

## **Dr. Wendy Widder, Daniel, Session 4, God's Kingdom in Conflict Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Widder, Daniel, Session 4, God's Kingdom in Conflict, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture on Daniel 1 explores the text as history, literature, and theology.** She emphasizes that biblical narratives are crafted to reveal God's self-revelation through historical events and literary techniques. **The lecture analyzes the historical context of Daniel 1, including the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the exile of Daniel and his companions.** It discusses chronological difficulties surrounding the third year of Jehoiakim and explores different interpretations to resolve these issues. **The lecture also highlights the importance of the temple vessels, the significance of the characters' names, and Daniel's decision to abstain from the king's food.** Ultimately, the lecture sets the stage for understanding key themes in the book, such as God's sovereignty, faithfulness in exile, and the conflict between God and other perceived gods.

**2. 9 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Widder, Daniel, Session 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).**



**Widder\_Daniel\_Ses  
sion04.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Widder, Daniel, Session 4, God's Kingdom in Conflict

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture on Daniel 1:

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Wendy Widder on Daniel 1

##### I. Introduction: Reading Biblical Narrative

- **Purpose of Biblical Stories:** Dr. Widder emphasizes that biblical narratives are not merely lists of historical events. They are carefully crafted literature intended to convey theological points about God. The Bible functions as history, literature, and theology simultaneously.
- Quote: *"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."*
- **Focus on God:** The narratives are ultimately about God's actions in history through the lives of people, not just the people themselves.
- Quote: *"It is about those people, but it's really about God's acts in history through the lives of people."*
- **Historical Events Shaped Creatively:** The human authors, guided by God, used literary techniques to communicate God's self-revelation through historical events.
- Quote: *"the biblical writers talk about historical events creatively shaped through literary techniques in order to communicate God's self-revelation."*
- **Importance of Hearing the Text:** The biblical text was originally meant to be heard and memorized, and this impacts how we should understand its features.

##### II. Daniel 1: Historical and Chronological Context

- **Setting:** The chapter opens in the third year of King Jehoiakim of Judah (605 BC), when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Jerusalem.
- **Historical Difficulty:** There is a chronological issue because Babylonian records don't show Nebuchadnezzar in Syria-Palestine at this time.

- Quote: *"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."*
- **Possible Explanations for the Chronological Issue:** The author of Daniel may have consolidated events.
- Different methods of calculating regnal years are used (Babylonian vs. Judean).
- Quote: *"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."*
- The 'siege' may have been an act of hostility rather than a formal military engagement, leading to a shift in loyalty.
- Quote: *"The word that's used there in Hebrew could just mean showed hostility... Nebuchadnezzar could have persuaded what would have been Jehoiachin at that point to surrender without actually attacking him."*
- The reference to "the third year" might be a literary device indicating early in a king's reign.
- Quote: *"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."*
- Daniel 1 is a summary of multiple deportations into one event.
- **Endpoint:** Daniel's service lasted until the first year of Cyrus, marking the end of the enforced exile (539 BC).
- Quote: *"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."*

### III. The Significance of the Temple Vessels

- **Sacredness:** The vessels from the Temple were profoundly sacred to the Jewish people, representing their covenant relationship with God and hope for restoration.

- Quote: *"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...In a lot of ways, they represent their hope of restoration."*
- **Religious Conflict:** The transfer of the vessels to the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god, Marduk, is symbolic of a religious conflict, appearing as if Marduk has defeated the God of Israel.
- Quote: *"In the ancient world, when kings go to war against each other, it's not just a military fight. It's a religious fight...So, when Nebuchadnezzar defeats the God of Israel... it appears to everybody watching that the God of Babylon has defeated the God of Israel."*
- **God's Sovereignty:** However, the text explicitly states that "the Lord gave Jehoiakim...into his hand," indicating God's control over the situation.
- Quote: *"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."*

#### IV. The Characters and the Babylonian Education

- **Ashpenaz:** The chief eunuch, who executes the king's orders.
- **The Youths:** Selected from the royal family and nobility of Israel to be educated in Babylon.
- Purpose: To train them as civil servants, to be less rebellious, and to serve as diplomatic hostages.
- Education: They were taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans (Akkadian) and given food from the king's table.
- Quote: *"So, he teaches them the language and literature of this host nation...In mastering the language, they're also mastering the literature. They're mastering the myths, the beliefs, the worldview of Babylon."*
- **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah:** Four prominent youths from the tribe of Judah. Their Hebrew names are significant, reflecting praise to God.
- **New Names:** The youths were given new Babylonian names, symbolizing their new ownership and submission to Babylon.

