

**Research: Dan 1: 1, 3, 5, 6, 11-15,
Four boys in Babylon and king's meat**

Jehoiakim:

After Josiah's death, Jehoiakim's younger brother Jehoahaz (also known as Shallum) was proclaimed king, but after three months pharaoh Necho II deposed him, making Eliakim king in his place. When placed on the throne, his name was changed to "Jehoiakim".

Jehoiakim reigned for eleven years, until 598 BCE and was succeeded by his son Jeconiah, (also known as Jehoiachin), who reigned for only three months.

Jehoiakim was appointed king by Necho II, king of Egypt, in 608 BCE, after Necho's return from the battle in Haran, three months after he had killed King Josiah at Megiddo. Necho deposed Jehoahaz's younger brother Jehoahaz after a reign of only three months and took him to Egypt, where he died. Jehoiakim ruled originally as a vassal of the Egyptians, paying a heavy tribute. To raise the money he "taxed the land and exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land according to their assessments."

However, after the Egyptians were defeated by the Babylonians at the battle of Carchemish in 605 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar II besieged Jerusalem, and Jehoiakim changed allegiances to avoid the destruction of Jerusalem. He paid tribute from the treasury in Jerusalem, some temple artifacts, and handed over some of the royal family and nobility as hostages.

Rabbinical literature describes Jehoiakim as a godless tyrant who committed atrocious sins and crimes. He is portrayed as living in incestuous relations with his mother, daughter-in-law, and stepmother, and was in the habit of murdering men, whose wives he then violated and whose property he seized. He also had tattooed his body.

Jeremiah, the prophet, criticised the king's policies, insisting on repentance and strict adherence to the law. Another prophet, Uriah ben Shemaiah, proclaimed a similar message and Jehoiakim ordered his execution.

Jehoiakim continued for three years as a vassal to the Babylonians, until the failure of an invasion of Egypt in 601 BCE undermined their control of the area. Jehoiakim switched allegiance back to the Egyptians. In late 598 BCE, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II invaded Judah and again laid siege to Jerusalem, which lasted three months. Jehoiakim died before the siege ended and his body was thrown outside the city walls. He was succeeded by his son Jeconiah, also known as Jehoiachin. Nebuchadnezzar deposed Jeconiah and installed Zedekiah, Jehoiakim's younger brother, as king in his place. Jeconiah, his household, and much of Judah's population were exiled to Babylon around March 597 BCE. (Wikipedia)

RULERS OF JUDAH (the southern kingdom)

Saul*David*Solomon*Rehoboam*

Abijah*Asa*Jehoshaphat*Jehoram*Ahaziah*Athaiiah*Joash*Amaziah*Uzziah/

**Azariah*Jotham*Ahaz*Hezekiah*Manasseh*Amon*Josiah*Jehoahaz*Jehoiakim*Jehoiachin*
Zedekiah***

Babylonian captivity

Daniel:

One of the four great prophets, although he is not once spoken of in the Old Testament as a prophet. His life and prophecies are recorded in the Book of Daniel. He was descended from one of the noble families of Judah (Dan. 1:3), and was probably born in Jerusalem about B.C. 623, during the reign of Josiah. At the first deportation of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar (the kingdom of Israel had come to an end nearly a century before), or immediately after his victory over the Egyptians at the second battle of Carchemish, in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim (B.C. 606), Daniel and other three noble youths were carried off to Babylon, along with part of the vessels of the temple. There he was obliged to enter into the service of the king of Babylon, and in accordance with the custom of the age received the Chaldean name of Belteshazzar, i.e., “prince of Bel,” or “Bel protect the king!” His residence in Babylon was very probably in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, His training in the schools of the wise men in Babylon (Dan. 1:4) was to fit him for service to the empire. He was distinguished during this period for his piety and his strict observance of the Mosaic law (1:8-16), and gained the confidence and esteem of those who were over him. His habit of attention gained during his education in Jerusalem enabled him soon to master the wisdom and learning of the Chaldeans, and even to excel his compeers.

At the close of his three years of discipline and training in the royal schools, Daniel was distinguished for his proficiency in the “wisdom” of his day, and was brought out into public life. He soon became known for his skill in the interpretation of dreams (1:17; 2:14), and rose to the rank of governor of the province of Babylon, and became “chief of the governors” over all the wise men of Babylon.

After the taking of Babylon, Cyrus, from Persia, who was now master of all Asia from India to the Dardanelles, placed Darius, a Median prince, on the throne, during the two years of whose reign Daniel held the office of first of the “three presidents” of the empire, and was thus practically at the head of affairs, no doubt interesting himself in the prospects of the captive Jews (Dan. 9), whom he had at last the happiness of seeing restored to their own land, although he did not return with them, but remained still in Babylon. His fidelity to God exposed him to persecution, and he was cast into a den of lions, but was miraculously delivered; after which Darius issued a decree enjoining reverence for “the God of Daniel” (6:26). He “prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian,” whom he probably greatly influenced in the matter of the decree which put an end to the Captivity (B.C. 536). (Easton’s Bible Dictionary)

[Daniel 1:3, 5, 6, 8 \(to :\), 11–15](#) (blue is not in this lesson)

[IN the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.](#)

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim came Nebuchadnezza. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim into his hand — He took Jehoiakim prisoner, and put him in chains, with a design to carry him to Babylon; but he having humbled himself, and submitted to become tributary, he was restored to his kingdom. Jehoiakim having become tributary to the king of Babylon, consequently the seventy years of the Jewish captivity and vassalage to Babylon began” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

