

Daniel - "Staying True When It Matters Most"



1. **(Overall)** Daniel's captivity under Nebuchadnezzar began in 605 BC, about 20 years *before* the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The final verse of chapter one tells us that Daniel was in Babylon until the first year of King Cyrus of Persia (1:21), which was 539 BC. Assuming that he was a teenager when he was abducted, he would have been roughly 80 years old at this time. Daniel 11:1 tells us that he was still in the Persian political world in the first year of King Darius who ascended the throne in 522 BC, which puts Daniel in his nineties at this time! Daniel lived through the *entire* "Babylonian exile" and some of the most turbulent and significant global events in history.
2. **(Q1)** Names in the ancient near east were very, very significant. We get a hint of this even in the naming of Jesus and John the Baptizer. The fathers are *told* what to name the boys because they would have most certainly named them something else, either a family name or a name that reflected the hopes of the parents or the circumstances surrounding their births. These Jewish boys, who were old enough to understand and appreciate the names they had been given as Jews (by their parents), would have certainly struggled *immensely* with being renamed, and that with pagan names. Imagine how long it would have taken them just to *respond* when someone called their "name"! And, how do you continue to worship Yahweh in a culture where your very name is an assault on His existence and sovereignty?
3. **(Q1b)** The university campus would be the closest modern equivalent that is truly plausible (i.e. away from home, educational focus, surrounded by temptation and opportunity, etc.). *However*, it would also have to be a *non-IndoEuropean* country such as China or Iraq, to be closer to the reality these boys faced. They were nearly 600 miles from home and living and learning in a culture whose accepted values were hostile to their faith, *and* a language that was totally foreign to them and would have to be learned in order to study and function. Then, imagine that word reaches you that your home city has been destroyed, not just conquered. Thoughts of returning would have evaporated at this point.
4. **(Q2)** Being "resolved" (ESV) is *not* simply being stubborn or strong-willed. A strong will can just as easily galvanize itself to *defy* God as to serve Him, if one's will is merely strong. Daniel was "internally governed." His convictions travelled *with him* to Babylon, they weren't forged there. They also weren't left behind in Jerusalem when he was abducted (i.e. a product of his family, friends, or synagoge, or fear of being "caught").
5. **(Q4a)** Daniel's salient quality here is his faithfulness to serve those over him. Expressing this quality "at work" gave Daniel a blameless reputation as a servant of the king. Expressing this quality in his private world gave him the reputation of being a faithful servant of Yahweh.
6. **(Q5 - Dan 9:1-2)** Obviously Daniel had access to Jeremiah's prophecy, at least to the letter Jeremiah had written to the exiles in Babylon (cf. Jer 23:1-23, esp. vs 10). In short, Daniel was doing *more* than praying three times a day facing Jerusalem. He was also maintaining an acquaintance with God's Word. This tells us a lot about what he brought *to* Babylon, besides his "resolve." Daniel knew, and had a solid personal knowledge of God's Word, and valued it as something he needed to read and reread.
7. **(Q5d)** If I am not regularly in the Scriptures like Daniel apparently was, my convictions can *not* be shaped by the mind of God and the truth. They will either be shaped by my context (i.e. who's around me) or my circumstances (i.e. what's happening *to* me). We mustn't lose sight of the fact that it was the former of these two that was responsible for the Babylonian captivity in the first place! The Jews of

Daniel, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah's day rejected the message of the prophets because "the word on the street" was "God would never destroy His own hometown or His own house! We're safe to keep on living the way we are."

8. **(Q7-Matt 26:33 and 35)** Peter apparently believed that what others were capable of, he was not. Or what others were incapable of, he was. He also believed he was incapable of denying Christ. At this point, these "convictions" had never been tested. They were soon to be exposed as mere "commitments."
9. **(Q7 - final)** Peter's *real convictions* were the fruit of the failure of his beliefs about his devotion to Jesus to stand when tested. Our true convictions tend to emerge in the fire rather than in front of the fire-place.
10. **(Q12)** The main purpose of Questions 8-11 is to help people determine how much of what they say they believe is only verbal, *and* to help reveal how much God's Word has shaped their beliefs. It's very important at this point that their answers to #11 are *not* determined by a vague "sense" of what the Bible "says," but rather actual scriptures they can point to, to show you where the basis of this "belief" is found.



"Stumbling Stones"

1. **(Q2)** Being "resolved" (ESV) is *not* simply being stubborn or strong-willed. A strong will can just as easily galvanize itself to *defy* God as to serve Him, if one's will is merely strong. Daniel was "internally governed." His convictions travelled *with him* to Babylon, they weren't forged there. They also weren't left behind in Jerusalem when he was abducted (i.e. a product of his family, friends, or synagoge, or fear of being "caught").
2. **(Q6d-Ps 27)** David's longing was to be *near* God. And for a 10th century BC Jew, that meant being near to where God "dwelt" (i.e. Tabernacle, Temple, etc.). This is much more difficult for us because on one hand, we have abandoned the notion of "holy places," and on the other hand it *is* true that God now indwells His people and *they* are His "temple." However, there would be great benefit in seeking to recover some sense of the sacred in our individual and corporate lives as believers, even sacred "places" or objects (e.g. Mezuzah), or sacred days (e.g. liturgical calendar).
3. **(Q7-Matt 26:33)** Make sure to get to what Peter believed *about himself*, not just what he "believed" in a general sense. It was his "convictions" about *himself* that prompted him to respond the way he did to Jesus. **(NOTE:** Verse 31 tells us that Jesus had just said, "*All of you will fall away because of me...*") Peter has some definite beliefs about himself that caused him to challenge Jesus' prediction.
4. **(Q4a)** Sometimes we get these reversed, and falsely assume we need to have a reputation *at work* of being a "servant of Yahweh," and a reputation in church of being a "success" in the marketplace. Our primary goal "at work" must *always* be to be "blameless" in terms of performance and dependability. This more than anything else, gives credibility to our "testimony." Failing to be blameless and excellent at work destroys the credibility of our religious convictions—even to the point of corrupting the Gospel itself!
5. **(Q12)** "Can you open your Bible and point to the verses or passages that are the basis for the things you said were your convictions in Questions 8-11?"



“Going Deeper”

1. **(Q2)** “Do you think others (believers or unbelievers) should *know* why you do or don’t do certain things?” Explain.
1. **(Q4)** “What is the one quality in Daniel’s life that is responsible for what *both* of these passages reveal?”
1. **(Q5a)** “How did the wise men of Persia actually play on Daniel’s strength to accomplish their scheme?”
(NOTE: Daniel’s convictions were so solid that these men could actually predict what he would do.)
1. **(Q5d)** “If I am *not* in the Word regularly (like Daniel apparently was), where will my convictions come from?”
2. **(Q6-Phil 3)** “Paul associates suffering *for* Christ with intimacy *with* Christ. Do you?”
3. **(Q6d)** Have group members share their responses here. Chances are, some (many?) may have left it blank. If so, perhaps you should stop here and pray as a group for God to give each of you some sense of a “one holy passion.”
4. **(Q7-Matt 26:33)** “What must Peter have believed about himself in comparison to the other apostles? Do you ever think this way?”
5. **(Q12 and 13)** Have group members volunteer to share their responses to these two questions.