

Daniel 05-09-18b

Let's begin our detailed look at the book of Daniel in chapter 1, verse 1, where it tells us, In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it. Already we have a conflict. Already we have a crux interpretum.

Because the other scriptures, among them Jeremiah, tell us that this took place in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, a year later. And for us, and for our purposes of understanding the book, this is not a big deal. But for the principle of inspiration of scripture, is this an error? Is this something that we're just going to gloss over because it's an unfortunate glitch in the information in the Bible? We can't really afford to pass it over and pretend like it's not there.

If it seems to be a contradiction, or if it seems to be a historical inaccuracy, this, believe it or not, calls into question the inspiration of scripture. And it's not like there's a textual problem and some of the manuscripts say one thing and some say another. All of the texts agree that it says the third year of Jehoiakim, when historically, from Jeremiah and other sources, we know that it was the fourth year.

And you say, well, a year, what's the big deal? Well, in one sense, it's not a big deal because we're not hinging our faith and practice on the year in which this took place. But, we do hinge our faith and our practice on a belief that scripture is, in fact, inspired. I'm allergic to the very idea that scripture would contain an error.

So, how do we account for this? It says the third, Jeremiah and other sources say the fourth. What's the deal? Well, you remember one of the last points we made in our first session this morning was that while Ezekiel is all written in Hebrew and speaks from the Hebrew-Israelite-Judean point of view about God's discipline on the nation, about God's overarching plan as it centers on Israel in the Old Testament, Daniel has a different perspective, doesn't he? He's got almost four chapters all written in Aramaic. And he's looking at it from the Gentile court of the conquering nation that has led these Jerusalemites and Judeans captive and is holding them captive.

And so, it's written in Aramaic, it's written in the language of the Gentiles. And from this Gentile perspective, and Daniel remains in that perspective even when he could have gone back. So, what about this third year, fourth year deal? It's very easily resolved.

And the only thing you need to know about this, if anybody ever brings it up and says, well, there's a mistake in your Bible, this is the key. Accession year reckoning. Accession year reckoning.

This has to do with the way you count the years of a king's reign. There's a great book called The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings. Well, it's great for me.

I'm not suggesting that you buy it. It's a detailed, technical, long-involved and largely boring

exercise in reconciling date references, dealing with the years of the reigns and trying to make sense out of everything that's in Kings and Chronicles and so on in the Bible. You don't need that book, but for somebody like me, who is all into the technical details, this is like the manual of figuring out the chronology.

And it's intense, it's deep, it's hard to follow, but my copy is well-thumbed and well-worn because it does explain. But this is it in a nutshell. The Israelites count the first year that a guy came to the throne as a year.

So let's say that you've got the 12 months of the Hebrew calendar, and let's just use our calendar so I don't have to keep explaining all the months. Let's pretend like the Hebrews are using a January through December calendar. So, King Jehoiakim comes to the throne in November.

In the Israelite reckoning, as soon as you get to January, he's in the second year of his reign. In the Chaldean reckoning, in the Aramaic reckoning, in the rest of the Gentile world, they say, wait a minute, he's only been king two months. He's still in the first year.

So, depending on the kind of reckoning that you use to count the years, in the Hebrew reckoning, by the time Jerusalem is besieged and this stuff is carried off, in their reckoning, it's the fourth year of Jehoiakim, because of this accession year reckoning. In the Babylonian, Chaldean reckoning, it's the third year. What is the perspective of the book of Daniel? We get it in verse 1. Verse 1 tells you right away, particularly back in the day, when Daniel's prophecy was first published, when his book first came out, everybody knew.

This is like July 4, 1776. This is like 1492 Columbus sailed the blue. Everybody knows the dates when things happened.

And so, in the very opening statement of the book, when it says, in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and besieged it, everybody knows, oh, I see, you're looking at this from the Babylonia. That's how the Babylonians count reignal years. So, this is not a mistake, this is a clue.

This is a key to the perspective of the book. Very first sentence. And that's how we're going to view it.

