



DANIEL

faithful in a foreign land

SERIES OVERVIEW

In his letter to the church in Philippi, the Apostle Paul wrote, “we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives” (Philippians 3:20). Paul’s point is that we, as followers of Christ, are living in *a land that is not truly our home*. Like the Israelites in exile in Babylon, we are tasked with remaining faithful to our God in a world filled with radically different values than those of Christ’s kingdom (Peter even refers to his current home as “Babylon” in 1 Peter 5:13!).

And yet, the New Testament is not the only place in which the biblical authors use the memory of the Babylonian Exile to make sense of their place in a broken world. The book of Daniel, which follows the adventures and travails of some young Jewish nobles living in Babylon during the 6th century B.C. Babylonian Exile was most likely compiled over four centuries later, when Israel again faced great hardship under a foreign ruler. In the 2nd century B.C. The Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes persecuted the Jewish people, introducing foreign worship, offensive new customs, and sacrilegious objects into Jerusalem, all of which led to widespread unrest and revolt. Into this incendiary situation, the book of Daniel offers a compelling (if rather challenging!) call to remain faithful to God when the world around us looks nothing like our true home. Throughout the book, Daniel and his companions boldly and courageously put their trust in God, discovering again and again that the Lord has rewarded their faithfulness and delivered them from harm.

As followers of Christ living in a world which looks nothing like the values of God’s kingdom, we have much to learn from the bold faith of our spiritual ancestors. How do we trust God in a foreign land, even when that foreign land is actually our earthly home?

WEEK 1 - FAITHFUL IN EXILE OVERVIEW

In the ancient world it was customary for mighty empires to house young nobles from defeated enemy nations in something of a gilded cage. These upper crust “hostages” would be raised in the empire’s royal courts both as an insurance against further war (“attack us and we’ll kill your sons”) as well as to indoctrinate these future foreign royals into the culture and values of the empire. The book of Daniel opens with four such Israelite men, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, being presented with a seemingly innocuous offer: to eat the fabulous, sumptuous food and wine provided by the Babylonian king. There is just one problem with this: eating non-kosher food is a direct violation of the Law of Moses. Instead of disobeying God’s commands, Daniel and his three companions ask to eat just “vegetables and water.” This small act of faithfulness on their part is rewarded by God as these four young men quickly outpace the other nobles in court in health, vitality, and vigor.

This story has a lot to teach us. To the Israelites living under the cultural dominance of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and to Christ-followers today living in a world full of sumptuous temptations luring us away from our Savior’s teachings, the message is clear: It takes boldness to live differently than the world around us. However, if we trust God enough to do so, we will experience the fruit of our self-denial.

*Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king.
He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.*

Daniel 1:8

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever felt like an “alien” at a certain time of your life, like Barry did in high school? Share your experience with your group.
2. Read [Daniel 1:1-10](#)
 - a. Why was Daniel in Babylon?
 - b. Why did Daniel and his friends not want to eat the meat from the king’s table?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

continued

3. Read Daniel 1:11-17, 20.
 - a. What agreement did Daniel make with the attendant of the chief of staff?
 - b. What was the outcome of the agreement for Daniel and the other Israelites?
 - c. Why do you think this outcome happened?
4. Barry said that "God honors our devotion and sacrifice when we're in a land far from home."
 - a. How do we know this to be true?
 - b. What does he mean by "far from home"?
5. Barry asked us to consider the following personal questions:
 - a. What aspects of your faith in Jesus make you seem like an alien to those around you?
 - b. What is the "meat from the king's table" that tempts you to compromise?
 - c. What would it mean for you, like Daniel, to stand strong?