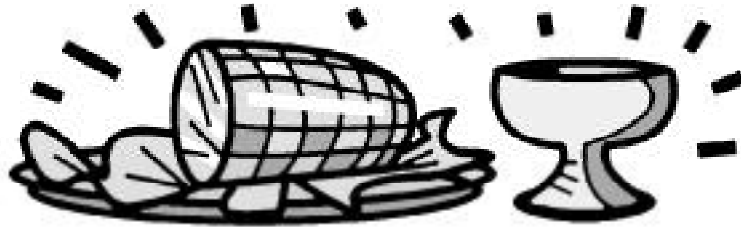


“To Eat or Not to Eat—That Is the Question”



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 25

MEMORY VERSE: “Your [God’s] word is like a lamp that shows me the way. It [God’s word] is like a light that guides me” (Psalm 119:105, NIV).

APRIL 1945, THE PACIFIC. In a terrible battle during World War II, about 80 American soldiers owed their lives to one man. This man was Private Desmond Doss. Private Doss was a medic. The soldiers had once laughed at him because he refused to carry a gun. Under heavy enemy cross fire, which cut down soldier after soldier, Private Doss ignored the danger to his own life. He carried more than 75 wounded men to safety. Then the man who was a favorite subject of their jokes became their hero.

Doss was not afraid to stand up for what he believed. He was not afraid to stand up on the battlefield. For his bravery, Doss received the Congressional Medal of Honor¹ from the President of the United States.

This week, we will take a look at another battle fought in another part of the world. It is a totally different kind of battle. Some people stood for what they believed. Who were these people? What did they stand for? And what can we learn from their example?

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK’S LESSON: What do Babylon and Jerusalem symbolize? What caused the death of Jerusalem? Why did innocent people have to suffer in the attack against Jerusalem? Why did Daniel not eat the king’s food? If Daniel had been punished for not obeying, would he still have been right for refusing to eat the king’s food?

Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 2.

¹Congressional Medal of Honor—the United States’ highest military award given to soldiers for showing the greatest acts of bravery.

SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 26

A TALE OF TWO CITIES: BABYLON AND JERUSALEM (Daniel 1:1).

The book of Daniel is the story of two cities—Jerusalem and Babylon. One city represents the rule of righteousness (holiness). The other city represents the rule of wickedness.

What were the historical situations of Babylon and Jerusalem? Genesis 11:1-9; Genesis 14:17-20.



The first time we hear about Babylon is when we read about the Tower of Babel.

Babylon. The Babylonians received the name of their city from the

word *Bab-ilu*, which means “gate of god.” According to Genesis 11:9, *Bab-ilu* means “confusion.” This is because “the Lord confused the language of all the earth” (NKJV). This may be a play on words, because the two Hebrew words *balal*, “to confuse,” and *babel*, “gate of god,” sound almost the same. At Babel, the people planned to build a tower that would reach into heaven. But God turned the tower into a symbol of humanity’s² foolishness.

Jerusalem. The Hebrew word *shalem* means “complete” or “peaceful.” In Psalm 76:2, Jerusalem is called Salem, the city in Genesis 14:18. When David took over the city, Jerusalem was under the control of the Jebusites (1 Chronicles 11:4-7). From the time of David’s rule on, Jerusalem had been the capital of the Jewish nation.

What does Babylon symbolize in the book of Revelation? What is Babylon’s final end? Revelation 14:8; Revelation 16:19; Revelation 17:5; Revelation 18:2, 10, 21.

Jerusalem symbolizes peace and completeness. Babylon symbolizes confusion. Spiritually, are you living in the city of peace? Or are you living in the city of confusion? How can you move to the city of peace, if you are living in the city of confusion?

²humanity—all the people of the world.

MONDAY—SEPTEMBER 27

INNOCENT³ PEOPLE AND GUILTY PEOPLE (Daniel 1:1-7).

It is hard to believe that the Lord would hand Jerusalem over to a pagan⁴ king! If written in a newspaper, the headlines would be six to ten inches tall! Here was Jerusalem, where the Lord lived in His temple, taken over by pagans. And the king of Jerusalem was captured!