That's how we're going to understand it. It's going to be borne out by finding out after chapter 2, verse 3, that we get the rest of chapter 2, chapter 3, chapter 4, chapter 5, and chapter 6, is all going to be written in Aramaic for the same reason. It is a reminder and a telling clue to the perspective we should have as we approach this book.

So, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, as the Babylonians count years, fourth year as the Hebrews count years, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it. What is the larger view here? The big picture in terms of chronology, in terms of historical events. Well, we have the last years of the... I'm trying to get my mind back to the beginning of

my little mental tape on the history here.

You remember when we studied Ezekiel and the background of Ezekiel, and we had King Josiah and the last great reform and the ministry of Jeremiah coming forward, and then you have the suggestion of going down to Egypt, and you have the waning days of the Assyrians and the rising up of Babylon as the next big thing, as the power in the region. When Nebuchadnezzar comes to the throne, he wastes no time in subjugating the region. It's like he was the Napoleon of his day.

As soon as he got the reigns of power, he immediately began to expand. And 605 BC is the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. And he's going to reign for like 43 years in Babylon.

But 605 is the first year, and 605 is the year that he marches forth and goes down and begins this great conquest. So, as he goes down to subjugate Egypt and fight with Pharaoh Necho, remember there was the whole warning that Ezekiel gave, don't be going down to Egypt, don't you remember the lesson of the Assyrians coming, and when Isaiah told Hezekiah, don't be leaning on the Egyptians, they're unreliable, they're going to come and go, and that's exactly what happened, because Nebuchadnezzar came down and squashed Pharaoh Necho. Well, then Nebuchadnezzar was going to turn his attention to Jerusalem, which is kind of on, he sort of bypassed it to go down and deal with Pharaoh, who was the biggest threat.

He was going to come back, and he had already gotten an agreement from Jehoiakim saying, alright, I'll pay tribute, I'll be a good boy and be a subject vassal state. Nebuchadnezzar said, okay, fine, I won't destroy your city if you'll sit down and behave, and he said, okay, fine, I will. Well, then Nebuchadnezzar got busy down here taking care of the Egyptians, and defeated Pharaoh Necho, subjugated Egypt, it was just as well that the Judeans didn't go to them for help because they were no good.

Well, just as all this is taking place, an event happened personally in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. Right in the middle of all of this, his father died, and word came down to Nebuchadnezzar, your father is dead. Well, it tore him all up, and he said, I have got to go back, big state funeral, his father of course was a big monkey muck there in Babylon, so Nebuchadnezzar bugs out and goes back home.

Well, this is three years after the initial agreement that Jehoiakim made with Nebuchadnezzar and said, I'll be a good boy. Well, Jehoiakim was looking over the wall at these huge armies that were marching down to Egypt, and he said, oh no, you get no argument out of me, fine, we'll play along, we'll play by your rules. Well, Nebuchadnezzar bugs out and takes a bunch of his army with him because anytime somebody powerful like his father dies, there is a possibility of uprising, upheaval, maybe somebody is going to take the occasion to revolt.

So Nebuchadnezzar takes a vast portion of his army back with him to make sure that he doesn't lose his throne and lose his holdings that he's already got up there, because he hasn't been king all that long. Well, he goes away. Jehoiakim says, aha, the cat's away, the mice will play,

and the very thing that Nebuchadnezzar marched back to try to prevent on the home turf is what Jehoiakim decides to do down there in Jerusalem.

He says, now's the time to show that I'm a big man here in Jerusalem. We're going to tell Nebuchadnezzar to stuff it and forget it, and we're going to throw off this yoke. Well, knowing that Nebuchadnezzar can't come back down for a little two-bit country like his, he's dealing with bigger things.

So what does Nebuchadnezzar do? Nebuchadnezzar says, well, I am going to send the armies that I did leave behind, which are the Syrians, the Moabites, the Ammonites. These are vassal states who have pledged their loyalty and are pretty loyal to Nebuchadnezzar. He says, you guys go over there and deal with Jehoiakim until I can come back down.

Well, you remember the Wosongs and Ezekiel are to Moab and Ammon and Edom and some of these other guys that are kicking him when they're down, coming in. Why do they say, sure, Nebuchadnezzar will go in? It's like a double-O license to kill. Hey, we can go in.

