

A Sincere Faith

Key Verse: *“Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.”*

—Daniel 1:8, New American Standard Bible

Selected Scripture:
Daniel 1:8-21

WHEN BABYLONIAN KING

Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, he ordered that some of the “sons of Israel” be selected, “in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence . . . , endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king’s court.” These Jewish youths were to be taught the “literature and language of the Chaldeans” and given “a daily ration from the king’s choice food and from the wine which he drank.” They were to be educated for three years, after which they would enter the king’s service.—Dan. 1:1-5, NASB

Among the young men chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Each was given a new, Babylonian name, as an attempt to get them to forget about their past lives as Israelites, and to think and become as Babylonians. (vss. 6,7, NASB) However, to these young Hebrews, their new names, as well as the request that they eat of the king’s food, served as a reminder of their nation’s servitude to Babylon. It is believed that the king’s food would have been first offered up to Babylonian gods, and eating these foods

would have been seen as an endorsement of these false gods.

In our Key Verse we are told that Daniel decided that he would not “defile himself” by partaking of the king’s food and wine. The word “defile” here means to soil, pollute or stain. By not eating the king’s food, Daniel and his companions would be sure to not violate the laws which God had given to Israel. (Lev. 11:4-20) In this we find a lesson. The Lord’s followers are to keep from defiling the robe of righteousness given to them by following in the footsteps of Jesus. (Rev. 3:4) They are to keep themselves “unstained by the world.”—James 1:27, *NASB*

At first, the chief of the Babylonian officials did not agree with Daniel’s request, because he feared for his own life if he granted it. However, Daniel did not give up, and with faith in God, replied, “Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king’s choice food.”—Dan. 1:10-13, *NASB*

The chief official agreed to this, and after ten days Daniel and his three companions looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. The choice food and wine were taken away and they were allowed to eat vegetables instead. (vss. 14-16) What a strong and sincere faith each of these Hebrew youths must have had, practicing daily self-denial, in order to please God, even though it likely meant being looked down upon by the other young men who partook of the king’s food.

Jesus told his disciples: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) Here the word “deny” means to deny utterly. The grace of God teaches us “to deny ungodliness and worldly desires,” and to live self-controlled and upright lives in this present age, just as the four young Hebrews did.—Tit. 2:11,12, *NASB* ■