

The Royal Food in the Book of Daniel and Nigerian Christians

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ABSTRACT

The quest for royal food has intensified the heart of Christians among many Nigerians today; this is an issue this research addresses. It is rightly observed that due to the level of bribery, embezzlement, 419, kidnapping that characterize an average citizen of the Nation Nigeria; even the so-called Christians in the country, it is thus imperative to highlight the dilemma of royal food, the implication of royal food in the book of Daniel together with the outrageous approach of Christians in Nigeria, using the royal food account as a prototype. Inability to respond appropriately to the so-call royal food has put a lot of Christians into problems in the contemporary time. Obviously, this ugly cankerworm has eaten deeply into the fabric of Nigeria Christians. Therefore, this work is accurately enshrined on the royal food narrative in the book of Daniel as the theological framework to analyze, examine and evaluate the malady which is ravaging Christians in Nigeria today. The setting of Daniel is reflective of the Nigerian situation in the sense that Christians have a decision to make. Amidst the porous system of the Nigerian nation; the ball is in the court of Christians to decide not to be defiled with the king's royal food. Although the population of Nigeria is not limited to Christians, the fact that Christianity covers a great part of the country; this in turn makes the decision of Christians significant.

Keywords: Daniel, Implications, Royal Food, Christians, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Critical observations of the character some Christians have demonstrated in our contemporary time reveal that some have compromised their faith for royal food. On the one hand, a number of Christians today got initiated into secret societies as soon as they get involved in politics or while seeking higher position in the society.² On the other hand, it is quite unfortunate that in the name of seeking power, position, wealth and fame, which can be classified as royal food in this context the evil the so-called people of God does today surprise even the devil.

Apparently, some unlawful practices such as bribery, embezzlement, drug and child trafficking, money laundry, 419, kidnapping, cheating, extortion, etc. are exemplified all in their effort to become affluent.³ This outrageous attitude is an opposition to religious moral value such as integrity, truthfulness and contentment, which society hitherto placed on high esteem. It is in the light of this disdainful act that this study discusses the implication of royal food in the book of Daniel using it as a paradigm.

The Book of Daniel

The placement of the book of Daniel in Old Testament canon has two alternatives; it is either following Ezekiel in the Greek canon or followed by the book of Ezra, Nehemiah in the Hebrew canon. Pertaining to the former canon, Daniel is regarded as a prophet, in the acceptance of Codex

²O.P. Kolawole, 2019. "John the Baptist: A Model for Christian Leadership for Effecting Change in Nigeria". *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 36-41.

³ Donovan, W.O. 1995. *Christianity in African Perspective*. Carlisle: U.K, Paternoster Press.

Alexandinus the placement of book of Daniel follows that of Ezekiel as the last of the great prophets.⁴The first exilic prophet was Daniel carried to captivity in the first aspect circa 605 B.C, which would have been about the time Habakkuk wrote his prophecy. To accompany the above, Wash agrees that the book of Daniel is credited to Prophet Daniel, who is named in the book as a captive of the Babylonians taken from Jerusalem to Babylon about 605 B.C.⁵

The book of Daniel centers on the historical account of a young man who adhere to his faith in spite of extreme duress. The book perhaps was written to comfort and strengthen the Jews oppressed during the middle of 2nd century B.C. by Seleucid king Antiochus IV. Various fragments of the book of Daniel was discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls excavated in caves near the Qumran in 1947. ⁶ Daniel, alongside Haggi, Zechariah and Malachi, were prophets of the Persian period in the context of the Jews, although Daniel's ministerial scope began with the Babylonian period. By its apocalyptic nature, Daniel is to the Old Testament what Apocalypse (i.e., Revelation) is to the New Testament. Apocalyptic teachings that are given in summarized form in Daniel are, however, further expatiated with many details in Revelation.⁷

The name Daniel (Heb. And Chad. Daniyel' (Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3) in the shorter form Daniel'), is the name of at least three men. Daniel i.e. "God is my judge"; or as others, "the judge of

⁴ H. J. M. Milne and T. C. Skeat, 1938. *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus*, London: British Museum,24.