We've always been envious and jealous and felt like we got the short end of the stick. We'll go in with Nebuchadnezzar's blessing and rape, pillage, and plunder and take what we want. So this was kind of an intermediate deal.

Well, all of this takes place in circa 605, 604, 603. And when Nebuchadnezzar does finally come back and squash Jehoiakim, remember he gets led away captive and all of that that we studied in Ezekiel, and Jerusalem is knocked over the first time, the first batch of captives is taken. That's where we are in the book of Daniel.

This is, say, seven, eight years before Ezekiel goes in the second carrying away to Babylon. This is the first carrying away. And they sack the city.

Nebuchadnezzar comes in and tells his guys, take the best and the brightest. Remember what happened with Nazi Germany and they had all the scientists that were working on the buzz bombs and the rockets and nuclear power and that kind of thing. And when we beat the Germans, we went in and got their brain trust and brought them over here and got our space program and our nuclear weapon program launched, largely utilizing the fertile brains of these German scientists.

Well, Nebuchadnezzar is no fool. He knows that there's a lot of really smart guys down there. So those of royal blood, those who are apt pupils, he says, you know, this little country has gotten along pretty well for a long time.

They must know some stuff. I'm going to take captive their brains, their up-and-coming young scientists, so to speak. So that's what he does.

That's what's happening here in chapter one. Third year of the reign of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, as the Babylonians reckon it, Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and besieged it. This is

after the Moabites and the Ammonites and the rest of them were nipping around the heels, but they just kind of kept them busy until Nebuchadnezzar could come back after the death of his father and knock the city over.

That's what has happened. The Lord gave Jehoiachin, king of Judah, into his hand with some of the articles of the temple, the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar. Shinar is the Hebrew word for Babylon.

Now, Babylon itself, you need to know just a little bit about it. This is what the ancient historians, ancient archaeologists call Sumer, S-U-M-E-R, and Akkad, A-K-K-A-D. The Sumerians, you may have heard of the ancient Sumerians, and also the Akkadians.

Well, Sumero-Akkadia, this is the land that is now comprehended by Babylon. This is why Saddam Hussein liked to talk about the ancient history of his land because Iraq sits where Babylon was. So Saddam saw himself as the latter day Nebuchadnezzar stamped a coin with his face and him superimposed on Nebuchadnezzar because that's where that is.

He rebuilt a lot of the old ruins from way back at this time. So, the Lord gave Jehoiachin, king of Judah, into his hand. We have a reference and an account of this in Scripture.

This is recorded for us in 2 Kings chapter 24. It is attributed to the sins of Manasseh. Manasseh, one of the most wicked rulers that they ever had.

Look at chapter 24 of 2 Kings. Keep your finger in Daniel there. You can look in chapter 23 and get some information about Jehoiachin and his relationship with Egypt and so on, but that wasn't a good deal.

But 24 says, In his days, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up and Jehoiachin became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him. And the Lord sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon.

This is at Nebuchadnezzar's behest. He sent messengers and said, Hey, I'm busy up here trying to consolidate after my father's death. You guys go down there and try to bring these guys back into line.

Here, the Lord sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans. These are the remaining troops from Nebuchadnezzar's army who are still stationed down there. Also, the allies, the mercenaries, the conscripts and the subjugated armies.

Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites sent them against Judah to destroy it. Now, isn't it interesting that here it says the Lord sent the Moabites and the Ammonites against Judah to destroy it. But in Ezekiel, the Moabites and Ammonites are condemned for what they did to Judah.

And you can think of a similar situation when Jesus talks about it's a part of the plan of God that

he be betrayed, but woe to him by whom he is betrayed. And it was a necessary evil, so to speak, that Judas do what he did in betraying the Lord into the hands of his enemies. But he nevertheless is accountable for that.

And so God allows it. You have the same idea here. And it is a reminder that people can sin against us and they are accountable before the Lord for the sins that they commit when they wrong us.

And yet, without relieving them of any responsibility, those bad things that come into our lives can be a part of the plan of God that he is working together for good. Maybe it's a part of discipline. Maybe it's a part of growth.

