

Our God Reigns

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Daniel

This inductive Bible study is designed for individual, small group, or classroom use. A leader's guide with full lesson plans and the answers to the Bible study questions is available from Regular Baptist Press. Order RBF0026 online at www.regularbaptistpress.org, e-mail orders@rbpstore.org, call toll-free 1-800-727-4440, or contact your distributor.

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The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

OUR GOD REIGNS: DANIEL

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Preface

Daniel, perhaps more than any other book in the Bible, presents the awesome fact that *Our God Reigns*. The book balances the simple, personal experiences of Daniel and his friends with grandiose, complex visions and prophetic images. Both serve to demonstrate that God rules over all.

As you study the familiar accounts as well as the prophecies, don't get lost in the simplicity of the one and the intricacies of the other. Focus on understanding the passages so you will be able to grasp the meaning of God's reign in your life.

Daniel bravely faced lions and lion-like kings as well as took in extraordinary scenes of future atrocities and triumphs. He did all this with an obedient, humble heart because he had learned to trust His reigning God. He didn't dare refuse his calling as God's prophet. He took God's rule personally and seriously.

Allow God to develop in your life the same seriousness for God's rule. Examine your life as you study these lessons. Allow God's Word as to penetrate your heart and develop in you a humble awareness that *Our God Reigns*.

Lesson 1

The Making of the Man

God sustains believers when they are tempted to compromise in the midst of trials.

Daniel 1

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8).

A fourth-grade boy named Alex walked nervously into his new school. Everything was so different from his old, comfortable school on the other side of town. The kids, the teachers, the color of the walls, and even the smell were different. Each step deeper into the school brought a deeper level of fear. When the boy reached the back of the school and spotted the portable classroom just outside the windows, his fear was overwhelming. Tears of terror formed in his eyes as his bottom lip quivered. That was his classroom!

Alex had never been in a portable classroom before. How would he manage this “radical” change? Where would he go to use the restroom? What if he got locked out of the portable? What if he got locked in? The questions swirled dizzily in his head.

Alex had no choice but to stay. Old Central Elementary was closed for good. He wanted to run and hide, but he decided to resist the urge.

Getting Started

1. When have you experienced an overwhelming situation that left you feeling afraid or helpless?

2. Which was greater—a desire to return to a “safe” place or an urge to adapt to your new surroundings?

3. What did you do?

The change that Daniel faced makes what Alex faced seem silly. Daniel not only went to a new school, he did so as a captive in enemy territory thousands of miles from home. There he felt the powerful pull to compromise his relationship with God. How he responded when lunchtime came would affect Daniel for the rest of his life.

Searching the Scriptures

The story of Daniel’s lunchtime decision is well known. But more than just food was involved. Daniel and his friends were placed in a dangerous, oppressive situation.

Judah Falls to Nebuchadnezzar

As Nebuchadnezzar swept southward along the Mediterranean, he came to Jerusalem. Apparently, the Jews submitted to him without a battle. Thus began the first of three waves of captivity and destruction that Babylon brought upon Judah. But Nebuchadnezzar’s success was not due merely to military genius; the Lord sovereignly allowed this victory. God used the Babylonian captivity to chastise His people.

4. Read Hebrews 12:5–11. How does God chasten believers today?

5. Compare and contrast this chastening with how God dealt with Old Testament Israel.

6. Read Daniel 1:1–4. Name two or three Scripture passages that substantiate God’s control in the affairs of nations.

Nebuchadnezzar took the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem as a token of Judah’s subjection to Babylon (1:2). He placed them in the pagan temple, indicating that he attributed his success to his pagan god. In addition to the vessels of gold, selected young men were taken to Babylon as a token of his conquest (1:3). The king enlisted the finest of these young men for governmental service.

7. How do Daniel 1:3 and 4 describe the selected young men?

“Children of Israel” means Jews. “Of the king’s seed, and of the princes” implies that Daniel and his companions were of the royal and messianic lineage. “Children,” or “youths,” are believed to have been about fifteen years old. “No blemish” refers to physical fitness. “Well favoured” indicates physical appearance. “Skilful in . . . wisdom . . . knowledge . . . science” refers to mental ability. “Such as had ability . . . to stand in the king’s palace” refers to poise and confidence necessary to live in a royal court. Those youths had potential and could be taught the ways of the Babylonians.

Nebuchadnezzar Grooms the Best Young Men

Nebuchadnezzar took good care of the chosen young men. Since

he intended for them to become government officials, it was necessary first to win their confidence, appreciation, and allegiance. He initiated them into a high-level training program that combined academic rigor with preparation for royal service—all in an atmosphere of pagan spirituality. He served the finest food in the kingdom to ensure their physical health. All this was done that “they might stand before the king” (1:5). At the end of the training, they were to be appointed to governmental service.

That Daniel 1:6 names only four young men is a commentary on the other Jewish youths who were taken captive: Apparently the rest assimilated the Babylonian ways. Only these four refused to compromise spiritually.

8. Imagine you were one of the magnificent youths taken captive to Babylon from your devastated homeland. What might tempt you to embrace the foreign, pagan society of your captors as you considered your situation?

