

**Food Fight**

**Daniel 1**

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I. An Attempt to Revive Babel

A. “To the land of Shinar” (Dan 1:2; cp. Gen. 11:1–9). Power Religion.

B. The Tower of Babel, the first “Tower of Power.”

1. These early empire-builders wanted to make a name for themselves (Gen. 11:4), to supplant the government of God and replace it with a centralized, bureaucratic government where all of life would be controlled from Babel. Making a name for themselves, like naming in general, was an act of *sovereignty* and *power*; it was to declare and claim *authority over* the thing that is named (Gen. 2:20, 23; Dan. 1:6–7).
2. In Genesis 11 we find the purposed attempted overthrow of God’s order and the elimination of God’s name. Those involved in this conspiracy (see Psalm 2) were humanistic, man-centered kingdom-builders who wanted to consolidate their efforts and establish Babel as the center of power and authority around false religion. The individual and the diverse makeup of society would be eliminated. The State would dominate society.
3. The symbol of their centralized power was the tower.
  - a. “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne *above* the stars of God, and I will sit on the *mount* of the assembly in the recesses of the north. I will *ascend*

above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isa. 14:13–14).

- b. God’s government is the only centralized government. He is the Planner. The builders of the tower wanted to be what God is. The tower represented the seat of power—God’s throne. Those who built the tower wanted to rise above “the stars of God” (Isa. 14:13).
  - c. In Scripture, stars often represent rulers and/or kingdoms (Judges 5:20; Dan. 8:10; Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:25). According to Babylonian mythology, the gods made their throne and counseled together in the far north. In effect, the dictators in Babel wanted to rule the world. Their centralized kingdom would be located in the “land of Shinar.” Power-hungry rulers, through the agency of civil government, would become like God as they ascended the Tower of Power, grabbing for more and more control over the true God’s created order, centralizing power domain and subjugating the people to do their bidding.
4. We read first of all, “Now the whole earth had one language [lip] and one vocabulary [set of words]” (Genesis 11:1). The word usually translated “language” (*saphah*) in this verse actually means “lip.” *Saphah*, as a concordance study will show, can refer to the lips of the human mouth, the edge of the sea, the lip on a bowl or basin, or to speech. When it refers to speech, it does so in a context of the *content* of speech, not the language thereof, and especially the confessional or religious content of speech. The phrase “one vocabulary” refers to language, but the phrase “one lip” refers to religion.

- a. The word for “language” in the immediate context is *lashon*, used for various Japhethite, Hamite, and Shemite tongues in Genesis 10:5, 20, and 31. See also Deuteronomy 28:49, Nehemiah 13:24, Esther 1:22, 3:12, 8:9; Isaiah 28:11; Jeremiah 5:15; etc.
- b. “Lip” means religious confession. For instance, alluding to the Tower of Babel, the prophet Zephaniah wrote: “For then I will restore to the peoples a pure lip, that they all may call on the name of the Yahweh” (Zephaniah 3:9). The only other place in the Bible where the *saphah* is generally mistranslated as “language” is Psalm 81:5, where again it clearly refers to religious confession, not to a foreign language.

C. We’ll see the revival of the tower idea in Daniel 3.

## II. The Name Game: An Exercise in Sovereignty

A. In the Bible, naming is a sovereign act.

1. God names Adam.
2. Adam names the animals (Gen. 2:20).
3. Adam and Eve name their children (Gen. 4).
4. God names Himself (Ex. 3:13–15).
5. The original inhabitants of the city of Babel (Gen. 11:2), in the land of Shinar, worked to make a name for themselves: “They said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and **let us make for ourselves a name**, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth” (11:4).

- B. Nebuchadnezzar exercises his claim to sovereignty which serves as a reminder to the exiles that they hold dual citizenship while they are in exile because of disobedience: the condition is not normative (see Matt. 22:15–22; Phil 3:20; Acts 22:25–29; 5:29).
1. The name Daniel means “Elohim is my judge.” Elohim is one of the Hebrew names for God. The name Belteshazzar means “May Bel protect his life.” Bel is one of the gods of Babylon.
  2. Hananiah means, “Yahweh is gracious.” Yahweh is the personal name of the God of the Bible. Shadrach means, “Aku is exalted.”
  3. Mishael means, “Who is what Elohim is?” while Meshach means, “Who is what Aku is?”
  4. Azariah means, “Yahweh is my helper,” and Abednego means “The servant of Nebo,” another Babylonian god.
- C. The March 26, 1976 issue of *Christianity Today* stated, “Albania has joined the list of countries taking away one of the most personal and private possessions of its citizens: their names. After all, someone named Abraham or Ruth or Mark might someday wonder where his name came from! That could lead to a time-consuming search for a Bible or other religious literature. In the process, the unfortunately named Albanian might absorb some of the teachings of the outlawed book. That result, in the view of the government, would be very bad.”<sup>1</sup>
1. Churches were closed in Albania. All religion was absolutely forbidden, even to the point of banning names with religious significance. Private land was confiscated from the wealthy and foreign property in Albania taken over by the