Maybe it is a challenge that will expose a weak area in our soul and help us build it up. God has a plan and has provision. This is not the end of Judah, is it? This is not the end of the people of God.

This is not the end of the worship of God. And it's not the end of God's plan of salvation. It seems like it at the time.

People say, whoa, the city is lost. The land is sacked and burned. And look at how many people have been destroyed.

It looks like the end of the world. But God has it all in His hands. And the people who perpetrate this are held accountable by God even though they are doing it at His behest.

And it seems like a contradiction until you really think about it. He sent them against Judah to destroy it. Surely at the commandment of the Lord, verse 3, 2 Kings 24, surely at the commandment of the Lord this came upon Judah.

Why? To remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh according to all that he had done. Also because of the innocent blood that he had shed for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood which the Lord would not pardon. The rest of the Acts of Jehoiakim are written in the Chronicles.

Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. Jehoiachin, his son, reigned in his place. The king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore for the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates.

Basically, took away all of Egypt's previous conquests and took all of their stuff. And then you have this further history there in 2 Kings 24. But, all of that impinges on our second verse here.

Carried away this stuff into the land of Shinar to the house of his God. Now, the articles of the house of God were financed by David, manufactured by Solomon, and have been a part of temple worship for 400 years. Can you imagine? You know, we go to an antique store and find a thing that's 100 years old and say, wow, this is neat.

You find something that's 200 years old from say 1800, that's really neat. I saw yesterday a copy of the Ladies Home Journal from 1897. It was the Thanksgiving issue and it had a picture of a lady in front dressed up sort of like a Greek goddess or something with a bowl of plenty.

I'm not real sure what was going on there. I thought, man, what a curiosity. Here's a Ladies Home Journal from 1897.

I didn't even know there was such a thing. Of course, it was \$35 to purchase. Needless to say, as far as I know, it's still down there.

But it was a curiosity and that's just a little over 100 years old. The golden objects used as a part of temple worship were 400 years old. This would be the equivalent of looking around your house and picking up cups and platters and shovels and other implements that were manufactured in the year 1600.

1605. That's how old these things were. Nebuchadnezzar came in, knocked over Jerusalem, knocked down the door of the temple and went in and ransacked it and had his people take all of these precious things manufactured by King Solomon himself, chopped them up to be melted down.

Do you know where the gold came from to build the big idol that figures later in this book? Well, there's where some of it came from. This was Nebuchadnezzar's policy in all of the capital cities that he went to. He would go find the temples where all the precious stuff was, scoop it all up, haul it back, chop it up, melt it down.

That's where he got all of that gold. That's why his empire in the vision later on is going to be figured as the head of gold. He just had a monopoly on the gold in the whole region.

So they took these things. He brought the articles into the treasure house of his god. So, along with the material wealth, he brings the intellectual wealth.

This is not a stupid man. Nebuchadnezzar is smart because he's doing two things. He is raising the IQ average in his capital city, in his cabinet, and in his brain trust, and he is depriving the conquered people of their best and brightest.

If somebody is going to rise up and do the Jehoiakim thing again, who is going to lead it? Princes? Nobles? Smart guys who know how to organize and get things done? Nebuchadnezzar says, Oh no, I'm taking those guys and bringing them down here. If anybody is going to do something smart, it's going to be me. So he has removed the best and brightest and he is training them and teaching them.

You might say brainwashing them into his system and his government. This is smart. This is why he reigned for so long.

So, verse 3, The king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs. Now, I personally can't

think why anybody would want to be a eunuch or the master of the eunuchs. But the eunuchs, again, in a pagan... This is one of the things that distinguished Israel from the surrounding nations is the kings in Israel and Judah didn't go this route.

This is sort of a physical way of ensuring that you don't have an uprising, a lot of hubris, and a lot of plotting and scheming and ambition within your own palace. You get guys that have been intentionally emasculated so that they're not going to try to get into your harem. They're not going to try to get into your politics.

They have no ambitions and no prospects outside your palace. The only thing they're good for is serving on the king's staff. Who out in the world needs eunuchs for anything? You don't.

So they are sort of permanently fitted for this particular function and usage on a king's staff. That's what they're good for. They have nothing outside of that.

