

# To Eat or Not to Eat?

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*Dan 1:8-16*

## Text:

<sup>8</sup>But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. <sup>9</sup>And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, <sup>10</sup>and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king." <sup>11</sup>Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, <sup>12</sup>"Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup>Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." <sup>14</sup>So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup>At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. <sup>16</sup>So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

## Notes:

- A. Why did Daniel resolve "that he would not defile himself with the king's food?"
1. It has been noted that there were three aspects of Daniel's pagan environment about which he had to make moral judgments:
    - a. Learning pagan knowledge—Daniel surely knew that in learning pagan science, he could not violate his conscience & accept certain parts of pagan knowledge.
    - b. The taking of a pagan name—It was simply something Daniel would need to endure as there was nothing he could do about it.
    - c. Eating from the king's table.
      - 1) The food from the king's table would involve Daniel's relationship with God.
        - a) The foods from the king's table would have been used in the worship of pagan gods; the wine would have been poured out in honor of a god.
        - b) Therefore, eating those foods would have been—to a pious Jew—the same as worshipping the pagan idol.
          - i. About 100 years before Jesus, it was common for Jews to carry a "purse" with food in order to keep from eating food sacrificed to idols.
          - ii. Josephus tells of a pious Jew who went to Rome & lived on nothing but figs & nuts.
      - 2) Therefore, Daniel could not eat the food.
  2. There are many times that we must make comparable moral judgments.
    - a. Sometimes, we can simply look over being placed in a pagan society—We can turn off the TV, stay away from specific places & people, etc. Simply because we are surrounded by paganism doesn't mean that we must automatically accept such.
    - b. Sometimes, like Daniel with his pagan name, we need to endure the immorality around

us, because there isn't anything we can do about it.

- 1) We worship on Sunday, the day set aside to honor the "sun-god." Surely, that causes us no consternation.
  - 2) There isn't anything I can really do about the Iowa Supreme Court's recent decision to legalize gay "marriage." It's simply something I must live with.
  - c. Sometimes, just like Daniel, we need to refuse having anything to do with a pagan society.
    - 1) We may need to refuse to participate in certain activities—It may be that our very presence at such activities would leave the impression that I condoned of them.
    - 2) We may need to refuse to go along with the government (as Daniel did with the king) because doing what the government asks us to do is sinful. If I'm ever required to marry a gay "couple," I'm going to have to refuse.
- B. Daniel "asked" the king's chief eunuch to allow him not to defile himself with the king's food.
1. Why didn't Daniel demand that he not be brought the food from the king's table?
    - a. Demanding that it be so could have caused multiple problems.
      - 1) Daniel would have certainly been right in saying that he wouldn't eat the king's food.
      - 2) Yet, Daniel's humility here meant that he could gain the favor of Ashpenaz.
    - b. There are certainly times when people spoke far more boldly than Daniel does here.
      - 1) Jesus entered the Temple & overturned the tables of the moneychangers.
      - 2) When the apostles were commanded by the Sanhedrin not to preach in Jesus' name,
        - a) Peter and John first said, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). That isn't a terribly harsh statement.
        - b) But, then when the apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin the second time, Peter & the apostles said, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 4:29).
  2. What makes the difference?
    - a. One thing that certainly seems to have made a difference is that Daniel wasn't talking to someone who gave the order.
      - 1) Ashpenaz himself was simply following the order Nebuchadnezzar had given.
      - 2) Jesus & the apostles, however, were talking to people who actually were involved in making decisions.
        - a) The moneychangers themselves were making a mockery of the Temple by extracting great fees from people.
        - b) The Sanhedrin had made the decision that the apostles could no longer preach in Jesus' name.
    - b. Jesus & the apostles' actions were also in the public realm.
      - 1) Therefore, the actions were an opportunity to allow their "light to shine before others." In other words, those there could see their dedication to God.
      - 2) But, Daniel & his companions, on the other hand, had no "platform" to make known why they were refusing the king's food.
    - c. Certainly something else that could have made the difference in the way Daniel dealt with Ashpenaz was that the chief eunuch could easily have been killed.
      - 1) Ashpenaz says to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king" (Dan 1:10).
      - 2) Daniel was willing to do what was required of him—even if it did cost him his life (e.g., he prayed to the LORD rather than Darius & ended up in a lions' den). Yet, he could not place Ashpenaz in any danger.
  3. We know the "rest of the story," but Daniel did not know it.
    - a. Daniel, therefore, stands as a testimony of those who do what is right before God
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- regardless of the circumstances & regardless of the consequences.
- b. Daniel, like so many of us, could have reasoned himself into consuming the king's food & drink. However, Daniel reminds us that divine precepts do not change.
- C. God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the eyes of the chief eunuch.
1. This is the first time in the Book of Daniel that we see God's preservation of Daniel & his three companions. This "foreshadows" God's preservation of them throughout the Book.
  2. God providentially begins his work that will culminate in true miracles.
- D. Daniel made a "deal" with the chief of the eunuchs.
1. As we previously mentioned, Ashpenaz was concerned about his life if he did not give Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah the food the king had commanded.
  2. Daniel proposed that the chief of the eunuchs give him & his three companions vegetables & water for ten days. At the end of those ten days, Ashpenaz was to examine the appearance of Daniel and his companions against those who ate the king's food.
    - a. The KJV translates the Hebrew as "pulse" instead of "vegetables."
      - 1) The Hebrew term literally means "things sown." This would not have included only vegetables as the ESV translates it but would also have included wheat & other kinds of grains.
      - 2) "Things sown" were not customarily offered to pagan gods.
    - b. Ten days would have been long enough to establish the validity of Daniel's case to Ashpenaz.
    - c. There are some who say that Daniel had a special revelation from God to carry out this test.
      - 1) The reasoning is that Daniel would have been quite presumptuous to have made this request without knowing what God would do.
      - 2) It is certainly possible that God revealed to Daniel how to carry out this test & what the result would be. Yet, we lack sufficient evidence from the text to say with certainty that's what took place.
- E. At the end of the ten days, Daniel & his companions were found to surpass those who ate the king's food. Therefore, the chief eunuch continued to give them vegetables & water.