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Donald K. Campbell, *Daniel: Decoder of Dreams* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1977), 10.

government. In fact Albania proceeded to become completely isolated from the rest of the world, in an attempt to defend her sovereignty from foreign influence.<sup>2</sup>

2. A number of African-Americans have changed their names out of the belief that the names they were given at birth were “slave names.”
  - a. Malcolm X. The “X” stands for his original African name when he had no earthly master. He was born Malcolm Little, also known as “Detroit Red” because of his red hair.
  - b. A person’s name-change often coincided with a religious conversion to the Nation of Islam: Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay)<sup>3</sup> and Kareem Abdul Jabbar (Lew Alcindor).
  - c. Kunta Kinte of *Roots*. The name “Toby” was forced on him as he was beaten with a whip. His new name marked him as the property of a new master.
3. There are atheists who will not name any of their children after names found in the Bible.

D. Controlling the language (see George Orwell’s *1984*): “It’s a beautiful thing, the destruction of words.”<sup>4</sup>

1. William Lutz, author of *Doublespeak*, reports that if a doctor in Britain removes the wrong kidney, this is written down as an “error of laterality.”
2. “Suboptimal outcome” is a euphemism for “failure.”

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.dictatorofthemoth.com/Hoxha/Aug2001HoxhaEN.htm>

<sup>3</sup>He was named after Cassius Marcellus Clay, nicknamed “The Lion of White Hal” (October 19, 1810 – July 22, 1903) who was an abolitionist from Madison County, Kentucky, and a second cousin of famous politician Henry Clay.

<sup>4</sup>John Leo, “[Awash in Euphemisms](#)” (February 27, 2006).

3. Liberals have “deeply held religious beliefs,” while conservatives “hold religiously extreme opinions.”
4. Liberal becomes “progressive.”
5. Tax increase becomes “revenue enhancement.”
6. Homosexual becomes “gay.”<sup>5</sup>
7. Abortion becomes “choice,” “reproductive freedom,” “a woman’s right to control her own body.”
8. Relativism becomes “tolerance.”
9. “Living in sin” has become “covenanted relationship.”

#### E. How it Happened: It Started with Pluralism and Lead to Relativism

1. “There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: Almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating.”<sup>6</sup>
2. From God, to God and Baal (Judges 2:11; 9:4), to everyone doing “what is right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6).
3. Turning to the State (1 Sam. 8).

#### IV. Capture the Youth

A. Nebuchadnezzar, like all tyrants, understood that if you want to capture the future, you must capture the present by manipulating the minds of the young.

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<sup>5</sup>The commandeering of the word “gay” has made it difficult to watch *The Gay Ranchero* (1948) starring Roy Rogers and Trigger or even *The Gay Divorcée* (1934) with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” includes the line “Make the Yule-tide gay.” Try watching *Stalag 17* (1953) when the POWs sing and dance to “When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again” with the line “and we’ll all feel gay.” It looks a little “gay.”

<sup>6</sup>Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 197.

1. “If you insist on teaching your children falsehoods—that the Earth is flat,<sup>7</sup> that “Man” is not a product of evolution by natural selection—then you must expect, at the very least, that those of us who have freedom of speech will feel free to describe your teachings as the spreading of falsehoods, and will attempt to demonstrate this to your children at our earliest opportunity. Our future well-being—the well-being of all of us on the planet—depends on the education of our descendants.”<sup>8</sup>

2. “When an opponent declares, ‘I will not come over to your side,’ [Adolf Hitler] said in a speech on November 6, 1933, “I calmly say, ‘Your child belongs to us already . . . What are you? You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.’” And on May 1, 1937, he declared, “This new Reich will give its youth to no one, but will itself take youth and give to youth its own education and its own upbringing.”<sup>9</sup>

3. Phillip Pullman, author of *His Dark Materials*, says, “if there is a God, and he is as the Christians describe him, then he deserves to be put down and rebelled against.” Pullman is targeting children: “I wanted to reach everyone, and the best way I could hope to do that was to write for children.”

B. It’s ironic that the book of Daniel begins with a chapter that highlights the work of “youths” (Dan. 1:4).

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<sup>7</sup>On the “flat-earth myth,” see Gary DeMar, *America’s Christian History: The Untold Story* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1995), 221–234; Gary DeMar and Fred Douglas Young, *To Pledge Allegiance: A New World in View* (Atlanta, GA: American Vision, 1996), 75–82; Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians* (New York: Praeger, 1991). This topic will be covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>8</sup>Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 519.

<sup>9</sup>William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 249.

