

Introduction

- In this account today, Daniel makes a confession through what he eats and doesn't eat. He will not eat at the king's table because his ultimate allegiance and reliance is not the king, but the King of kings. This is similar to Abram's confession of faith to the king of Sodom: *Genesis 14:22* *Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, ^{14:23}that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ ^{14:24}I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.”*
- We see this in the life of Paul who was thankful for the provision of the Philippian congregation but didn't rely on it for his life or contentedness (**READ: Philippians 4:10-13**) – even though he had every right to expect their support because of his preaching of the Gospel to them (1 Corinthians 9:14).

At Whose Table Do You Eat (1:8)?

1:8 *But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.*

Commitment

- Nothing outside Daniel constrained him to take this course of action: he “*made up his mind,*” or literally, “set it upon his heart” to take these steps.
- He is motivated by a desire to avoid being defiled. What the nature of the defilement is has been the subject of debate since it was written:

- Daniel does not permanently abstain from meat, but it seems he desires to do so for the specific period of training, three years.¹
- It's important to note that, to some degree, Daniel's very circumstances in being part of the Exile in Babylon caused him to be under defilement:
 - *Hosea 9:3* *“They will not remain in the LORD's land, but Ephraim will return to Egypt, and in Assyria they will eat **unclean food**. ^{9:4}They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD, their sacrifices will not mourners' bread; all who eat of it will be **defiled**, for their bread will be for themselves alone; it will not enter the house of the LORD.”*
 - *Amos 7:17* *“Therefore, thus says the LORD, ‘Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a measuring line and you yourself will die upon **unclean soil**. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.’”*

¹ We see in 10:3 that he purposefully abstains from “*tasty food...meat or wine*” for three weeks; the purpose of this specific fasting seems to have been both to mourn over the message he received and to perceive its meaning. There would be no point in mentioning his fast if he was a vegetarian; it seems that Daniel had, probably after the initial three-year training period, accepted food and wine from the king's table.

The Theme of Daniel: Battle of the Kings

- Why does Daniel resist eating “*the king’s choice food or...the wine which he drank*”? Some suggest it is related to the fact that the king’s food would have been sacrificed to idols or because of Daniel’s insistence on following the Jewish dietary laws. There are objections to both these suggestions, however: “To say that the food had been offered to idols and was therefore to be shunned is to import a New Testament controversy into an Old Testament setting where the subject is not mentioned...another suggest explanation is that in Babylon no distinction was made between clean and unclean animals, and therefore to eat the king’s meat would have been to break the Levitical food laws (Lev. 3:17; 11:1-47)...but the text includes wine, against which there was no prohibition, except in the case of Rechabites and Nazarites, and there is no indication that Daniel and his friends were in either of those categories.”²
- There are two passages from this time period (the Babylonian Exile) that best help us understand Daniel’s action:
 - First, in the angelic messenger’s explanation of the “*king of the South*,” he describes those in temporary league with the king as “*those who eat his choice food*” (11:26), the exact language of 1:5,8,13,15,16. To eat the king’s choice food was to be in covenant fellowship in a way that, for Daniel, was to only be enjoyed with God Himself.³

² Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 91-92.

³ In the addition to Esther in the Apocrypha, she says this in a prayer to God: “...I have not honored the king’s feast or drunk the wine of libations” (14:17). Though not original to the Hebrew text of Esther, the additional chapters to Esther are found in the Greek text as early as 114 B.C.

- Second, Ezekiel is told to make bread and drink water as a symbol of the diet of Exile:
Ezekiel 4:9 “*But as for you, take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt, put them in one vessel and make them into bread for yourself; you shall eat it according to the number of the days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days.* 4:10 *Your food which you eat shall be twenty shekels a day by weight; you shall eat it from time to time.* 4:11 *The water you drink shall be the sixth part of a hin by measure; you shall drink it from time to time.* 4:12 *You shall eat it as a barley cake, having baked it in their sight over human dung.* 4:13 *Then the LORD said, ‘Thus will the sons of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations where I will banish them.’”*
- We also see from this time period the dethroned king of Judah having a place at the king of Babylon’s table: 2 Kings 25:27 *Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he became king, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison; 25:28 and he spoke kindly to him and set his throne above the throne of the kings who were with him in Babylon. 25:29 **Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes and had his meals in the king’s presence regularly all the days of his life...***

- The faithful remnant among the Jews during the time of the Babylonian Exile not only suffered through the Exile along with the wicked, unfaithful Jews, but were taught to regard it as the purpose of God for their lives and embrace it by faith
(**READ: Jeremiah 27:12,13; 29:5-7**).