⁵ Wash, J. Watt, 1967. *Old Testament Teachings*, Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publisher,335.

⁶ DEAD SEA SCROLLS is the name generally given to the manuscripts and fragment of manuscripts discovered in caves near the northwestern end of the Dead Sea in the period between 1946 and 1956. They are also called by several other terms, such as the 'AinFeshka Scrolls, the Scrolls from the Judean Desert, and probably best of all the Qumran Library (QL).

⁷ James Adeyanju, 2014. *Introduction to Biblical Prophecy, Prophesying and Prophets: Isaiah to Daniel* (Ilorin: Amazing Grace print-media, 152).

God”, as his Chaldean name Belteshazzar means “the prince of Bel.” The book of Daniel is divided into two equal length. The first part is constituted of the first six chapters, which are primarily historical. The second division is comprised of the last six chapters, and these tell of the four visions God gave to His prophets.⁸

The Dilemma of Royal Food: Daniel’s Decision

According to Geoffrey, Daniel as well as his companions was faced with the challenge of compromise regarding the matter of eating the food provided by the king. Certainly, the provision provided by the king was intended to display generosity and showcase his favor to them. However, Daniel determined in his heart not to defile himself with the king’s food.⁹For James, the problem was in twofold which are: Firstly, the food preparation did not meet the requirement of the Mosaic Law, because the preparation negates the regulation and possibly the food includes meat from forbidden animals. On the other hand, there was no proscription on the issue of drinking wine in the Law, nevertheless, the concern here was that the meat and wine inclusive had been dedicated to their gods which was habitual in Babylon. Participating thereof would be to identify with the idols as deities.¹⁰

Though only Daniel is emphatically named with the assertion that he will not compromise based on his diet, but the reply of the commander of the officials is directed to Daniel and his companions (Dan 1:10). Similar declaration and determination of Daniel not to defile himself is discover in the Apocrypha (Tobit 1:10-11) which discusses about the exiles of the northern tribes: “When I was carried away captive to Nineveh,

⁸ Leon J. Wood, 1979. *The Prophets of Israel*, Grand Rapids: Michigan Baker Book House, 353.

⁹ Geoffrey R. King, 1966. *The Book of Daniel*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 67.

¹⁰ James A Montgomery, 1964. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 485.

all my brethren and my relatives ate the food of the Gentiles: but I kept myself from eating it, because I remembered God with all my heart.” A Related reference is found in 1 Maccabees (1:62-63), “But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die¹¹.

Wood posits that the issue of whether Daniel and his friends should eat the food provided by the king was an absolute test of their faithfulness to the law and possibly served the practical purpose of splitting Daniel and his three companions from the other captives who actually could compromise in this matter. His decision also validate that he understands that God brought Israel into captivity because of their failure to observe the law.

The way Daniel handle the problem sets the spiritual undertone for the entire book.¹² That is, the imperative of the king that the young men should be fed with food and wine from his table, was to Daniel and his cohorts an examination of fidelity to the Lord and His law, such as that to which Joseph was subjected in Egypt, equivalent to the situations in which he was placed of his Commitment to God Gen. 39:7. The participating of the food brought to them from the king’s table was to them defiling, because it was forbidden by Law, and the food was not prepared in accordance to the Levitical dictates or better consisted of the flesh of animals which to the Israelites were unclean.

In fact, the youths were not under the compulsion of refraining from the wine, but the reason of their refusal was due to the fact that the heathen at their feast offered up in sacrifice to their idols, a part of the food and the drink and therefore consecrated their meals by a religious right; whereby

¹¹ King, *The Book of Daniel*, 69.