1. They had the marks of the youth culture: good looking, educated (the finest schools), and of the cultured classes (the best neighborhoods).
2. Nebuchadnezzar believed that these young men could be turned to the Babylonian way of thinking by being given cultural perks: free education and a front seat at the public trough.
  - a. Youth International Party (Yippie) leader Jerry Rubin captured the mindset of unanchored youth: ““Satisfy our demands, and we’ve got twelve more. The more demands you satisfy, the more we’ve got. Everywhere one looks one sees the elevation of youth—that is to say, of immaturity—over experience.”<sup>10</sup>
  - b. “Going to college involves not so much the ‘questioning’ as the repudiation of traditional moral and political values. . . . The greater the exposure to higher education, the more thorough the repudiation is like to be.”<sup>11</sup>
  - c. “As Paul Hollander has shown in meticulous detail in his book on anti-Americanism, ‘institutions of higher education in America since the 1960s became major resources or reservoirs of the adversary culture, the setting in which its values and beliefs are most frequently elaborated and displayed in the most unqualified form.’”<sup>12</sup>

## V. The King’s Table

### A. Faithfulness in Small Things

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<sup>10</sup>Roger Kimball, *The Long March: How the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s Changed America* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000), 10.

<sup>11</sup>Kimball, *The Long March*, 130.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Kimball, *The Long March*, 130.

1. “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. . . . No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:10, 13).
2. “And [the nobleman] said to [the first slave], ‘Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities’” (Luke 19:17).
3. “An overseer . . . must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Tim. 3:1–7; see Ex. 18:21: the qualifications are ethical, experience-related, and practical).

#### B. Test over Food

1. Back to the Garden: The first Adam (Gen. 2–3). There was nothing inherently evil about the fruit or the tree.
2. Ahead to the Wilderness: The second Adam (Matt. 4:1–4; Luke 4:1–4).
3. Eating food has a covenantal meaning (Matt. 8:11; Matt. 15:27).
  - a. Lord’s Table (Matt. 26:20).
  - b. Table of Demons (1 Cor. 10:21)
3. Daniel makes food an issue—a question of boundaries—“precisely and only because it came from the king. No other reason is given or hinted at.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Jordan, *The Handwriting on the Wall*, 144.

- a. Food sacrificed to idols? All foods, even vegetables, were sacrificed.
  - b. Paul makes it clear “that eating previously sacrificed flesh is not a sin; it is only a sin to join in the actual sacrificial meal.”<sup>14</sup> (see 1 Cor. 10:23–33).
  - c. Not kosher? (Lev. 11). The text does not say anything about the food being “unclean.”
  - d. “I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all, **until the entire three weeks were completed**” (Dan. 10:3).
  - e. “Eating food [any food in situations that Daniel and his three friends found themselves in] is a sign of incorporation. . . . [E]ating the same food as other people, and with them at the same meal, means becoming one with them. . . . To eat the food offered by God [as in the Peace Offering in Leviticus 3] is to unite with Him, while to eat the food offered by the serpent [which was fruit] is to unite with him.”<sup>15</sup>
4. Are the “sons of Israel” (Dan. 1:3), “youths in whom there is no defect” (1:4), a description of what a priest and sacrifice was to be (Lev. 21:17–23; 22:20–25), a reference to a new beginning (new creation) for the people of God even while they are in exile?
5. They choose to eat creation food. Not a vegetarian diet, but a diet of grains and seeds (Gen. 1:11, 12, 29).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Jordan, *The Handwriting on the Wall*, 145.

<sup>15</sup>Jordan, *The Handwriting on the Wall*, 146–147.

<sup>16</sup>The Hebrew word translated “vegetables” is variously translated: conceive, gives birth, plant seed, scatter, set, sow.

## VI. The Great Reversal

- A. Daniel and his three friends rejected moral relativism on the minor issue of food.
  - 1. It's the beginning of reversing the trend.
  - 2. From self-government to civil government.
  - 3. As the individual goes so goes the family, church, and state.
- B. There is no reckless abandon, no escapism, no sense of drift, no false guilt, and no cultural promiscuity in the life of Daniel.
  - 1. Daniel could have succumbed to the temptations of Babylon; instead, he took his stand on what is perceived to be a minor thing—food! “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.” (Luke 16:10).
  - 2. Daniel could have escaped into his own manufactured world to avoid encounters with Babylonian culture; instead, he took advantage of the bankrupt worldview of his oppressors and stayed consistent with his own (2 Tim. 3).
  - 3. Daniel could have objected that he was only one person; instead, his actions made him a ruler in Babylon. “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ‘Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, they have torn down Thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.’ But what is the divine response to him? ‘I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’”

In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice" (Rom. 11:1–5).

4. Daniel could have taken a live-and-let-live attitude, claiming neutrality and a sacred-secular separation.