Appeal or Rebellion (1:9-14)?

1:9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, 1:10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.” 1:11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 1:12 “Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. 1:13 Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king’s choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see.” 1:14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.

Appeal as Opposed to Rebellion

- There are two levels to Daniel’s appeal to ungodly authority in this account:
 - First, Daniel appeals to the “*the commander of the officials.*” The commander is hesitant. The words of “*the commander of the officials*” reminds us of the great theme of Daniel: worldly power (king Nebuchadnezzar in this case) and the true Power (God the King). The commander’s concern and focus: *1:10 “I am afraid of my lord the king...”* That this is his reason for denying Daniel’s initial request enforces our interpretation that Daniel seeks to be released from this diet because it comes from king Nechubadnezzar’s table.

- Second, Daniel appeals to *1:11 the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.* It is this guard, or overseer, who agrees to Daniel’s proposal of a test period.

Favor & Compassion

- God’s granting of “*favor and compassion*” to Daniel is an answer to king Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem (**READ: 1 Kings 8:46-52**): *8:50 “...make them objects of compassion before those who have taken them captive, that they may have compassion on them...”* Roughly 320 years pass between Solomon’s prayer request and the answer being seen in the Exile. How often do we pray with this kind of timeline in mind? Do we pray for future generations or, like Hezekiah (Isaiah 39:8), are we only contented by answers in our own lifetime?
- Also **READ: Psalm 106:41-48.** *106:46 He also made them objects of compassion in the presence of all their captors.*
- Favor and compassion are commonly paired in the O.T.⁴
- Favor and compassion – in this case – do not immediately result in Daniel receiving what he desires.

Sustained & Prospered by Faithfulness to the True King (1:15,16).

1:15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food. 1:16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

⁴ Psalm 25:6; 40:11; 51:1; 69:16; 103:4; Isaiah 63:7; Jeremiah 16:5; Lamentations 3:22; Hosea 2:19; Zechariah 7:9.

Food: An Expression of Loyalty or Worship

- **READ: Numbers 11:4-10.** The Lord can use our most basic need – food – to reveal truths about the state of our soul and our attitude toward Him. Daniel could have just thanked the Lord for king Nebuchadnezzar’s food and eaten it with a clear conscience (1 Timothy 4:4,5). Daniel is not making a new rule or law for us; he is, in this particular episode, living an example of discipline and loyalty to the Lord.
- We will fast (deny ourselves a meal or change it to minimal caloric intake) on doctor’s orders before a test or procedure, but when was the last time you denied yourself food as an expression of dedication to the Lord? Fasting is a legitimate practice for new covenant believers, but is exceedingly alien to the Southern Baptist life.⁵
- **READ: Matthew 6:1,16-18** (it is one of three “righteous practices” mentioned by Jesus Himself). Also **READ: Acts 13:2,3; 14:23** (this is something you should expect from your spiritual leaders, and something you yourself should partake in before helping make congregational/ministry decisions!!).
- Is your loyalty to Christ ever changed how you ate? Have you ever considered giving your dietary practices to the Lord? I’m not suggesting you become a vegetarian for three years; I’m suggesting we give everything to the Lord, including the food we put in our mouths.⁶

⁵ We (the Southern Baptist Convention) are one of the most unhealthy Protestant denominations in the U.S.A. We will rail against tobacco and alcohol intake (I’ve been criticized for not saying enough about these) but destroy our bodies just as much by eating without any discipline at all.

⁶ We DO NOT want any kind of fasting or battle with the belly-god and his demands (Philippians 3:19) do become a reason for pride or self-righteousness, however! **READ: Luke 18:9-14, esp. vs. 12.** Pride and self-righteousness are wicked perversions of true religion that we

Human Beings Do Not Prosper by Bread Alone

- **READ: Deuteronomy 8:2-6.**

Our Commission

Diet & Application

- While we deny that the “food sacrificed to idols” controversy or Levitical dietary laws are the issues here in Daniel’s case, they are a very prominent (and complicated) issue in the New Testament. **READ: Acts 15:20,29; Romans 14:1-23; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:1-33; Revelation 2:14,20.**
- Daniel’s primary theme is the proclamation of the true King and His kingdom over and against those of the world. In this case that is expressed in food – does Daniel eat the rich food from king Nebuchadnezzar’s table or does he eat the simple food of an Exile brought about by the true King of kings?
- Does your commitment to God show itself in what or how you eat (**READ: 1 Timothy 4:1-5**)?