¹² Wood, J. Leon, 1973. *A Commentary on Daniel*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 78.

not only he who partake in such meal participated in the worship of idols, rather the meat and wine as a whole were the meat and wine of an idol sacrifice. According to the saying of the apostle in 1 Cor. 10:20 is the same as sacrificing to devils. Abstinence from such food and drink betray no rigors going beyond the Mosaic Law, a propensity which first showcase itself in the time of the Maccabees.¹³

Furthermore, Wilson asserts that Daniel did not refuse the heathen names given to them nor their education which include the learning of the heathen religious opinion. This was not conflicting directly with the Jewish law. Daniel is exercising a proper conscience in issues that were of premium importance. When he brought his appeal to the prince of the eunuchs, it is indicated that God favored him and his friends Dan. 1:8-9. Considering the King James Version it connotes that this precedes his request. It is more plausible that it happened at the time the request was given, as brought out literally from the Hebrew rendition, 'God gave Daniel favor.....'¹⁴Bruce observes that the arrangement of these ideas is historical. The word 'favor' connotes kindness or good will. The translation 'tender love' (rahami.m) is plural intended to signify deep sympathy Dan. 1:9. Evidently, God intervened on Daniel's part in preparing the way for his request.¹⁵

However, the prince of eunuch was not talking frivolously when he replied to Daniel, 'I fear my lord the king..' Dan. 1:10 for without a doubt it was not an overstatement that if he did not accomplish his role well, he might lose his head. Life was cheap in Babylon and subject to the whims of the king. Therefore, the prince did not want to be caught changing the king's order in regard to the diet of the hostages. In similar vein, peradventure they show any ill effects and inquiry was

¹³ Leon, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 74.

¹⁴ Wilson, Robert Dick, 1917. *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, New York: Putnam,49.

¹⁵ B.P. Les, 2003. *Discourse Theme and the Narratives of Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 90.

done, he would be held responsible. The expression ‘worse liking’ i.e., worse looking, poor in comparison does not imply any dangerous illness rather only difference of appearance, such as paleness or being thinner than his companions. Although, the prince could have emphatically denied Daniel’s request, Ashpenaz tried to explain the issue and opened the door for a counterproposal.¹⁶

Implications of the Royal Food

This section of the paper discusses some implications of royal food in the book of Daniel. It is instructive to note that in view of the experiences of the Hebrew youths they proposed in their heart not to partake in the royal food because of its implication.

Neglect their Youthful Worship: Criswel asserts that they were given every encouragement to forget the altars of their youthful worship and to be gilded Babylonians. But it was not that easy for the young men to forget and forsake the training of their godly parents. The deep spiritual commitment of these captives, along with the other captives of Judea, is recorded in psalm 137: 5, 6 “ if I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” Daniel had been born during the rule of righteous king Josiah. In childhood, he remembered the finding of the book of the law in the temple. His youth was passed in the great reformation under Josiah.¹⁷

Breaking Mosaic Law through acculturation: Another point to consider is the term acculturation, which provides a better understanding of the scenario that took place in the book of Daniel pertaining to the issue of the diet as regards the royal food. To put the matter more succinctly, acculturation is the

¹⁶ Les, *Discourse Theme and the Narratives of Daniel*, 94.

¹⁷ W.A Criswell, 1970. *Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 39.

study of the cultural transmission process. Acculturation was part of what affected the Hebrew youths which has been taken captive to the Babylon and this can be seen in the subject of go on a diet. “And the king assigned for them a daily portion of his own rich and dainty food and of the wine which he drank” (Dan. 1:5).

Based on the Babylonian point of view it was done in attempt to take away their Jewish identity. This is reflected in placing intelligent and promising Hebrew youths in special training in the court of king Nebuchadnezzar. Charles notes that captive youths had come from many places, and living standards of most would be inferior to that of the Babylonians.¹⁸ Having giving this ample opportunity to these Hebrew youths they should have counted it a great privilege to enjoy meals from the table of the king but Daniel and his companions rejected it.