9. Why might you stay true to God?

The four names in verse 6 are Hebrew. Each one contains the name of the true God. “Daniel” means “God is my judge.” “Hananiah” means “Jehovah is gracious.” “Mishael” is translated “Who is what God is?” and “Azariah” stands for “Jehovah has helped.” However, the Babylonians gave the young men new names that referred to pagan deities. “Belteshazzar” means “May Bel protect his life.” “Shadrach” is “Command of Aku” (the moon god). “Meshach” stands for “Who is what Aku is?” and “Abed-nego” is translated “Servant of Nebo.” Separated from family in a foreign land, these Hebrew young men lost all traces of their identities. Not only were they tempted to compromise, but they could compromise without restraint.

10. Why might the Babylonians have changed the names of the Hebrew youths?

11. What are some ways the world tries to assimilate Christians into its culture?

12. What are the dangers in being assimilated into culture?

Daniel Avoids the King's Food

How did Daniel and the other three respond to this temptation? Daniel requested to be exempted from the menu because it would be defiling. The Babylonians would not have prepared kosher food for the Jewish captives. They were instead trying to do away with the Jewish customs. Also, both the wine and meat would have been offered to idols by the pagans. To eat this food was considered an act of worship of the deity to whom it was offered.

13. What excuses might men in Daniel's position have made for eating the food?

14. Do believers today ever use some of these same type of excuses? In what situations?

Daniel's decision to avoid the king's food is remarkable, as is the way in which he made his request not to eat it. He did not lie to cover his true motive, but gave a Scriptural reason to his godless superiors. He took the opportunity to witness concerning his belief in Holy Scripture.

Although the prince of the eunuchs may not have understood why Daniel found the food defiling, it is certain that he respected Daniel (1:9). One does not look favorably on a person who is merely demanding or uncooperative. Daniel had a winsome spirit from the beginning. Daniel had established a good rapport before he made his request.

15. What can Daniel's response teach us when we face compromising situations?

Since it was the prince's responsibility to carry out the king's orders, he was reluctant to grant Daniel's request. Daniel was, in essence, asking him to join in endangering both of their lives (v. 10). While sympathetic, he feared the king greatly. But his sympathy may have encouraged Daniel to try another approach.

How do you view an obstacle? Daniel did not let the refusal of the prince of the eunuchs deter him. He tried another avenue. Blocked doors are not necessarily closed doors. Daniel found another door in Melzar (v. 11).

Daniel proposed a ten-day trial period. He believed that in this short time, God would intervene and make him appear physically superior to the others. The trial was short enough that Melzar saw no problem in granting it. Melzar would be the judge (vv. 12, 13). Daniel demonstrated that a person can have principles yet be gracious. He can have convictions without being contentious. Christians today must follow this approach when facing compromising situations.

Daniel's request was accepted (1:14). Here is an example of God honoring someone who honors Him. Yet we must not assume that God will always manifest His honor in this manner.

16. When have you had to be creative in order to keep from participating in a compromising situation?

At the end of the ten days, the judge rendered his decision: the Hebrew youths had passed the test. They were in fact fairer and fatter than those on the official government diet (1:15). While Americans tend to view being overweight as a health problem, in Biblical times the sickly and starving were skinny. Hence, fatness was desirable.

Since the Hebrew youths had done so well on this diet, Melzar continued to allow it. Had they shown adverse effects, he would have demanded that they return to the king's diet.

17. Daniel's choice not to compromise said as much about God as it did about Daniel. What do we communicate about God when we compromise?

Nebuchadnezzar Chooses the Best

The initial problem of the diet having been settled, the youths entered their training period. Although they were sharp youths with great natural ability and were trained in the learning of Babylon, "God gave them knowledge and skill" (v. 17).

In Daniel's case, that included the ability to understand visions and dreams. The Babylonians placed great emphasis on dreams and had devised methods of interpreting them. Visions and dreams would become very important parts of Daniel's prophetic career.

At the end of their training, the Jewish youths were given a comprehensive oral exam by Nebuchadnezzar himself. His examination of the four Hebrew young men found them at the top of the class. Because of this, they received commissions to high office (v. 19). After Daniel and his companions had served for a time, the king also found them "ten

times better” than his established officials (v. 20). The phrase was likely a figure of speech, but they were by far Nebuchadnezzar’s best ministers.

Daniel Has a Long, Distinguished Career

Daniel still had an official position during the reign of Cyrus (v. 21). Since Cyrus was a Persian king, that means Daniel continued all through the Babylonian period. He served under seven rulers for at least seventy years in two major world empires. Kings and kingdom fell—but Daniel continued on, being used of God to convey marvelous predictive prophecies that Christ called for future generations to understand (Matthew 24:15).

Daniel 1 sets the stage for the whole book. Decisions that Daniel and his companions made here revealed their character and prepared them for the events recorded later. Daniel 1 contains no direct predictive prophecies, yet its demonstration of God’s sovereignty—even in Babylon—prepares us for the prophecies of God’s work among Gentile nations.

In response to God’s sovereignty, Daniel and his friends displayed faithfulness. In turn, God elevated Daniel to become one of the greatest men of the Old Testament.

18. How are these two fundamental beliefs related: (1) God is in control; (2) I must be faithful not to defile myself in a compromising situation?

Making It Personal

19. Sometime this week, read the complete book of Daniel.

20. During the week, keep a record of situations that tempt you to compromise what you know pleases God. Record what you choose to do in each situation.

21. Memorize Daniel 1:8.