Why did God give Judah and Jerusalem to the Babylonians?

2 Kings 21:10-16 _____

2 Kings 24:18-20 _____

2 Chronicles 36:15-17 _____

Jeremiah 3:13 _____

The people of Judah could have avoided capture by the Babylonians.

Through Jeremiah, God begged the people to return to Him. If the people had repented,⁵ they would not have been punished (Jeremiah 4:1-4). But they refused to listen, so punishment was poured out upon them.

All this brings up another question: The leaders rebelled and did not obey. But why should innocent people be punished, too? It does not seem fair that Daniel and his three godly friends should suffer for the sins of their leaders. But life in this sinful world is not fair. That is why we must have the hope of a new world.

Meanwhile, there are hard questions about innocent people suffering with guilty people. Jesus dying on the cross is the greatest example of innocent people suffering with guilty people. But we have the promises that God loves us, that He is in control, and that He will one day make all things right.

At the same time, we must not forget that God turned the suffering of Daniel and his three friends into a blessing. God's people and the pagan nation of Babylon both received this blessing.

How have you personally suffered for the sins of other people? Through this suffering, how did you experience God's love? How did this experience help you trust even more in God?

³innocent—people who are without blame.

⁴pagan—a person who worships idols.

⁵repented—to have said you were sorry for your sins and that you want to stop sinning.

TUESDAY—SEPTEMBER 28

DANIEL'S STUBBORN FAITH (Daniel 1:8).

The king of Babylon served Daniel and his friends the best food the kingdom of Babylon had to offer. So why would they refuse to eat the king's food? What principles are being shown by these verses? Proverbs 23:1-3, 29-32.

Daniel and his friends refused to follow the ways of the world. Obeying God's will was the greatest purpose of their lives. They might have refused to eat the king's food because:

1. Some of the food was unclean meat (Leviticus 11).

2. Even the clean meat was not prepared the way Moses had taught the Israelites (Leviticus 7:22-27).

3. Eating and drinking involved an act of idol worship because the food was first offered to idols.

Daniel asked for different food. He used the word for vegetables (*zero'im*). This is the same word God used in Genesis 1:29 when He told Adam, "I [God] have given you [Adam] every tree that has fruit with seeds [*zorea'*; *zera'*] in it" (NIRV). By asking for vegetables, Daniel showed his faith in the God who created all that is good and healthy to eat.

Read Daniel 1:8. Daniel and his friends were prisoners in a foreign land. The people in charge of them could quickly have killed them. How easy it would have been to make

excuses for eating the king's food and drinking his wine. What do the following verses say that relate to what Daniel and his friends did? What lessons do these verses have for us? Matthew 10:22; Luke 8:1-15; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 3:8; 2 Timothy 2:12.



**We do what is right when we truly know
Jesus (Philippians 3:8).**

Daniel made the right decision about the king's food. His decision shows that he understood the connection between health and holiness. The test over food was one of the ways of strengthening his character and preparing him for future greatness. Each right decision made in the face of hardships makes a person stronger. Each principle broken leaves a person weaker.

The story of Daniel shows that a right decision bravely made often influences that person's life and his or her future. "God gives opportunities. Success depends upon how wisely people use these opportunities." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 486.

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 29

THE TEST (Daniel 1:9-16).

When Daniel and his three friends arrived in Babylon, they received new names. They had to study the arts and sciences of the Babylonians. And they were supposed to eat food from the king's table. Studying the arts and sciences presented no great problem for them. But eating the king's food was a challenge to their faith.

The hard question often is, How does one know where to draw the line? After all, in the ancient⁶ world, a person's name often had a spiritual meaning. For example, the name *Daniel* means “God is judge.” Should Daniel have refused his new name? Or should he have refused to study the Babylonian arts and sciences, because they were connected with false religion? There is no record of them refusing anything except the king's food. This is where they drew the line.

Why did Daniel believe it would have been wrong for him to have eaten the king's food? Daniel 1:8.

Besides Daniel and his friends, who else was facing a risk? Daniel 1:10. Why would this have given Daniel and his friends a good excuse to eat the king's food?