## V. Daniel's Refusal and God's Intervention

- **Daniel's Decision:** Daniel resolves not to defile himself with the king's food and wine, though the exact reason for this defilement is not stated.
- Quote: *"But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank."*
- **Possible Reasons for Defilement:** Food may have been offered to idols.
- Food may not have followed Torah's dietary laws.
- The food and wine may have been festival foods, inappropriate for mourning exiles.
- **Tremper Longman's Interpretation:** Daniel is choosing to be sustained by God, not the king, by refusing the king's food and choosing vegetables.
- Quote: *"Tremper thinks that by refusing the food...the Hebrew youths were making a decision about who was sustaining them...By refusing that and choosing instead vegetables... they are being reminded every time the dinner bell rings that God's the one who sustains them."*
- **Theological Focus:** The primary issue is divine nurture vs. human nurture – who sustains these youths.
- **God Gives Favor and Compassion:** God gave Daniel favor with the chief eunuch, but the chief eunuch still refused to honor Daniel's request due to fear of the king.
- **Daniel's Wisdom:** Daniel approaches a different official and suggests a ten-day test.
- **God Gives Learning and Skill:** God gives the four youths learning, skill, and wisdom, and gives Daniel understanding in visions and dreams.
- Quote: *"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."*

## VI. Key Themes

- **God's Sovereignty:** "God gave" is a repeated theme, demonstrating His providential hand in both world history and individual lives.
- Quote: *"God is the driving force in all the events, and we have this theme of small G God versus big G God."*
- **Small g Gods vs. Big G God:** The conflict is not just between kings but between the God of Israel and the gods of Babylon.
- **Faithful Servants in Exile:** Daniel and his friends are examples of people who remain faithful to God even in a foreign, hostile culture.
- Quote: *"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?"*
- **God's Activity in Exile:** God is actively working and involved, even during exile.
- **Faith and Culture:** How to live faithfully in a culture that is anti-God.
- **Big Questions:** The chapter raises questions that the rest of the book addresses:
  - How can one believe in a God who allows Jerusalem to fall?
  - What happens to the youths being enculturated in Babylon?
  - Can one avoid defilement and satisfy overlords?
  - How does God work in exile?

This briefing document should provide a comprehensive overview of the main points and ideas presented in the provided source. Let me know if you have other questions.

## 4. Study Guide: Widder, Daniel, Session 4, God's Kingdom in Conflict

### Daniel 1 Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. According to Dr. Widder, what are the three primary aspects of biblical narrative that should be considered when studying scripture?
2. What event led to Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem in Daniel 1?
3. Explain the difference between how Babylonian and Judean systems accounted for a king's regnal years, according to Dr. Widder.
4. What is the significance of the vessels from the temple being taken to Babylon?
5. What was the purpose behind the education of the Israelite youths in Babylon?
6. What were the original Hebrew names of Daniel and his three friends, and what did their names mean?
7. Why does the text suggest that Daniel refused the king's food and wine?
8. How did Daniel first attempt to avoid eating the king's food?
9. How did Daniel and his friends ultimately succeed in avoiding the king's food?
10. What key themes does Daniel 1 introduce for the rest of the book, according to Dr. Widder?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. According to Dr. Widder, biblical narrative is history, literature, and theology. It is rooted in historical events, creatively shaped through literary techniques, and ultimately communicates God's self-revelation. It's not just a list of events but a carefully crafted message about God.
2. Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, rebelled against Babylon, which led Nebuchadnezzar to come to Jerusalem and besiege it. This act of rebellion brought about the Babylonian siege.
3. The Babylonian system counted a king's ascension year separately as year one, so his first official year was really his second year on the throne. The Judean system

counted the ascension year as the first year of the king's reign so their count of years was one year less than the Babylonian system.

