

CALL to PRAYER - odd request - Thank God for the trials in your life - 1 Thess. 5:18, James 1:2

## *Daniel 1:1-7 - Good Figs and Sour Grapes*

Intro - This cryptic title is from two parables that describe “*how they got there.*” Four privileged youth were uprooted from their homeland and carried away captive to a foreign land to serve a foreign king. Their nation was at fault...but they were not personally a fault. They were caught up in the corporate punishment of God upon His unfaithful people. Their life plans were severely altered yet their change of plans was just what God had planned for their own good and the good of generations to come. Had Daniel and his 3 friends not been carried away...we might not know of them today (maybe negligible impact then & now). The worse thing to happen to them was the best thing to happen to them. Today we consider the “*Good Figs and Sour Grapes*” in the upended lives of four famous teenagers.                      The National                      The Personal

### *THE NATIONAL*

1. The national perspective is one of the Nation of Judah in decline
  - a. About 500 years as a nation with an official king                      24 kings (43) only 6 or 7 any good
  - b. Jehoiakim is #22....only 19 years until it is all over for the nation
    - i. They are circling the drain.
2. The people of God had been consistently unfaithful to God                      (with sporadic partial obedience)
  - a. God was very patient and provided many prophets to give warning
  - b. God told them from the very beginning what would happen to them if they rebelled....be driven out of land just as they drove out the nations before them.
  - c. God's people are not exempt from God's judgment and discipline                      1 Peter 4:17
3. God uses nations to punish nations
  - a. Daniel 1:1-2                      “God gave Jehoiakim into the hands...”
    - i. Mary, after being informed she would bear the True King... (truth)- Luke 1:52
  - b. Jesus is the King of kings & raises up, or disposes, of rulers as He wills
    - i. God is in sovereign control over the rise/fall of nations and leaders
    - ii. Main thrust in book - *God's control over kings & He will install Eternal King.*
    - iii. All kingdoms can be shaken...except one!...the one to come.                      Heb. 12:28
  - c. God uses war to punish nations
    - i. Judges 4:1-2; 6:1                      Is. 10:5-6                      Jer. 27:5-7; 43:10-11; 51:20
4. Religious life was incorporated into national life
  - a. Judah's nation and religion was plundered                      Dan. 1:2
  - b. Their “*faith*” was a façade...but they loved the adornment of religion                      Jer. 7:3-11
  - c. Their lives made a mockery of the True Religion, so God sent Neb to plunder the vestiges of their religion as a victory and mockery over their hypocrisy.
5. Pride comes before a fall.
  - a. 100 years earlier envoy from Babylon came to Jerusalem....(Judah was on top).
    - i. Good King Hezekiah showed off all his hidden treasures
    - ii. 2 Kings 20:12-19                      (Boasting to the Babylonians)

- b. The national scene was one of little repentance and lots of rebellion and pride...a slow decent into wickedness and empty religion lead to the destruction of nation.

## THE PERSONAL

- Four young teenagers caught up in the consequences of nations sins
  - Our sins do not just effect ourselves (ripple effect to sin)
  - Sowing and reaping - Gal. 6:7                      The sins of the fathers – Ex. 20:5
  - Ezekiel 18:2                      *Sour Grapes*
  - Not their fault but they were feeling the consequences...Five effects
- 1. Relocation
  - a. Daniel 1:3-4
  - b. These young princes were carried away as captives...never to return home
- 2. Castration
  - a. The Bible doesn't explicitly say they were castrated...but...
    - i. Ashpenaz was chief over the eunuchs          Dan. 1:3, 7 (NKJV)
      - 1. Hebrew word – #5631 *cariyc (sawreece)* = "to castrate"
    - ii. Eunuchs were often used in the kings service - (not as many distractions)
      - 1. Acts 8:27
    - iii. Isaiah 39:6-7 (NKJV / NIV)
    - iv. Josephus (1<sup>st</sup> cen. Historian) records that all four young princes were castrated
- 3. Education
  - a. Daniel 1:4-5                      3 years of higher learning
  - b. Taught: language, science, mathematics, astrology....
- 4. Consumption
  - a. Daniel 1:5a                      each culture has its distinctive foods
  - b. Change their diet of conform them to a new culture
- 5. Identification
  - a. Daniel = God is my Judge                      Belteshazzar = Bel's treasure
  - b. Hananiah = grace/mercy of God                      Shadrach = inspiration of the sun
  - c. Misael = strong God                      Meshack = goddess Shack (Venus)
  - d. Azariah = the Lord is my help                      Abed-nego = servant of fire (Nego)
  - e. new names to tempt with new gods and entice to forget the faith
- Onslaught of assimilation for these four young princes
  - Removed from home, sterilized, reeducated, forced diet & new identification
  - Tough circumstance for these young teens
- Good Figs
  - They had it bad but it was much better than those who came after - Jer. 24
  - The four youths had their faith severely tried by fire (literally so for 3 of them)
  - They experience the *sour grapes*...but they were *good figs*
  - They are examples to us in how not to conform to the world when they are inundated with the world....how to wisely resist forced assimilation.