Eating Food Dedicated to Idol: The way a food is been prepared and pertaining to is dedication has a great premium to the ancient Jews because the Babylonians dedicated food to their idols. The problem they faced was that the mode of preparation did not conform to the Mosaic Law Lev. 7:1; Deut. 14: 3-21 and that the food and wine have been offered to the Babylonians idols. Parking out of the food would lead to religious desecration. Therefore, he utterly refused to participate.¹⁹

Awokoya observes that “Daniel and his friends refused to eat the royal food in order to avoid breaking of Mosaic Law of clean and unclean, for the meals to be presented to them many may include unclean animals forbidden to be eaten by the Jews according to the Mosaic Law”.²⁰ Daniel had the

¹⁸ Charles. F. Pfeiffer, 1984. *Exile and Return*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books House, 91.

¹⁹ TokunboAdeyemo, ed.2006. *Africa Bible Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 991.

²⁰ SOD Awokoya, 2016. *Daniel & Revelation: An introduction to Biblical Apocalyptic Literatures*, Oyo Refrost: Nig. Limited, 74.

knowledge about the set of laws of Moses with reference to food so this gave him vivid understanding that there are clean and unclean foods which has been stipulated in the Levite directives. In other words, Daniel and his cohorts resolved not to defile themselves, sticking to their religion and not compromising because of change of location of cultural values which denotes they are now in Babylon so they could behave the way they like.

Health Damage: Jacob is of the opinion that the most usually credited to the Jewish dietary law is hygiene.²¹The dietary laws are frequently thought of as health measures dictated by the primitive hygiene conditions of the ancient world. In addition, Dayan posits that anticipating the endings of modern science, was history's greatest public health administrator. The hygiene theory is suggested by both ancient and contemporary Judaic and secular scholars. The theory enjoyed its greatest popularity at this beginning of this century with the great advances in medical knowledge. Although, many observe the hygiene theory as a logic most commonly embraced by secular scholars, one of the most vocal advocates of the hygiene theory is the esteemed Biblical commentators and doctor.²²

To accompany the above, Maimonides postulate that prohibited diets are objectionable, likewise all the diets which the Torah prohibited us to eat has some bad and destructive effect on the body. The major purpose the law prohibits swine's flesh is to be found in the situations that its habits and its food are very unclean and despicable.²³Hygiene concern forbids against consuming the sacrificial fat, *heleb*. The fat of the intestines is prohibited because it fattens and

²¹ Jacob Milgrom, 1992. *Food and Faith: The Ethical Foundations of the Biblical Diet Laws*, New York: Zondervan Publishing, 5.

²² Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld, 1972. *The Jewish Dietary Laws*. New York: Soncino Press, 10.

²³ Moses Maimonides, 1978. *Guide of the Perplexed*, Trans. M. Friedlander, New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 253.

damages the abdomen which results to cold and clammy blood.

Conformity to the World's Program: Daniel and his friends refused to conform to the world's program. Daniel the initiator purposed in his heart in the very citadel of his soul. He makes decision to separate himself from the compromises of the world. His choice of simplicity in living is a marvel and an astonishment to behold. He laid aside the rich and luxurious menu of Nebuchadnezzar the king in order to eat vegetables from the table God. He turned aside from the delicious bounties of the heaped up tables in the dining hall of the golden palace in order to eat pulse and drink plain water. This is a magnificent demonstration of a choice between rich life of sensual indulgence over against the discipline life of restraint and temperance.²⁴

Daniel committed himself to the latter and he did so with all his heart. In view of this, assuming that Daniel with his cohorts had conform to partake of the royal delicacy, then what is the difference between them and the Gentiles but their refuter of the food makes them to be distinguished. In regards to this, Ashpenaz can never forget the Hebrew youths in the sense that they help him and he also helped them as they came out as one of the best among all of them after the whole training exercise. Daniel and his friends were distinguished as a result of the determination not to spoil themselves with the royal delicacy.

The King's Royal Food and Nigerian Christians

Conspicuously some so called Christians have been caught in the web of shameful character in the quest for royal food.²⁵

²⁴ W.A Criswel, 1970. *Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan publishing, 18.