3¶ And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring *certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes;*

“Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, took Jerusalem, and carried whom and what he pleased away. From this first captivity, most think the seventy years are to be dated. It is the interest of princes to employ wise men; and it is their wisdom to find out and train up such. Nebuchadnezzar ordered that these chosen youths should be taught. All their Hebrew names had something of God in them; but to make them forget the God of their fathers, the Guide of their youth, the heathen gave them names that savored of idolatry” (Matthew Henry’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“Eunuch: a man who has had his sexual organs removed” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

“Eunuchs were, and still are, common in Oriental Courts; they sometimes attained to great influence with the monarch, and were treated by him as confidential servants. Eunuchs are often represented on the Assyrian monuments, where they are readily recognizable by their bloated and beardless faces. The ‘master,’ or superintendent, of the eunuchs would have the control of the eunuchs employed in the palace, and would naturally hold an important position at court. The principal eunuch, with other eunuchs under him, would have the care of the royal harem; and the training of youths for the service of the king was a duty which would be naturally entrusted to him” (Cambridge Bible Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

5And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

“It seems from what is here said, that the Chaldeans entertained a notion that a diet of the best sort contributed both to the beauty of the body and the improvement of the mind” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“Such wine as the king was accustomed to drink. It may be presumed that this was the best kind of wine. From anything that appears, this was furnished to them in abundance; and with the leisure which they had, they could hardly be thrown into stronger temptation to excessive indulgence.

“So nourishing them three years - As long as was supposed to be necessary in order to develop their physical beauty and strength, and to make them well acquainted with the language and learning of the Chaldeans. The object was to prepare them to give as much dignity and ornament to the court as possible.” (Barnes Notes, www.biblehub.com).

6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

“Doubtless most of them of the royal lineage of Judah, to which tribe God had a special respect, upon the account of David; and this tribe of Judah had the pre-eminence in many things.” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary).

“Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah - Of the rank and early history of these young men nothing is known. They became celebrated for their refusal to worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, [Daniel 3:12](#), following.” (Barnes’ Notes).

“All their names had some affinity with the name of *Jehovah*, the God whom they worshipped. *Daniel* signifies, *God is my judge*, or *the judgment of God*; *Hananiah*, *God has been gracious to me*, or, *one favoured of Jehovah*; *Mishael*, *the powerful one of God*; *Azariah*, *the help of Jehovah*, or, *Jehovah is my succour*. In like manner, *the prince of the eunuchs*, in changing their names, as a mark of dominion and authority over them, gave them such as had an affinity with the names of the gods of the Chaldees: . . . Belteshazzare – Daniel; derived from Baal;” (Benson Commentary).

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank:

“**Daniel purposed in his heart.**—He was cautious from the first. He feared that he might eat something that had been consecrated to idols” (Ellicott’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“The defilement here alluded to what might arise either from the food being such as was prohibited in the law of Moses, or else what was offered to the idols of the Chaldees, or entreated to be blessed in their names. . . It was the custom of most nations, before their meals, to make an oblation of some part of what they ate and drank to their gods, as a thankful acknowledgment that everything which they enjoyed was their gift; so that every entertainment had something in it of the nature of a sacrifice. This practice, generally prevailing, might make Daniel and his friends look upon the provisions coming from the king’s table as no better than meats offered to idols, and therefore to be accounted unclean, or polluted” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

“Melzar—rather, the steward, or chief butler, entrusted by Ashpenaz with furnishing the daily portion to the youths” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

*“Then said Daniel, Prove thy servants, I beseech, thee — To satisfy him that there would be no danger of any ill consequence, Daniel desires the matter might be put to a trial *for ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat* — The word seems to signify fruits or vegetables; or rather, according to the Greek interpreter, seeds in general”* (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

“The Hebrew word rendered countenance is not limited to the "face," as the word countenance is with us. It refers to the whole appearance, the form, the "looks;" and the expression here is equivalent to, "Then look on us, and see what the result has been, and deal with us accordingly" (Barnes Notes, www.biblehub.com).

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat.

“And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer - Hebrew, "good;" that is, they appeared more beautiful and healthful. The experiment was successful. There was no diminution of beauty, of vigor, or of the usual indications of health” (Barnes Notes, www.biblehub.com).

17 ¶ As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

“That is, in all sorts of learning and knowledge. They became particularly skilful in those parts of the Chaldean learning which were really useful, and which might recommend them to the favour of the kings both of Babylon and Persia, and qualify them for places of trust under them; as Moses’s education in the Egyptian learning fitted him to be a ruler of God’s people.

“And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams — Daniel excelled the others in the gift of prophecy, and in his extraordinary skill in interpreting all sorts of visions and dreams, namely, such as were sent of God, and foreshowed future events, under the cover of certain images and representations, which required an interpretation in order to the understanding of their true signification. But we must not suppose that Daniel attained this skill by any study or rules of art. It was God’s supernatural gift unto him, as was the same kind of knowledge which Joseph possessed and manifested when he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, and those of the chief butler and baker” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

Articles in the periodicals on “Daniel” (There are many other articles about Daniel)

Daniel, by Frederick Dixon, November 27, 1920, CSS.

The Story of Daniel, by Gail Bryant, January 18, 1999, CSS.

Daniel, Servant of God, by Florence E. B. Donaldson, March 1913, CSJ.