At first, this test over eating and

drinking does not seem important. But then the test for Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of good and evil did not seem important (Genesis 3). The tests in Daniel 1 and Genesis 3 were about appetite. Why is a test about appetite important? Genesis 3 and Daniel 1 show that Satan usually tries to reach us through our senses—hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting. So we must ask the Holy Spirit to help us guard our senses against bad things. The Holy Spirit reaches us through the nerve cells in our brain. What we eat and drink can damage these nerve cells. So it is important to eat and drink healthy things. A test about appetite is also important, because our decisions about what to eat show how loyal we are to God.



Satan usually tries to reach us through our senses.

Put yourself in Daniel's place. Write a paragraph giving good reasons why you *should* eat the king's food. Is what you wrote believable? If what you wrote is believable, why should that scare you?

⁶ancient—very old.

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 30

THE REWARD (Daniel 1:17-20).

At the end of the three-year period, Ashpenaz, the king’s officer, brought Daniel and his friends before the king for a test. What were the blessings that came to Daniel and his friends because they wanted to remain loyal to their God? Daniel 1:17-20.

Daniel and his friends were the best in their class. They had clear minds and healthy bodies. Their experience shows that God will bless people who are not afraid to be faithful to Him. Their faithfulness to the Lord paid off in such a way that everyone could see the results of their faithfulness.

But sometimes the endings turn out differently.

Contrast⁷ the difference between what happened to Daniel and his friends and what happened to Stephen (Acts 7:57–8:2). What do these two stories tell us about what can happen when one remains faithful to Bible principles? Why should the endings of these two stories not make a difference in our decisions to be faithful?

Things turned out well for Daniel and the three Hebrew boys. Things did not turn out well for Stephen.

⁷contrast—show how things are different.

⁸eternity—life without end; forever.

But as Christians, we know that whatever happens to us on earth, it is not the end. There is an eternity⁸ waiting for us. We will have a whole new life in a new heaven and a new earth. There will be no more sin, death, suffering, and loss. So it is not important what our “end” is in this world. What is important is that we stay faithful to God.

What would you say to someone who finds it hard to be faithful but wants to change?

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 1

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 479–490.

Daniel and his friends chose not to eat the king’s food. But they did choose to study Babylonian art and science. How did Daniel and his three friends manage not to be influenced by the false teachings of Babylonian science and art?

1. They managed not to be influenced because of the mind. “Through the right use of the mind, an entire change may be made in your life. By surrendering to Jesus, you join yourself with the power that is greater than all the powers in the world. You will have strength from God to keep you strong. When you always surrender to God, He will help you live the new life, even the life of faith.”—Adapted from

Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ [Jesus]*, p. 48.

2. They managed not to be influenced because they knew about the influence of the body on the mind. “Daniel’s parents had trained him in his childhood to practice strict health habits. They had taught him that he must follow nature’s laws in all his habits. They taught him that his eating and drinking had a direct influence upon his physical, mental, and spiritual nature. Daniel also learned that he was responsible to God for his abilities because they were a gift from God. For these reasons, Daniel knew he must not damage his abilities. As the result of his parent’s teaching, Daniel honored God’s law in his mind, and respected God’s law in his heart.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 154.



Parents must train their children to eat well.

3. They managed not to be influenced because of their prayer life and their dependence upon God. Daniel “was surrounded with influences that would tempt people with weak will-power. But God’s law guided him to have a holy character. Daniel dared not trust his own wisdom, power, and judgment. To Daniel, prayer was necessary and important.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified⁹ Life*, p. 20.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

It would have been easy for Daniel and his friends not to have cooperated at all with the king of Babylon. He had destroyed their city and taken them prisoners. It would have been better to die than to cooperate in any way with the king. So why was it good for Daniel and his friends to cooperate with the king in some things but not in other things?

SUMMARY: Daniel and his three friends were under pressure to eat Babylonian food. But they remained true to their God. And God rewarded them with special wisdom. By their faithfulness to God, they became examples for all Christians who are tempted to sin.

⁹sanctified—made holy by the work of the Holy Spirit.