²⁵ Kolawole O. Paul, "A Contextual Analysis of I Corinthians 9:13 and Extreme Materialism among Nigerian Pastors", *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, Vol. 8 (May) No. 2, (2020), 12-17. www.apjmr.com.

Royal food among Christians in the Nigerian context does not factually denote the physical food has been stated in the book of Daniel. Royal food in this perspective is issues like wealth, money, position, fame, power etc. This outrageous approach is an opposition to religious moral values such as honestly, truthfulness and contentment, which society hitherto placed on high esteem.

Uncompromised Attitude: Daniel and his friends were selected to be part of the people in position but they were not initiated into the cult of the Babylonians. This is because they have the fear of Yahweh in them. Daniel was a man of tender age which he should have been easily influenced with the royal food. Instead, He purposed in his heart not to conform to the pattern of the Babylonians, even though his name was changed, he did not change his attitude as a child of God. Many Nigerian Christians have been initiated into secret society in the name of mundane things. The level at which this so-called Christians have obliterate the Christian faith because of their craving for position, wealth and fame and other royal food is quite alarming. Today we have many cases of Christians renouncing their faith by converting to another belief system in the name of royal food. Unfortunately, this has not been glorifying the name of God whom they profess. The penalties of this approach could decrease or destroy ones reputation among the society which has a lasting impact. Many Christians because of the royal food have truncated the original plan of God for their life even it has made men lose the eternal heritage of God.

Greed: Another point raised in the approach of Nigeria Christians to royal food is greed. Greed is an inappropriate attitude towards things of value. To further elucidate, greed is excessive desire to amass wealth, power to a level that surpasses moral and spiritual integrity. Daniel and his friends were not the kind of people that is greedy for food most especially the royal food which in our contemporary time has made many Christians to lose their integrity in the society.

Some Christians today are gluttons, those that eat anyhow, anywhere, anytime. A greedy person can easily fall into the hands of the enemy for not rejecting the so-call royal food which many Nigeria Christians are victims of this, they will think they have seen green light or green pasture but at end they fall into the snare of the devil.

Undisciplined Habits: There is no confinement that is more exasperating than the one into which Daniel was transported; it is the captivity of immoral habit. But Daniel was a disciplined servant of God who was able to control self though he was been offered the royal food but he did not compromise. Daniel knew the consequence of going contrary to the commands of 'Yahweh' the God of Israel so he overcome undisciplined habits. In fact, among Nigeria Christians as Kolawole observes men talk of evil habits as though they were light and trivial; but they are scorpion whips that tear the flesh.²⁶ For instance, some Christians engage in criminal activities such as drug and child trafficking, money laundry, 419, bribery, kidnapping, embezzlement, cheating, extortion, etc. all in their effort to become rich.²⁷

Conclusion

Christians are saddled with the responsibility to shine as light in this corrupt world. The expectation of God from Christians is that the light should shine before men, that they may see the good works and glorify God which is in heaven. The fact that the implication of royal food narrative in the book of Daniel is relevant to Christians in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized, as variant vices are ravaging the country at a high rate. Thus, this paper becomes relevant to aptly serve as

²⁶ Paul Kolawole Oladotun "God Will Supply All Your Needs According to His Glorious Riches: The Problem of Extreme Materialism among Nigerian Pastors", *Crucible Journal of Theology and Ministry*, 11 (1), March, (2020).

²⁷ T. De Witt and D.D. Talmage, 2006. In *the Biblical Illustrator*, Age Software, Inc and Bible soft, Inc., 43.

a theological response to the different meltdown facing the nation and a living conscience that can make Nigeria a better place. Hence, Christians should be uncompromising in denouncing the immoral attitude done in the nation.

1. Christians should see themselves as representative of God at all levels of life and not only representative of themselves.
2. They should be determined that the divine responsibility given to Christians from God should not be bastardized or abused.
3. Every Christian should exhibit godliness and contentment as not to fall into the snare of the devil.
4. Christians should not partake in activities that can tarnish the image of Christ.
5. They must frown more practically at undisciplined attitude they epitomized and it should be discouraged at all cost.

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