

**Reaching the Next Generation:
Satan's Strategy against the Next Generation
Daniel 1**

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Text Introduction: At various times this year, I want to do some major teaching on our core values as a church. I have suggested that we adopt these four core values as a church.

1. We much preach the same Gospel.
2. We much declare this message to the next generation.
3. We must preach this same Gospel to all the nations.
4. Whatever we accomplish must be all for God's glory.

So, in this year, I want to spend a specific amount of preaching time preaching through these four core truths that we hold. With Graduate Recognition this Sunday and Mother's Day, which will include a time of Parent/Child Dedication, it is a good time to spend some time on our second core value.

Our text is Daniel 1 which tells the story of the Babylonian take-over of Judah.

Text: ¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it. ² The Lord handed Jehoiakim king of Judah over to him, along with some of the vessels from the house of God. Nebuchadnezzar carried them to the land of Babylon, to the house of his god, and put the vessels in the treasury of his god.

³ The king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his court officials, to bring some of the Israelites from the royal family and from the nobility— ⁴ young men without any physical defect, good-looking, suitable for instruction in all wisdom, knowledgeable, perceptive, and capable of serving in the king's palace —and to teach them the Chaldean language and literature. ⁵ The king assigned them daily provisions from the royal food and from the wine that he drank. They were to be trained for three years, and at the end of that time they were to serve in the king's court. ⁶ Among them, from the descendants of Judah, were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them [different] names: to Daniel, he gave the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

⁸ Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank. So he asked permission from the chief official not to defile himself. ⁹ God had granted Daniel favor and compassion from the chief official, ¹⁰ yet he said to Daniel, "My lord the king assigned your food and drink. I'm afraid [of what would happen] if he saw your faces looking thinner than those of the other young men your age. You would endanger my life with the king."

¹¹ So Daniel said to the guard whom the chief official had assigned to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for 10 days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then examine our appearance and the appearance of the young men who are eating the king's food, and deal with your servants based on what you see." ¹⁴ He agreed with them in this matter and tested them for 10 days. ¹⁵ At the end of 10 days they looked better and healthier than all the young men who

were eating the king's food. ¹⁶ So the guard continued to remove their food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷ God gave these four young men knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom. Daniel also understood visions and dreams of every kind. ¹⁸ At the end of the time that the king had said to present them, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king interviewed them, and among all of them, no one was found equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they began to serve in the king's court. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding that the king consulted them about, he found them 10 times better than all the diviner-priests and mediums in his entire kingdom. ²¹ Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Introduction: There is a part of me that absolutely detests preaching on Satan. I don't want to give the Devil more of a platform than he deserves. I want to preach on the victory that we have through Jesus Christ. Yet, we must be aware of the strategies of Satan. We must understand our opponent.

The story of Daniel and the three other Hebrew youth is a great case study in the attempt of Satan to hijack the next generation. What is his strategy?

Remove our children from the Influence of the Home.

Here is the first thing that Nebuchadnezzar did. He wanted his servants to "bring some of the Israelites." (v. 3) Now, please note the strategy. By taking the best and the brightest out of Judah, Babylon was in effect weakening the ability of Judah to mount a counter offensive. This scares me. Satan is after our best and brightest. Parents and grandparents, raise your hand if you think you have the best and brightest kid. OK, I have an announcement for you. It is Satan's goal to steal your kid. The stakes are high to protect our children.

Indoctrinate our children in the world's culture.

The king sought to teach them the Chaldean language and literature. (v. 5) Understand that there is nothing wrong with learning. In fact, a valid case could be made to study other religions, not to follow them, but to know how to refute them. However, we must be careful that our children not be indoctrinated into the systems of the world that would be harmful to them.

Introduce our children to other gods.

On the surface this name change does not seem like a big deal, but in truth, the Hebrew names all contain a reference to the true God. The new names all refer to pagan gods.

Daniel-God is my judge, but Belteshazzar-roughly translated Bel, protect his life
Hannaniah-Yahweh is gracious; Shadrach-command of Aku (moon god)
Mishael-Who is what God is (meaning there is no god like Jehovah God); Meshach-who is what Aku is
Azariah-Yahweh has helped or will help; Abednego-servant of Nebo (changed to Nego to avoid using an idolatrous name. Nebo was the second greatest god in Babylonian godhead.

Satan's strategy is to make our children think, "Well maybe God is not the only God. Maybe we ought to accept that there is more than one god or more than one way to God. Just believe in something." Does that sound familiar? Yes, that is the message that our children are bombarded with every single day.

Indulge our children's appetites.

We see this in the food that they ate. We see this today in that we give our children any and every thing. It is interesting that as enemies, Babylon did not mistreat the Hebrew youth. In fact, they made life incredibly good for them. Satan does that with us today. When we think of Satan, we want to think of evil and wickedness. Satan is not stealing our children with that which is dark and evil, but rather with that which seems to be wonderful.

Listen to the counsel of 1 John 2:15-17: ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. Because everything that belongs to the world— ¹⁶ the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's lifestyle—is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God's will remains forever. "

I hate such a negative sounding message, so let's shift the focus here just a bit.

Is there any good news?

Is it too late? Has Satan won? Is it all doom and gloom from here on out? The text does point to some good news.

Yes, like Daniel, the next generation can be prepared!

Daniel 1:8 is the most important verse in this text. Why could Daniel make that decision? Where did the determination come from? He had been prepared to do so. In the midst of a very wicked day in Judah, so wicked that God brought about the Babylonian invasion, Daniel had been prepared in the ways of Jehovah God. The home and the church must come together for the purposes of preparing a Godly generation.

Yes, like Daniel, God is pleased to prosper a Godly next generation!

God favors Daniel and the others. They were better than all the rest. They had high positions. Most of us are familiar with the words from 1 Peter 5:8, "...Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour."

But equally true is the promise found in 2 Chronicles 16:9, "For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to show Himself strong for those whose hearts are completely His."

God is looking for people to show Himself strong on their behalf.

Yes, like Daniel, the next generation can have a powerful influence!

As we keep reading Daniel, Daniel had a profound influence on Nebuchadnezzar. In Daniel 4:34-35, we read of Nebuchadnezzar's faith. Daniel's faith led to Nebuchadnezzar's faith. This is where we ought to get excited. Earlier I said I was scared. Satan is after the best and brightest. But, here is my excitement. God could use one from this next generation to speak in the most powerful places and to the most powerful people in the world. May it be so!