Respect of Authority

- My pastor taught me that the most important question you can ask in any situation is: who/what is the authority? Answering this question and conducting yourself in obedience/respect to that authority will make you successful in what you do.
- The Scripture links our fear of the LORD (the beginning of wisdom, Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10) with our respectful obedience to authority:

must examine ourselves for every day and pray for the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit in avoiding. Prayer: “Father, help me today through Your Holy Spirit to eat or not eat according to what gives Your Son the most glory in my life. Thank you for ‘richly supplying us with all things to enjoy’ (1 Timothy 6:17), but teach me to eat or not eat in a way that reminds me that You are more enjoyable than anything. And Lord, teach me this discipline without making an obsession with food or dieting greater than my zeal for You.”

READ: Proverbs 24:21; 1 Peter 2:17.⁷ This is similar to the command to honor parents (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1-3). If you cannot honor/fear the authority you see, you will not honor the authority you cannot see. Our first lesson for honoring/obeying God comes from our learning to properly honor our parents. Our follow-up lesson comes as we learn to properly respect governmental authority.

- **READ: Romans 13:1-5.** At the same time, Daniel’s life-sermon here challenges a popular attitude in U.S. society today: that we are owed much more than just “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” How does Daniel’s example model an alternative attitude from that which says I have a right to housing, health care, food, a job, internet access, etc.?

Wisdom Toward Authority

- The Proverbs frequently describe the correct way to address our authority: 14:35; 16:14,15; 19:12; 22:11.
- We should always remember Who is in control of the heart of a ruler or authority (21:1). Ultimately our response to authority is a test from the Lord on how much we trust Him. Therefore, we are to exercise the utmost care, wisdom, humbleness, and prayerfulness when questioning authority. Remember Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 3:34; 29:23; Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5.

⁷ It’s important to note that Peter writes this in a letter that is about how Christians are to suffer under persecution – and the government was playing a part in that persecution! How far does your trust in the sovereignty of God go? That question is answered in how you live in Christ under an authority hostile to Christ.

Daniel’s Use in the New Testament

- The glorified Christ, in describing the coming testing of the congregation in Smyrna, says that this testing will be over a period of “*ten days*”: Revelation 2:8 “*And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 2:9 I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.*”

- “*Ten days*” is a reoccurring time period in the Bible.⁸

At the Table of the True King

- Just as Daniel sought to receive his sustenance from somewhere other than king Nebuchadnezzar’s table, we, too, regularly gather at the Lord’s Supper table to remind ourselves of our true Source of life and our true allegiance.

“The Supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by Him the same night wherein he was betrayed, to be observed in his Churches unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance and showing forth the sacrifice of Himself in His death, confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in Him, their further engagement in, and to, all duties which they owe unto Him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other...”

⁸ Genesis 24:55; 1 Samuel 25:38; Nehemiah 5:18; Jeremiah 42:7.

worthy receivers, outwardly partaking
of the visible Elements in this Ordinance,
do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally,
and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon
Christ crucified & all the benefits of his death:
the Body and Blood of *Christ*, being then not corporally,
or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of Believers,
in that Ordinance,
as the Elements themselves are to their outward senses.”
- Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), 30.1,7

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“Great, Almighty God,
as long as our pilgrimage in this world continues,
may we feed on such diet for the necessities of the flesh
as may never corrupt us;
and may we never be led aside from sobriety,
but may we learn to use our abundance by preferring abstinence
in the midst of plenty:
grant also that we may patiently endure want and famine,
and eat and drink with such liberty as always to set before us
the glory of Thy Name.
Lastly, may our very frugality lead us to aspire after that fullness
by which we shall be completely refreshed,
when the glory of Thy countenance shall appear to us in heaven,
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

- John Calvin’s prayer at the end of his sermon on Daniel 1:8