifically making a choice about food. They didn't resist the new names.

They didn't resist the education. But the food they take their stand on. There are lots of different ideas on what would have made this food defiling.

At the end of the day, we aren't entirely sure, but let me tell you some of the suggestions. It's possible that Daniel refused the food because it came from the palace and palace food would have come by way of the temple. And if it had come from the temple, it would have been offered to an idol.

But the problem here is that that would have been true of the vegetables too. All of the palace food would have come from the temple and would have, therefore, been defiling. So, unless they're not going to eat anything at all, that doesn't seem to solve the problem.

Another possibility is that the palace, the Babylonian palace, of course, would not have observed the food laws in Torah. Things that would have made, or which animals could they eat, which ones could they not eat, how were you to kill an animal, there are certain ways to do that according to Torah. Obviously, the Babylonian palace would not have been concerned with those things, so that would have been defiling.

But the problem there is that Daniel considered the meat and the wine defiling. So why would the wine have been defiling? There's nothing in the Torah about why the wine would have been defiling. Animals don't appear to be the focus of the problem.

So maybe he refused because the meat and the wine from the king's palace were festival foods. And so, if Daniel abstained from them, he would be showing the mourning that he would have been in, in association with being in exile. It's not proper for someone in captivity to celebrate or have festive foods.

And it's also the kind of food that's fit for nobility, and Daniel's asking for peasant food, really, the vegetables. That may be true, but it doesn't say why it's defiling. It just says he maybe wouldn't have wanted to eat it because it was festival food, but that's not defiling.

There are a couple of other options here. At the end of the day, I like Tremper Longman's solution. Tremper thinks that by refusing the food, or by having control over which food they ate, the Hebrew youths were making a decision about who was sustaining them.

So, if they are sustained by the rich foods, the healthy foods of the king's table, and the best foods of the king's table, three times a day, they have this reminder that they are dependent on the king. He's the one who feeds them. By refusing that and choosing instead vegetables, which in that day would not have been considered the top diet, they are being reminded every time the dinner bell rings that God's the one who sustains them.

They're not eating the king's rich foods. They are merely eating vegetables. Now again, this doesn't explain the defiling nature of it.

Whatever their motivation was for refusing the food, the greater issue is theological. Okay? It's concerned with divine nurture versus human nurture. What are these youths depending on, or who are they depending on for sustenance? Who's going to sustain them? I just want to put a little caveat in here.

This is not a diet plan. This is not the Bible telling us how we ought to eat. And vegetables are healthier.

I agree with that. I think they probably made a good choice in some ways. But this is not the Bible telling us that we need to follow Daniel's diet.

Biblical narrative describes things. It describes stories for us. This describes something that Daniel did for us.

It's not prescribing what we should do. So, if you want to eat more vegetables, your doctor will be happy. You'll be happy.

More vegetables are better for you sometimes. But not because the book of Daniel tells you to. We'll put that aside now.

All right. So, the question isn't maybe why they refused it. We know they refused it because it was defiling.

We don't know exactly why it was defiling. The question is, who? Who are they depending on for their sustenance? All right.

Verse 9. So here we see Daniel interacting with the king's officials. And so, he asks the chief of eunuchs for permission not to do this, not to eat this. And then it says, and God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of eunuchs.

So, then the next thing I expect to read is that so, he said to Daniel, okay, I'll honor your request. Right? Daniel makes a request. The text says God gave him favor with the official.

The official ought to say okay. That's not what happens. God gave Daniel favor, and the chief of eunuchs said, I'm afraid of the king.

I can't do it. So even though God gave Daniel favor with this eunuch, he didn't meet Daniel's request. It's kind of interesting.

It's also the second time in the chapter that God gave something. First, he gave his king into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Now, he's giving Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the official over them.

God is in control of the big things and the small things. The first God gave is world history, right? This is the dominance of Nebuchadnezzar, the fall of Jerusalem. God gave that into Nebuchadnezzar's hand.

This time, God gave Daniel favor with his officials. It's possible that the courtier knew that what Daniel was asking could have been interpreted as treasonous. And so that favor that he had for Daniel meant that he just kind of let it go.

He couldn't honor his request, but he didn't punish him either. So, Daniel, what does Daniel do? Well, he acts wisely. Wisdom is finding the right way to do the right thing.