So their loyalty is ensured, at least in the thinking of the ancient people in this way. So Ashpenaz, the master of the eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles. Now only some.

What is the criteria for selection? Don't just bring any old, you know, just because they have something by way of a name or by way of birth. Look for ones that actually act like princes, act like nobles, act like kings, in whom is no blemish, good looking. And in the Hebrew, this is talking about strength.

It speaks of aptitude. It doesn't just mean I want somebody I can put on the cover of GQ or to be a suit model for Sears or something. This means they look good in the sense of their potential, their aptitude, their up and comers.

Gifted in wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, ability to serve in the king's palace. Now it's left up to Ashpenaz to figure this out. And he's going through sort of a sorting out process.

And he's got three years. He initially goes through the land and says, well, you're a likely looking guy. Let me bring you.

And then when he gets them, there's a further selection and winnowing process to get only the best and the brightest. These guys are basically going to be on scholarship to come to Babylon and be trained to serve in the king's palace to whom they might teach what? The language and the literature of the Chaldeans. Now, Chaldean is not necessarily a synonym for Babylonian.

Where did Abraham, centuries earlier, come from? Her of the what? Chaldeans. Now, there's great long speculation. I read through about a five-page excursus on what the origin of the term Chaldeans is.

And after five pages, they basically say, well, we're still really not sure. There's some guys back

in Genesis who seem to have this name. They're not sure that the Chaldeans here are the same as the Chaldeans of Ur.

Here's the point. Universally, in all of the ancient literature, the Chaldeans are the wise men. This was considered in the ancient world to be the think tank.

This is the Brookings Institution. This is the Brainiac. This is MIT.

It is Chaldea. And the Chaldeans from there. When you talk about somebody that is from Chaldea or is a Chaldean, speaks their language, understands their literature, these are the smart folks.

These are the best and brightest. The geniuses. So, they're going to teach them the language and the literature of the Chaldeans.

Well, it worked, because we're going to have four some odd chapters written in the language of the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans were subsumed and incorporated by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon, just like the gold and the bright people from these other capitals. It is likely that Nebuchadnezzar not only did this in Jerusalem, but also from Egypt and from many of the other capitals that he conquered, got the best and brightest out of the Pharaoh's family.

Best and brightest from the kings of Moab and Ammon and other places and brought those people all in. There is a mixture. There's a lot more than just Jews in this school, so to speak.

The king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank and three years of training for them. This is basically college. He's putting them all in UB, University of Babylon, or BU, depending on how you want to do it there.

And there are terms dictated as to their training regimen, and this includes their diet. Well, most of the people, this is no problem, and a lot of them are probably eating better in Nebuchadnezzar's court than they would in their home land. Nobody makes a fuss about this except one guy.

Not even Azariah, Mishaël, or Hananiah. The guy that squawks about this is Daniel. From among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah.

To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names. And we have those names. We'll talk about those more a little bit later.

Verse 8, Daniel purposed in his heart. This is the most important verse in chapter 1. There would not be 11 more chapters of this book if you did not have verse 8 of chapter 1. And if there's one thing you remember out of the introduction to the book of Daniel, as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Daniel formed a conclusion.

Now think about it. This young man has been torn out of his family. He is effectively now an orphan.

We don't know his parents. We don't know what happened to the rest of his family, brothers, sisters. He is of a noble family.

He is of royal blood. All of his prospects, all of his future dashed. He is now a captive, a prisoner of war in a foreign capital, but in a different way than Ezekiel.

And so, God seems to have overthrown the fulfillment of all of his promises, all of the blessing and everything in Jerusalem and Judea. And Daniel says, it's all out the window. It's gone.

I am taken captive. I've been hauled off to this pagan capital. Daniel has to make a decision, just like Job did.

Job had everything taken away. He's sitting there scraping his blisters with a broken piece of pottery. And his wife says, this God thing is not working for you.

Curse him and die and get it over with. Job says, he can slay me. I'm still going to trust him.

Daniel makes the very same choice many hundreds of years later. It doesn't matter what's going on in history. Daniel may have actually had an understanding and a perspective that because of the sins of Manasseh, this judgment had been brought on his people.

