

BE YE SEPARATE
January 8, 2017
Daniel 1:1-21

“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

Daniel was an extraordinary person. In any setting, his natural endowments would elevate him to the top tier of opportunity and respect. He was intelligent, handsome, young and perceptive; strong in every gift and trait of personality, and destined to succeed wherever he was placed.

Daniel became counselor to four successive world leaders—a rare phenomenon in any age. There were Nebuchadnezzar and his grandson Belshazzar, rulers of the Babylonian Empire. When Darius the Median captured Babylon, killing Belshazzar, Daniel continued with high rank in his government. In the late years of his life, Daniel served in the administration of Cyrus.

It is notable that Daniel is more famous than any of the rulers whom he served. But neither his gifts nor diligence nor winning personality are to be credited for this fame.

Rather, he is remembered because he refused to fit in with the world-system that surrounded him. He determined that rather than seeking man's approval, he would seek God's approval. Consequently, God used him in miraculous ways, gave him great honor and fame, vindicated his faith before his enemies, and made him one of the most memorable men of history. Had Daniel chosen to fit-in, he would simply have been another unknown bureaucrat who lived, worked and died.

In the first chapter of the book, he is likely no more than 15 years old, the age when “fitting-in” is one of the most powerful motivators. Yet Daniel knew that to fit in with the culture would be forsaking God. He refused to do this, knowing that he could suffer much for refusing. Reacting thus, he set a life-long pattern of conduct.

For God's sake, he refused to do what everyone else was doing, and succeeded above them all. They are forgotten forever. Daniel will never be forgotten. Perceptively, he wrote, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

Daniel understood that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4), and ordered his life upon this understanding. He knew that “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (I John 2:15-17).

Daniel and a few God-fearing comrades “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth . . . Through faith [they] subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises,

stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, [and] out of weakness were made strong . . . (of whom the world was not worthy)” (Hebrews 11:13, 33, 34, 38).