4. The vessels from the temple are significant as they represent the tangible items from the Jewish covenant relationship with God, serving as a symbol of hope for restoration and the covenant itself. Their transfer to the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god symbolized a perceived victory of Marduk over the God of Israel in the ancient religious context of warfare.
5. The Israelite youths were educated in Babylon to enculturate them according to Babylonian values, language, and literature, in order to make them less likely to rebel and become outstanding civil servants who were loyal to Babylon. They also became like "diplomatic hostages," ensuring the cooperation of their families back home.
6. Daniel's name meant "God is my judge." Hananiah meant "Yahweh has been gracious." Mishael meant "Who is what is like God?", and Azariah meant "Yahweh has helped". Their names reflected their faith in God.
7. Daniel chose to abstain from the king's food and wine because he considered it "defiling," though the specific reasons for the defilement are not entirely clear. Dr. Widder presents the idea that the refusal may have been to show his dependence on God, not the king.
8. Daniel first asked the chief of the eunuchs if he could be excused from eating the king's food and wine. However, the chief refused, fearing the king's response if Daniel's appearance worsened compared to other youths.
9. Daniel approached a more junior official and proposed a ten-day test where he and his friends would eat vegetables and drink water rather than the king's food and wine. After ten days, they appeared healthier than the youths who ate the king's food, so the official allowed it.
10. Key themes include God's sovereignty (God gave), the conflict between the true God and false gods, and the possibility of faithful servants thriving even in exile. The chapter addresses questions about God's role, the fate of the people in exile, and how to live faithfully in a hostile culture.



## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions in essay format.

1. Discuss the historical and chronological difficulties associated with the dating of the events in Daniel 1.1. How do scholars attempt to reconcile these discrepancies?
2. Analyze the significance of the taking of temple vessels to Babylon, including the possible impact on the Jewish people in exile, both practically and theologically.
3. Explore the multi-faceted reasons why Daniel may have refused the king's food. What does this refusal reveal about his character, motivations, and priorities?
4. Explain the way that God is shown to be in control throughout the events of Daniel 1. Include references to specific acts of God in the narrative.
5. Compare and contrast the themes presented in Daniel 1 with the possible questions of a people in exile. How does Daniel 1 act as a framework for the narrative chapters in the rest of the book?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Akkadian:** The language spoken in ancient Babylon. It is essential for understanding Babylonian culture and literature, akin to Latin in the study of classical history.
- **Ascension Year:** The year in which a king ascends to the throne. The way it is accounted for in regnal dating differs between Babylonian and Judean systems.
- **Babylonian System:** A system of regnal dating in which a king's ascension year is counted separately as the first year, so his first official year is actually the second year of his reign.
- **Defilement:** A state of ritual uncleanness that made things (including people) unsuitable for sacred use. The exact reasons for Daniel's concern are not fully clear.
- **Diaspora:** A scattered population of people whose origins lie in a different geographic location. In this context, it refers to the Jews living outside of their homeland.

- **Enculturation:** The process of being integrated into a culture by learning its values, customs, and beliefs. Babylon aimed to enculturate the exiled Israelites.
- **Exile:** The state of being barred from one's native country, typically for political or punitive reasons. In this context, it refers to the forced removal of the Israelites to Babylon.
- **Historical Difficulty:** Discrepancies between biblical texts and historical records or findings, such as in the dating of the siege in Daniel 1.1.
- **Jehoiakim:** King of Judah who reigned before the exile. His rebellion resulted in Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem.
- **Judean System:** A system of regnal dating in which the ascension year of a king is the same as his first year of reign.
- **Marduk:** The chief god of Babylon, worshiped by Nebuchadnezzar.
- **Nebuchadnezzar:** The king of Babylon who besieged Jerusalem and took the Israelites into captivity.
- **Regnal Years:** The years of a king's reign. This system is used to date events in ancient histories.
- **Shinar:** The land where Babylon is located. In Daniel 1, it is where the temple vessels were taken.
- **Sovereignty:** The supreme authority or power, often used to describe God's absolute rule and control over all things.
- **Temple Vessels:** Sacred objects used in the Jewish temple for worship. Their capture and removal to Babylon symbolized the perceived victory of the Babylonian gods over the God of Israel.