He may have been hoping that he could work from the inside to change it in Jerusalem, but he never got the chance. Because the city fell before he ever came to any kind of power and influence. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.

I can't help the nation anymore. I can't help the capital anymore. I can't help the king anymore.

I can only control what pertains to me. And this is a universal principle for all of us, isn't it? A lot of times there are events and circumstances swirling around us that we cannot control. And it boils down to, well, what can I control? You know, the old saw we've referred to before.

God help me to recognize what I can change and what I can't. The wisdom to know the difference kind of a thing. Well, Daniel understands that he can't change.

He can't speak for the other captives. He doesn't get up on a box and say, listen all you captives, we've got to join together. We've got to get some power of numbers here and we'll go on a hunger strike until they give us the right kind of food.

Daniel purposed in his own heart and he said, I am not going to defile myself. His close friends find out that this is what Daniel is going to do and they decide to join him. But the initiative is Daniel's alone.

Daniel purposed in his heart. He would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies nor with the wine which he drank. Now, how would wine defile a young Jewish man? Well, you've heard about kosher foods and about the process by which foods are processed so that Jewish people who are observant Jews, quote unquote, can eat them.

There is a way to make certain food products so that they are considered to be clean and acceptable for an observant Jew to partake. So there are kosher meats and there are those that are not because you can't guarantee that there's not some pork or some other defiling process. Well, the way that the wine was made in Babylon was not kosher.

Yeast defiles. There is a way to make wine that was employed in the land of Israel that was acceptable and conformed to the law of Moses and there is a way that didn't. And the fermentation process in Babylon was unclean and Daniel knew it.

Now, he could make an excuse for himself and say, but look at all of my problems here. Look at my circumstances. God can't expect me.

It's a rule of the king. Doesn't God say, obey those that have the rule over you? In effect, that particular scripture hadn't been written yet, but the principle is there. Respect for authority.

The king says, eat. Surely God will give me a pass on this. Daniel says, no.

I cannot use my circumstances as an excuse to be disobedient. This food is defiling and I will not defile myself. Why would he make that choice? Why does he purpose this in his heart? What does it say about Daniel? Daniel loves God.

Daniel wants to live his life to please God. That's his priority. If it costs him his life, so be it.

And that's essentially what he's risking here. They could say, you know, you're a troublemaker. We've got plenty of other Jewish captives here.

If you're not going to eat, fine, starve. You don't like the king's food, we'll give you nothing. But Daniel takes that risk.

He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies. This is our challenge today. Different generations, different places in the world, Christians are challenged in different ways.

You go to Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. You go to Afghanistan. You go to Uganda.

You go to Central Africa. You go to different places where Christians are being slain for their faith. You go to South America, the Shining Path guerrillas down there who will kill you if they find out you're a Christian.

That's not our challenge, is it? Our life is not on the line for our faith. We have no fear of identifying ourselves as a Christian or keeping a Bible in our car or out in our house. There are places in the world where to do that is to risk your life.

Places in Islamic countries where you are considered an infidel and it is a holy thing to take your life in their mind because you're a Christian. That's not our challenge. Our challenge is represented by these king's delicacies.

It's an easy thing to say, well, this is just the way it is. I've got to compromise here. God's going to have to give me some slack, some flexibility.

Daniel purposed in his heart the most important thing is to please God. And he's willing to put his life on his line to avoid eating delicacies that most other people would say, hey, I've got a free pass here. I'm being commanded.

It's not my fault that I'm eating these. And where most people would see an excuse and where evidently most of the Jewish captives saw an excuse and took it, Daniel, all by himself, in consultation with nobody, purposes in his own heart, that's just not right. I can't partake of these things.

And he makes an issue out of it. He rocks the boat. He makes a wave.

Therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. He says, look, I serve the God of my fathers and this is prohibited to me. You might imagine the chief of the eunuchs coming back and saying, what do you mean? None of your other Jewish people are speaking up on this.

And some of the other captives might have come to Daniel and said, you know, you're going to put us in an awkward spot if you make this point. If you come up and say that we've already started eating this stuff and you've said you're not going to eat it, you're going to cast us in a bad light. For the unity of the group and for the survival of the group, you need to not say this.

