

STRANGERS + EXILES: I AM DANIEL

April 23, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

The Book of Daniel, is a beautiful gift to us. Because it is a historical, biographical and prophetic book, at times we've only viewed it as prophetic or only about two stories; the furnace and the lion's den.

This book among other things, shows us how to live in exile and still walk faithful before God. Because we as believers are all strangers and sojourners in a place that is not our home. But we also realize that Daniel or the 4 Hebrew men aren't the focus of the story, but the God of Daniel is the star of the story!

Here is the link to the Bible Project video that we watched Sunday morning I believe it will give you the best overview of the book you will find. When you open the link hit the download button and then start the video.

<https://thebibleproject.com/product/read-scripture-daniel-video/>

As we read this book we realize that it is meant to inspire and motivate hope. We will see people living in exile in one of the most evil nations that ever existed, yet they had an impact on this evil culture. No matter the kingdom or nation, no matter how oppressive or evil, God always has a remnant of people who are faithful to him.

"Exile": A feeling of disconnect, something feels out of tune. Not just physical removal from a land, but longing and homesick for what we are made for.

This is an exile that all of God's people feel and know. After the fall Adam and Eve were no longer home anymore. As 1 Peter tells us, we are exiles and strangers in this world.

Living fully present while longing for another Kingdom.

In the past our nation would always default to a Christian/Judeo foundation and mentality. We understand that this is in decline as we have moved into a "post-Christian" era.

What was once an advantage for politicians or business people is no longer the case. In fact, many times it is a disadvantage as we are labelled negatively for our beliefs. In reality what is declining is "cultural Christianity". Those who hold to the resurrection, the Word of God and the Gospel are standing firm.

So we see that there will be times our faithfulness to God will be gain, but for others will result in a furnace.

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." (Daniel 1:1-10)

Verse 2 is very clear that “the Lord delivered” them into exile, they were being judged for their persistent sin. God allowed his name to be drug through the mud and disgraced. Then the “re-engineering” process began as their names were taken and changed...but Daniel never forgot who he was. This left them with 3 options as well as us today as exiles.

THREE OPTIONS WHILE LIVING IN BABYLON:

SEPARATE FROM CULTURE: OFTEN ROOTED IN FEAR AND SELF-PRESERVATION

This choice is often rooted in fear and self-perseverance. Some believe that the church needs to be in “power” (political and more) Daniel’s book would seem to argue against this thought.

“This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

God’s telling them that they are here because of God’s righteous judgment. He is also calling them through Jeremiah to take the longer view, to place roots and be a witness where they find themselves.

“We are called to be a faithful witness, separate from the city but present in the city”

ASSIMILATE AND BECOME LIKE THE CULTURE: OFTEN RESULTS IN COMPROMISE AND SYNCRETISM (the fusion of diverse religious beliefs and practices))

This is a subtle intoxication, it’s slower over a time period. Unlike the furnace or lion’s den.

A good practice is to ask ourselves, in the last 5 years, has there been any “drifting” in my life in relation to morality, money, standards, etc.? The second half to the question is are we more like Jesus today than 5 years ago?

“ Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

Daniel flourished in exile, because he knew who he was. It is no different for us today the culture and the enemy of our souls will continually try to re-define you.

REMAIN FAITHFUL TO A FAITHFUL GOD: LIVE AS A COMMITTED AND CREATIVE MINORITY

How do we remain faithful to our faithful God? Especially when things around you are pressing you, trying to shape you? Daniel will be a key part of 3 Babylonian administrations, he had to wonder why he had to serve these evil leaders. Verse 8 is the key, he “resolved”, God then breaks into the story and the very minute he chose to stand with God, God stood by him.

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine...” (:8)

“A creative minority is a Christian community in a web of stubbornly loyal relationships, knitted together in a living network of persons, in a complex, and challenging cultural setting, who are committed to practicing the way of Jesus together for the renewal of the world.” Jon Tyson

The darkness in our culture is an opportunity to bring God’s light into our culture and situation. History tells us that the church will thrive in evil cultures and the church becomes purer and needless things are burnt away.

"At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds." (Daniel 1:15-17)

Daniel Resolves: Whom are you going to trust?

God Works: What story do you want to tell?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Book of Daniel is a historical, biographical and prophetic book. In your past how have you thought or viewed this book? Also after watching the Bible Project video, did you feel a little more confident that you had a handle on the message of the book?
2. As we begin our journey into the Book of Daniel we will see people living in exile in one of the most evil nations that ever existed...yet they had an impact on this evil culture. First look at the definition of "exile" (page 1) and share if you have had this feeling before. You may have experienced this in your life because of a move or displacement or as we walk with Jesus and realize this earth is not our home.
3. So because Israel would not turn from her sin, she is delivered into exile. Now the "re-engineering" process began as their names were taken and changed. Pastor Randy suggested that they (and we) have three choices, please discuss all three of these options:
4. "Separate from the culture" (page 3) In addition to your discussion, take a look at this quote and give practical examples of how you see this working: "We are called to be a faithful witness, separate from the city but present in the city"
5. "Assimilate and become like the culture" (page 4) How does this occur and how can we guard against it?
6. "Remain faithful to a faithful God" (pages 4-5) How do we remain faithful in such an evil culture? How does verse 8 come into play and how important was Daniel's "resolve"?