And so, Daniel knows the right thing. He can't eat that food. He's got to find a way to do it.

So, he approaches another official, the one directly over them, and he says, test your servants for 10 days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. So now he's just throwing out 10 days.

Give me 10 days. This is a different official, probably a more junior official. It's probably a time just long enough for there to be some difference if the vegetables weren't going to do the job, but not so long as to maybe arouse the suspicion of other people.

And what does this official do? He listened to them, tested them for 10 days. It doesn't say God gave him a favor. Just says the guy listened to him.

It doesn't tell us why. I've heard commentators, and I'm one of them, wonder if maybe by swapping out those four servings of rich meat and wine from the king's table for vegetables, that official got to take those meals home. Maybe.

So, he got a little pay out of it. Perhaps. It's not in the text.

It's just imagining. But Daniel navigates his way through the situation. He's resolved not to eat the king's food.

He's first turned down. He tries another approach with another person. He achieves doing what is right, and he does it in a way that's wise and tactful, and Daniel is respected.

He's not belligerent. He's not obnoxious. He's wise.

So, of course, the outcome of this is that Daniel and his friends, at the end of this 10-day test, come out 10 times better, which is probably some good hyperbole, because how would you really measure that? They're way better than anybody else and all the other youths. So that takes us to verse 17, and here we get a third occurrence of God gave. So as for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom.

God is involved in their life in exile. He was involved in the big event that got them there. He was involved as Daniel was trying to navigate his way to doing the right thing, and now he's involved in giving them really special skills and abilities to excel in this foreign environment.

We're told that Daniel had understanding and visions and dreams, and that's really going to set us up for the next several chapters. What happens in chapter 2? King has a vision. He doesn't know what it means.

Daniel does, and when we get to 7, which is actually quite interesting, Daniel has a bunch of visions he doesn't understand, but we're not to 7 yet. So, they stand before the king. They enter the king's service, and they are loyal servants, and the king finds them better than everybody else, better than all of his other servants.

So, we have this framework for the narrative chapters. The third year of Jehoiakim, he's there, and Daniel is there until the first year of Cyrus, serving in the king's court. This first chapter is an introduction to the whole book.

We meet the characters. We get the context for all the events. We really can pick out some of the key themes, and we have a series of questions.

So, this chapter and this book are going to answer a whole bunch of important questions for exilic and diaspora people. How, for these people who have lost their homeland, they've lost their temple, they've lost their king, it appears that their god has lost, they might be wondering, how do we believe in a god who lets Jerusalem fall? What are we doing in exile? How did our god lose? Well, Daniel 1 says your god didn't lose. Your god turned you over.

It doesn't say why. You have to wait until chapter 9 for that, but what will happen to our youths who are being enculturated in this foreign way of life? Well, God gives them success. Now, that's not a promise that's going to happen, but this served as an encouragement that, okay, they were hauled off from their homeland, but God is watching over them.

God's giving them favor. Can they avoid defilement and satisfy their overlords? Apparently, they can. How is God working? How is God going to win? Why does God let himself look bad sometimes? How can we live in exile? There are all sorts of big ideas thrown at us in this opening chapter and questions that the rest of the book will interact with.

Some of them, it'll answer. Some of them, it'll just leave the question there for us to keep thinking about, but the key themes, we have God's sovereignty. God gave.

God gave. God gave. This is the providential hand of God at work in history, big history, and people's lives, just little people's lives.

I find that very encouraging. God is at work in the headline news, and God is at work in my little life. God is the driving force in all the events, and we have this theme of small G God versus big G God.

This is the gods of Babylon, the gods of the most powerful nation in the world versus the God of Israel, who appears to have lost, but we have a small K King versus a capital K King. We have faithful servants thriving in exile. In a lot of ways, the book of Daniel plays with the idea of faith and culture.

How do we live faithfully to God in a culture that is anti-God? It answers the question in this first chapter, at least, by saying God's there. God's active. God's involved.

God's providence is at work, even in exile. Who is this conflict really between? Is it between Daniel and his overlords? Is it between Jehoiakim and Nebuchadnezzar? No. This is between God and small G gods.



The book of Daniel chapter one tells us who has already won that, the sovereignty of God. God gave all of these things into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. We will come back to chapter two in our next lecture.

This is Dr. Wendy Widder in her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 4, Daniel 1.