**Culture’s Indoctrination**

**Daniel 1:4-7**

**Introduction**

When Nebuchadnezzar took Israel captive, he sought to bring about not only a military revolution, but a cultural revolution. Someone has said that an enemy is anyone who wants to change your allegiance, and Nebuchadnezzar sought to change the allegiance of the people of Israel. He did not want them to think of themselves as Israel, the people of God. He wanted them to think of themselves as his subjects living in Babylon. Thus, he began a calculated process of indoctrination. He enrolled these young men in an intensive three-year program designed to make them loyal to Babylon. At the end of this time, they would stand before the king. If they passed the test, they could be used in Babylon or deployed to another location. Identifying his means of indoctrination will help us to be alert to Satan’s advance to indoctrinate those of our generation. This will enable us to stand, as did Daniel and his friends.

1. **Notice how Nebuchadnezzar sought to indoctrinate the young leaders for service in his administration.** 
   1. Nebuchadnezzar sought to indoctrinate the young leaders by removing them from any who might influence them to remain true to their heritage. (v. 3)
      1. He had to remove them from their families. They may have had godly families, given their names and actions.
      2. He removed them from the elders of their land. He wanted the young to mix only with the young of their own society and the influential leaders of the Babylonian society.
   2. Nebuchadnezzar sought to indoctrinate the young leaders by exposing them to the thinking of their society. (v. 4b)
      1. Their educational experience was designed to expose them to Babylonian literature.
      2. Babylon was the “learning center of the day.” (Miller). They acquired an extensive library from Ashurbanipal of Assyria.
      3. To be useful to Nebuchadnezzar, they would learn the ways of a Babylonian sage.
         1. Their study would have included the study of omens, incantations, prayers, and hymns.
         2. “To begin to study Babylonian literature was to enter a completely alien thought world…These young men from Jerusalem’s court needed to be secure in their knowledge of the LORD to be able to study this literature objectively without allowing it to undermine their faith. Evidently the work of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk had not been in vain.” (Baldwin).
      4. He wanted to change their way of thinking.
   3. Nebuchadnezzar sought to indoctrinate the young leaders by teaching them to speak the language of their culture. (v. 4c)
      1. They would have learned a form of Akkadian known as Neo-Babylonian, the language of the people.
      2. They also learned Aramaic, the legal language of Babylon. Daniel 2:4b-7 is written in Aramaic.
   4. Nebuchadnezzar sought to indoctrinate the young leaders by changing their diet. (v. 5)
      1. He wanted them to have a taste for wine. The wine would have been associated with their idolatry. Belshazzar’s drunken party in Daniel 5 indicates the wine was intoxicating.
      2. He wanted them to have an appetite for the king’s meat. It would have been tempting. What young man isn’t interested in meat? This would have been especially true since it was royal delicacies that were placed before them. Plus, there was the social pressure to eat.
      3. There are three problems with this situation.
         1. As Jews, they were not to eat certain meats.
         2. They were not to eat meat that had been offered to idols.
         3. They were not to drink that which was intoxicating.
      4. Ultimately, he wanted them to have an appetite for that which was forbidden in their culture. He was not just inviting them to change their diet, but to change their entire way of life.
   5. Nebuchadnezzar sought to indoctrinate the young leaders by changing their identity. (v. 6-7)
      1. Renaming them demonstrated Babylon’s dominion over them.
      2. They had names that conveyed their trust in God.
         1. Daniel – God is my Judge
         2. Hananiah – The LORD has been gracious
         3. Mishael – Who is like God?
         4. Azariah – The LORD has helped
      3. He gave them names associated with their false gods. He hoped the change of names would change their identities. He wanted them to forget who they were and who they served.
   6. He planned to take three years to indoctrinate under these circumstances. He was willing to take the necessary time to conform them to their society.
   7. Central Idea: Nebuchadnezzar sought to indoctrinate the young leaders by turning their hearts away from the true and living God to serve his administration.
2. **Relevance: Satan seeks to indoctrinate the next generation of God’s people by turning their hearts away from the true and living God to serve that which is not God. (Romans 1:25)**
   1. How does Nebuchadnezzar’s indoctrination parallel the process of indoctrination in our country? What evidence of indoctrination do you find in our society?
   2. Notice how this coincides with Satan’s work in your life.
      1. He wants to separate you from godly influences.
      2. He uses literature to change your thoughts about God, your country, and morality.
      3. He wants you to learn the lingo of this world. Obscenity is accepted as normal in our culture. There is also the effort to condone sin by use of new terminology. Murder is referred to as a choice. That which is called an “abomination” by God is called a lifestyle in modern terms.
      4. He tempts you with an appetite for the forbidden. Alcohol is still destroying lives. Immorality still has devastating effects. Don’t be deceived by the king’s meat!
      5. He wants you to forget who you really are. Socialists want to revise our nation’s history to shape our future. Ecumenical leaders urge us to drop our Baptist distinctives to fit in with society. We must remember who we are as the people of God and resist the process of indoctrination!
   3. What should you do?
      1. Remember that you are saved to serve the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 1:9)
      2. Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11)
      3. Encourage one another in the way of righteousness. Notice that we are to pursue godliness “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Timothy 2:22) You are not alone in this spiritual battle! Cultivate godly friendships within your church family.
      4. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. As the pressure to conform to culture increases, it is imperative that we are daily in the Word. (Romans 12:1-2)