

IN GOD WE TRUST
AN EXEGESIS OF DANIEL 1:8-16

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Thesis Statement: *Hence, it is in the absence of all man has to offer that we find sufficiency in God alone as we make the decision to trust Him and simultaneously find favor and honor in the sight of men.*

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INTRODUCTION

It is absolutely no doubt that Daniel has the utmost confidence in the God he serves. With a loyalty to God and an unwaivable trust in God's strength, Daniel exudes an upright character in this passage for every reader alike. While Daniel has the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of men and choose the broad path most commonly walked, Daniel decides to take a detour on a narrower path to do the thing that is least expected. It is in this passage that Daniel shows his desire to please God and keep himself holy, pure and undefiled as he makes a personal choice as he "resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank."¹ Daniel's choice of God's providential ground produce over the king's lavish food is an indication of his understanding of who he was in God. It is here that Daniel proves first hand that we don't need anything outside of God's sustaining sufficiency. Furthermore, it is in this chosen passage that God uses Daniel to remind the readers that His strength is sufficient. Daniel proves that there is a better way and that way is to be fully dependent upon God rather than man. There is nothing that man can do or give that will surpass the sustaining power and strength in the arm of God. David declares it best in Psalm 60:11 when he states, "for vain is the help of man."² What may seem good, may indeed be evil as we so graciously learned during the fall of man in the book of Genesis. What may be available and accessible, may not be something that we should indulge in or partake of. As Paul so eloquently states in 1 Corinthians, 6:12, "All things

¹ Holy Bible [Daniel 1:8]

² Holy Bible [Psalm 60:11]

are lawful, but all things are not expedient.”³ In other words, just because man has been given free will doesn’t mean that man should do whatsoever he wants. As we view this text in neutrality, we will understand that Daniel makes a clear statement of dependence on God rather than choosing the indulgences of man. *Hence, it is in the absence of all man has to offer that we find sufficiency in God alone as we make the decision to trust Him and simultaneously find favor and honor in the sight of men.*

CONTEXT

Historical Context

As it pertains to the historical context of Daniel, there are few conclusions that one can make as the book of Daniel provides clarity in authorship and provenance throughout the book. According to House and Longman, the historical context pertaining to the time that the Book of Daniel is written is found in the “basic historical-political scope, which spans the Babylonian era to the Persian era.”⁴ Furthermore, the book of Daniel covers multiple eras so it is important to view the book of Daniel in its totality because viewing it in parts would cause theologians to exclude some of the most important moments in the book of Daniel. From Nebuchadnezzar to Darius the Mede, Daniel’s expansion of history occurs over a wide array of time periods and leaders. “Therefore, readers must hold Daniel’s past, present and future together, not separate

³ Holy Bible [1 Corinthians 6:12]

⁴ Paul R. House, and Iii Tremper Longman. 2018. *Daniel : An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 00023. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=dd14ec0b-0a9c-349c-b1b8-ee8d0883c2bc>.

them.”⁵ The book of Daniel works together as a whole to convey the message and visions of God to the reader without interruption.

In the same manner that provenance remains unchallenged, the authorship of Daniel does the same. Very few arguments can be made to dispute the author as the book of Daniel along with other books in the Bible provide support in the designation of the author. Biblical internal evidence would prove that Daniel is the author in Daniel 8:1, Daniel 9:2, Daniel 9:20 and Daniel 10:2. These passages of scripture provide the text in first person, ultimately indicating and alluding to the fact that Daniel is the author. Once again, few questions arise as to who wrote the book of Daniel due to the fact that Daniel is referenced in passages that give validation to the authorship of Daniel. For example, in Matthew 24:15 Jesus Christ himself references Daniel as the author as he speaks of “the abomination of desolation.”⁶ It is passages like these that give Daniel credit for authorship as we explore references throughout the New Testament.

Literary Context

In the passage of Daniel 1:8-16, we see a bold Daniel willing to stand up for what he believes in and perhaps for what he knows as a result of being divinely inspired by the infinite wisdom of God. It is at this moment that “Daniel exhibits authentic devotion to God.”⁷ For it is here that the reader catches their first glimpse of Daniel’s character as he displays holiness and sanctification through his willingness to consider what he put in his body. Daniel’s display of

⁵ Paul R. House, and Iii Tremper Longman. 2018. *Daniel : An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 00023. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=dd14ec0b-0a9c-349c-b1b8-ee8d0883c2bc>.

⁶ Holy Bible [Matthew 24:25]

⁷ Paul R. House, and Iii Tremper Longman. 2018. *Daniel : An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 00023. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=dd14ec0b-0a9c-349c-b1b8-ee8d0883c2bc>.

discipline sets the tone for this passage as his choice even influenced the choice of his friends while they too stood with Daniel in an effort not defile themselves. “The problem of whether Daniel and his companions should eat the food provided by the king was a supreme test of their fidelity to the law and probably served the practical purpose of separating Daniel and his three companions from the other captives who apparently could compromise in this matter.”⁸ Their ability to separate themselves with their willingness to be obedient to God allowed them to receive honor from both God and man. Daniel and his friends are tested with taking part of the finest cuisine of his day and yet still chose to deny themselves. When one chooses to honor God in word and deed, it is a display of obedience and loyalty to God. While Daniel did not have to deny himself, his choice to do so provides a glance into his heart.