There's all kinds of rationalizations that Daniel is fighting that you don't immediately think of. But Daniel purposed in his heart. That's our challenge.

We live in a time of prosperity. We live in a time of opportunity. We live in a time of distraction.

We live in a time of compromise. We live in a time of misdirection where believers don't know who they are and why they're here. And we have to purpose in our heart to not defile ourselves.

We have to purpose in our hearts and go before the Lord and say, Lord, this is the desire and this is the purpose of my heart. How can I best express it? How can I best live my life in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus? Many times we are unwittingly carried along in the flow of a group or in the flow of a syndrome and an ongoing thing that a lot of people do. And we need to come out from among them and be separate.

Touch not the unclean thing. And we ask God to give us the eyes to see that. Where is that in my life? What we need, you don't have to immediately come up with a bunch of ideas about what to change.

We don't have to catalog a lot of things and say, well, I need to turn off channel 12 on my TV or something. I don't know what channel 12 is, but we don't have to necessarily pick specific things. What do we need to do? Go to God and say, Lord, this is my desire.

This is my goal. Give me the perception. Help me to see if I need to change and where I need to change.

How can I touch not the unclean thing? How can I express this purpose of my heart to not defile myself? Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened.

If there is something we've unwittingly incorporated into our life or our lifestyle or our habits, we don't have to start by identifying that thing. We have to start with the purpose of our heart. And if we express that purpose to God, God will reveal it to us.

And the great thing is, we don't have to do a lot of speculating and agonizing. Take it to God, put it in His court and say, Lord, show me. And if we're serious about that, and if that is an expression of our faith and our true heart's desire, trust me, God will show you.

God will show all of us. It's a matter of the purpose of the heart. That's the initiation that needs to take place.

How do you get this process started? Express the purpose of your heart. That's what Daniel did. And Daniel saw immediately, well, it's the diet.

This chow, this food they're giving us, is a defilement. So, notice in verse 9, God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. I could easily see this verse reading, now Daniel had brought himself into the favor of the chief of the eunuchs.

Daniel had cultivated a friendship. Daniel had gone out of his way to humor and chat up this guy and get into his goodwill and his confidence. When we need, and this is the second big principle of this lesson, if we need the goodwill of people, whether it's an employer or a superior or somebody in authority, if we need that, God will give it.

In order to pull this off, Daniel needs some latitude. Daniel needs some flexibility on the part of the chief of the eunuchs and his steward. And God gave that favor.

Daniel didn't ask for it. Daniel didn't cultivate it. Daniel didn't bribe him.

Daniel didn't, under false pretences, cultivate a friendship. Daniel just lived Daniel's life before the Lord and God gave him favor. This is what God did for Joseph in the house of Potiphar and later in the household of Pharaoh himself.

God gave him favor. We do not need to compromise. We do not need to sort of inveigle ourselves into the goodwill of people.

If we need goodwill of people, God will grant it. The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. So this is what God granted to Daniel.

And this is the means by which Daniel is going to be able to fulfill that purpose of his heart. Because he's going to get the latitude. He's going to get the flexibility for this ten-day test.

Because God has brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. It's not even the chief of the eunuchs that's going to let him do the test. It's a subordinate of the chief.

But why do you think that subordinate steward is going to allow Daniel to do the ten-day test? Because he knows in what esteem Daniel is held by his boss. The chief of the eunuchs says, I could lose my head over you. But the steward says, I know my boss isn't going to kill anybody over trying to help Daniel out.

And so that goodwill trickles down. You never know from what quarter God is going to provide deliverance and provide salvation. There's no point in trying to cultivate a false friendship or a false favor.

Just live your life before the Lord. Express the purpose of your heart. God will grant whatever favor is needed.

God will make the opportunities in and through people that are involved. Well, this is where we have to stop right here at the cusp of the events of chapter 1 and verse 10. And this is where we'll pick up next Sunday.

But let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth that you reveal to us in your word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts.

Help us to manifest and express the purpose in our hearts of living our lives for your glory. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.