## 5. FAQs on Widder, Daniel, Session 4, God's Kingdom in Conflict, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions about Daniel 1

1. **What is the primary purpose of biblical narratives, such as the story in Daniel 1, according to the lecture?** Biblical narratives are not merely a record of historical events. They are carefully crafted pieces of literature designed to convey theological points, revealing God's self-revelation through historical events and the lives of people. They aim to show how God works through history rather than simply detailing a timeline.
2. **What is the significance of the historical setting of Daniel 1, and what are the chronological difficulties surrounding it?** The historical setting of Daniel 1 establishes the context of the Babylonian exile, specifically in the third year of King Jehoiakim (605 BC). This date presents a historical difficulty as Babylonian records don't definitively place Nebuchadnezzar at Jerusalem at this time, nor do they mention a siege of Jerusalem at that time. The lecture explores how this date may represent a different way of accounting for a king's reign, a condensed event, or a reference to the 3rd year of rebellion, rather than an exact time of a siege.
3. **Why were the vessels of the temple important to the Jewish people, and what did their transfer to Babylon symbolize?** The temple vessels were deeply sacred to the Jews, representing a tangible link to their covenant relationship with God. The transfer of these vessels to the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god symbolized the apparent victory of the Babylonian god over the God of Israel, signifying a religious conflict, not just a military conquest. However, the narrative explicitly states that God gave the vessels into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, indicating God's ultimate control.
4. **Why did Nebuchadnezzar bring the young men of Israel to Babylon, and what was the purpose of their education?** Nebuchadnezzar brought the young men from the royal family and nobility of Israel to Babylon for several reasons: to train them as civil servants, making them less likely to rebel; as diplomatic hostages to control their homeland; and to assimilate them into Babylonian culture, thereby solidifying their loyalty to Babylon. The education included learning the Akkadian language and Babylonian literature, effectively "brainwashing" them.

5. **What is the significance of the changing of names for the young Hebrew men, and why does Daniel refuse to eat the king's food?** The change of names symbolized a shift in ownership and loyalty, representing that the Hebrew men now belonged to Babylon and were subject to their king and gods. Daniel's refusal of the king's food was a stand against defilement. While the exact reason for the defilement is not specified, one interpretation suggests it was to emphasize divine dependence over human provision; a choice to acknowledge God as their sustainer, rather than being sustained by the King of Babylon.
6. **How does the narrative demonstrate God's sovereignty in the events described in Daniel 1?** God's sovereignty is highlighted through multiple instances of the phrase "God gave." God gave Jehoiakim and the temple vessels into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, demonstrating control over historical events; God gave Daniel favor and compassion, illustrating involvement in personal lives; and God gave the youths skill and learning, highlighting his role in their success. These instances establish God as the driving force behind both world history and individual stories.
7. **What key themes and questions are introduced in Daniel 1, setting the stage for the rest of the book?** Daniel 1 introduces themes of God's sovereignty, the conflict between the God of Israel and other gods, the nature of faith in exile, and the tension between living faithfully to God in a culture opposed to him. It poses fundamental questions for the exilic community such as: how can they have faith in a God who let Jerusalem fall? How can they thrive in a foreign land? How can they avoid defilement while satisfying their overlords? and ultimately, how will God win?
8. **What is the significance of Daniel's wisdom and tactful approach to his situation in Daniel 1?** Daniel's actions highlight the importance of wisdom and tact when navigating difficult situations while maintaining faithfulness to God. He doesn't react aggressively or rebelliously to the initial denial, but rather wisely finds another avenue to meet his needs. By acting respectfully and finding solutions instead of demanding or fighting, he is successful in his goal and also builds his reputation for wisdom.