Daniel’s steadfastness not to defile himself reveals his respect for God and himself. “Daniel and his companions were confronted with the problem of compromise in the matter of eating food provided by Nebuchadnezzar which, no doubt, indicated the king’s favor.”⁹ Though they were favored by the king, they desired and sought the favor and honor of God more. When confronted with an opportunity to compromise what one thinks, feels or believes, it is safe to discern that one might ascertain to do whatever motives are in their heart. So, it is here that we see firsthand what resides in Daniel’s heart. His loyalty to God and Mosaic statutes outweighed this light and temporary moment of temptation. Daniel knows that one temporary moment of disobedience can bring the future of he and his friends to ruins. To place in proper perspective, one bite of food and one sip of wine could have been utterly detrimental to Daniel and his friends. While it is not

⁸ John Walvoord, and Charles H. Dyer. 2012. *Daniel*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.
<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=bb79da46-b833-31cd-a25c-509cc3cd93c9>.

⁹ John Walvoord, and Charles H. Dyer. 2012. *Daniel*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.
<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=bb79da46-b833-31cd-a25c-509cc3cd93c9>.

stated in the scriptural passage, historians and theologians believe that “it’s possible the food provided did not meet the requirements of the Mosaic law in that it was not prepared according to regulations and may have included meat from forbidden animals.”¹⁰ Therefore, if this were the case, Daniel sets the example for his friends and remains loyal to Jewish traditions, ultimately honoring the Mosaic law and encouraging his friends to do the same.

Daniel’s continued obedience is shown as he chooses to request permission to deny the king’s food. His willingness to respect the king and those placed in charge of him show his candid ability to both serve and lead. In Matthew 23:11-12 Jesus eloquently states, “The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”¹¹ Daniel’s willingness to serve with honor and excellence by requesting permission from the eunuch to refuse to eat the food allows the reader to gain insight into his leadership ability as a result of his humility to serve. As a result of his desire to remain humble, Daniel was eventually exalted. As we discuss literary context, it is imperative that we must not forget these fleeting leadership lessons hidden beneath Daniel’s noble decision. In all of Daniel’s nobility, what remains notable is the fact that Daniel willingly “risks his life, the steward’s, and his friends’ by requesting another diet.”¹² Daniel’s bravery and courage to resist the temptation to defile himself placed himself and others in great danger, but

¹⁰ John Walvoord, and Charles H. Dyer. 2012. *Daniel*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.
<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=bb79da46-b833-31cd-a25c-509cc3cd93c9>.

¹¹ Holy Bible [Matthew 23:11-12]

¹² Paul R. House, and Iii Tremper Longman. 2018. *Daniel : An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 00023. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=dd14ec0b-0a9c-349c-b1b8-ee8d0883c2bc>.

his loyalty to the laws of his God eventually made him and others victorious in the fullness of time.

As we continue to reflect on Daniel's character in the midst of his denial of the king's food, one might even catch a glimpse of King David's character to be laid in the balance as well. Biblical evidence proves that Daniel was not the only one who rejected a king. In what might seem disrespectful to decline a king's offer, rejection of what seemed better has repeatedly proven to be triumphant. In 1 Samuel 17:38-39 we see David reject King Saul's armor as he prepared for victory over Goliath. David reminds us that God alone is enough. While David could have used Saul's armor, his decision of refusal and rejection of the armor was one that defied all odds and proved that God's power was strong enough to deliver the Philistine into his hand.

It is this type of rejection of humans and the things of this world that reminds the readers that they can trust in God and believe Him to deliver them in any situation they may find themselves in the absence of human help, resources and recommendation. In the same way, while Daniel and his friends could have partaken of the food, their refusal to do so was a direct reflection and testament to the God that they served. While the story of Daniel's refusal of the king's food may not often be seen in this light, it is a perspective that is worthy of considering as he and his friends proved their countenance to be fairer than those who chose to eat the king's food.

CONTENT

Daniel 1:8-10 | Daniel's Choice

As previously stated above, Daniel's choice not to defile himself with the king's food was one of nobility and respect. Daniel 1:8-10 lets the reader in on what would have been an intense dialogue between a student and his teacher during that time. To place in proper perspective, this passage places a servant of the king and his loyalty to the king on display as he converses with a student in training about what that student will and will not eat. Daniel's boldness and nobility is unchallenged and unmatched as he respectfully declines to eat the king's food in the face of what could have been danger or imminent death. Not only do we see him respect God and himself, we also see him respect the chief of the eunuchs that has been charged with his care, education and training. In a victorious turn of events, Daniel receives favor from God as well as the chief of the eunuchs in this matter as he requests permission to reject the king's food. While the eunuch is initially hesitant, thinking that it might harm the appearance of Daniel and his friends, Daniel eventually provokes the eunuch to take him up on his request and is granted permission.

