

## **DAY 2 - JANUARY 9, 2026**

### **Four Hebrew Youths in Babylon (Daniel 1)**

In 609 BC, King Josiah (640-609 BC) had just been killed in a battle with Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, a regional power that seeks to control the cities of Palestine and Judah. Josiah's successor, Jehoahaz, reigns only three months until Pharaoh Neco removes him (2 Kings 23:30-32), and replaces him with his brother Jehoiakim, who becomes a vassal of Egypt (2 Kings 23:34).

But Pharaoh Neco's influence in Judah is short-lived. Nebuchadnezzar, general of the armies of Babylon, defeats the combined forces of Egypt and what is left of Assyria in the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC, signaling the end of Assyrian might and Egyptian intervention. Nebuchadnezzar II then succeeds his father as king of Babylon and reigns 605-562 BC.

To consolidate his victory over Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar sends his troops south into Syria and Palestine to end Egyptian control of that region. Whether he actually besieges Jerusalem with his massive army, or only threatens to do so, is unclear. The bottom line is that Jerusalem seems to have surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar with minimal resistance. Jehoiakim now switches allegiance from Egypt to Babylon and becomes Babylon's vassal.

This is the first of three waves of exiles deported from Judah to Babylon. This first group includes Daniel and his friends (1:1). Jehoiakim also begins giving tribute to Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC (2 Kings 24:1). Babylonian troops remain in the area, invading Syria in 604, Ashkelon in 603, and clash with Pharaoh Neco on the borders of Egypt in 601.

**Q1. (Daniel 1:1-5)** Have you ever made a rapid transition between your customary culture and a new and radically different culture? What did it feel like? Were you able to take your faith with you, or did it fade to the background during this time?

**Q2. (Daniel 1:1-7)** What changes did Daniel and his friends experience? What was their status in Jerusalem? In Babylon? What do you think was the effect of changing their names to Babylonian names? What impact might it have on them to be made eunuchs? Did they make compromises? If so, why?

**Q3. (Daniel 1:8-10)** Why do you think Daniel took a stand concerning being defiled by the king's food and wine? How do you think eating the king's food would cause defilement to Daniel's conscience? What does this tell you about Daniel?

**Q4. (Daniel 1:8-16)** What is Daniel's first approach to eat a different diet? What does he do when his first attempt failed? What is his demeanor towards those over him? In what ways do you think God affects the outcome of Daniel's request?

### **Lessons for Disciples:**

1. Though our lives may take wrenching turns (such as Daniel's exile), God knows these things and works through them to achieve his purposes.

2. We must learn flexibility to live in the culture we are placed in, without being unfaithful to the Kingdom of God to which we pledge allegiance - the fine art of compromise without capitulation.

3. Daniel seeks compromise with gentleness, not confrontation. He suggests a limited-time experiment. Finding compromise involves discerning the interests of each party (in this case, the health of the young men, and faithfulness to their religion), and then finding a way to meet the needs of all, so far as that is possible. True education and wisdom, when aided by God, doesn't restrict us, but can cause us to have more wisdom and breadth than our peers.