Daniel 1:11-14 | Daniel's Test

Daniel 1:11-14 provides insight into what would be the beginning of Daniel's trust in God and Daniel's leaders' ability to trust in Daniel. Not knowing the exact outcome of refusing the king's food, both Daniel and the chief of the eunuchs embark upon somewhat of a blind journey together, hopeful that what Daniel believes about his alternative diet is true. However, what is

known is that “Ashpenaz could have simply denied Daniel’s request without discussion.”¹³ Therefore, we dare not dismiss the humility of Ashpenaz as he respectfully displays humility with those he is in charge of. The willingness to listen to Daniel and consider his concerns shows leadership ability as he and the chief of eunuchs show care and concern for those they lead. Daniel’s request for a ten-day diet trial “was a reasonable length of time to test a diet and yet one that would not entail too much risk of incurring the wrath of the king.”¹⁴ Let it be known that Daniel’s request was nothing short of a risk. However, all were willing to take the risk in the event that it would prove that Daniel and his friends would be better and even perhaps, stronger. Nevertheless, “the steward granted their request, and the test was begun.” It is here that we are reminded that every risk is not a bad risk. Some risks, if never taken, prove or disprove things that might not otherwise be known. However, risks are always in the discretion of those determining and taking the risk as they willingly do something that has never been done. To define risks a step further, biblically, a risk might further be explained as faith as Hebrews 11:1 states that faith is “the evidence of things not seen.”¹⁵ While the outcome may be unknown, the action or decision may still be taken in hope that the desired outcome will come to pass. Perhaps, Daniel and the chief of the eunuchs teach the readers a lesson of not only trust, but faith as well.

Daniel 1:14-16 | Daniel’s Victory

¹³ John Walvoord, and Charles H. Dyer. 2012. *Daniel*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.
<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=bb79da46-b833-31cd-a25c-509cc3cd93c9>.

¹⁴ John Walvoord, and Charles H. Dyer. 2012. *Daniel*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.
<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=bb79da46-b833-31cd-a25c-509cc3cd93c9>.

¹⁵ Holy Bible [Hebrews 11:1]

Daniel 1:14-16 is a passage of victory. There is nothing more celebratory than knowing success has been achieved. There is nothing more joyous than to know that a desired expected end has come to pass. In the aforementioned paragraphs, credit is given to Daniel and the chief of the eunuchs for taking a step of faith as they charted an unknown outcome of Daniel's diet trial. As one could expect, nothing would make Daniel or the eunuch more excited than for them to know that the trial worked. It is in this moment that Daniel gains a bold confidence in his God and the chief of eunuchs gains confidence in Daniel. The outcome that had been hoped for had come to fruition. God's fulfillment of Daniel's expectation and request became a staple in Daniel's education as Daniel and his companions would continue on in their alternative diet.

APPLICATION

As we look to use Daniel 1:8-16 for application, those wishing to glean wisdom should not overlook the values and principles of loyalty, obedience and trust on display. Daniel's loyalty and obedience to God reminds the reader to always place God first above everyone and anything no matter what the consequences or circumstances may be. Daniel reminds the reader to keep their eyes on God as they honor Him with their whole heart in mind, body and soul. Daniel challenges the reader to remember that compromises are costly and that any compromise made in an adversarial manner toward God and His precepts, law or statutes will place them in jeopardy of being punished. Daniel knew that rebellion could be costly as he had known, seen and heard of the Mosaic law by which he chose to abide. His Jewish customs and traditions kept his heart and motives pure so as to honor God in all that he did.

While we see Daniel's loyalty, obedience and trust on display, we also get a glimpse of God's loyalty to those who choose to trust Him. God never fails to exalt those who humble themselves and He never fails to reward those who are faithful in word and deed. God's

willingness to remind readers that He can be trusted is a delightful treasure that can be found in the book of Daniel, and perhaps within this specific passage of scripture. Daniel not only trusted in God, but also in the provision that God provided as Daniel's select dietary restrictions found its basis within food from the ground. It is in this way that both Daniel and God remind us that we can trust God and His provision. Though man may offer us resources that may seem better, we are to be reminded that what comes from the hand of God is so much greater. Further, when we choose the hand of God over man's, we will always find strength and everlasting provision. *Hence, it is in the absence of all man has to offer that we find sufficiency in God alone as we make the decision to trust Him and simultaneously find favor and honor in the sight of men.*

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<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=bb79da46-b833-31cd-a25c-509cc3cd93c9>.

See Holy Bible [Daniel 1:8].

See Holy Bible [Psalm 60:11].

See Holy Bible [1 Corinthians 6:12].

See Holy Bible [Matthew 24:25].

See Holy Bible [Matthew 23:11-12].

See Holy Bible [Hebrews 11:1].

