

SERMON | WE ARE SOJOURNERS

SERIES | STRANGE LAND

STUDY GUIDE | DAVID STOCKTON | SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2024

SERMON SUMMARY

The book of Daniel begins in 605 BC when Babylon conquered Jerusalem and exiled Daniel, his three friends, and others. The captivity continues to the eventual demise of Babylonian supremacy in 539 BC. As a teenager, Daniel was kidnapped from his family in Judah and deported to Babylon to be brainwashed into Babylonian culture and for the task of assisting in dealing with the imported Jews. There he spent the remainder of his life (85 years or more). He made the most of the exile, successfully exalting God by His character and service. He quickly rose into a statesman role within the royal leadership, served as a confidante of kings, as well as a prophet in two world empires.

After all the years of exile, Daniel resolved not to defile himself to the royal food. He still believed that God was real and worth serving. He wanted to continue to be a man of God, even after his disappointment in God through exile. His dedication to faithfully honor God, and continued acknowledgement to Who was helping him in this regard, gave him favor from the Lord. The favor of God kept Daniel in leadership, and he remained there through Babylonian empire, until the first year of King Cyrus. Because Daniel clung to God, he was able to remain over many years in a strange land.

Being a Christian in today's world is living in a strange land, a land of exile. Living in exile is a reminder that this world is not our home. Humanity was made for the Garden of Eden, and we have been in exile since we were removed from the garden back in Adam and Eve's time. We do many things to try and get back to the garden, but we fail. We can build whatever we want here on earth, but it's not our home. We've been camping ever since the garden and we're trying to make sense of the pain we're in, because we're living in a strange land. The truth is, we're all in exile.

There are three things that will help us have the wisdom to navigate the challenges that we face in this life of exile and focus on God's Kingdom.

- 1) **We Are Sojourners**
This is not our home. We are citizens of heaven. This is a Biblical theme throughout Scripture. *Read Hebrews 11:8-10 below.*
- 2) **We Are to Be Set Apart**
Daniel did not want to be defiled by some of the things the culture around him was partaking in. *Read 1 Peter 2:11-17 below.*
- 3) **Remember the Savior**
Daniel was able to remain, because he never lost sight that God was his Savior, and believed He would rescue him. *Read Hebrews 12:1-3 below.*

Do we want to be pure and follow the way of Jesus and not our own version or some hybrid version? Then, we must study the Word of God that exposes us, so that we can be and live holy. The more holy we become, the more connected we become to God. We must fix our eyes on Jesus to know the way, truth, and life. Looking at what He went through, we'll have the resolve, patience, and wisdom to continue on the path of righteousness. The same God that was calling His people to live as citizens of heaven's kingdom in Daniel's time, is the same God calling us to do the same today.

SCRIPTURE READING

READ THIS WEEKS BIBLE PASSAGE: Dan. 1; Ps. 137:1-4; Heb. 11:8-10; 1 Pet. 2:11-17; Heb. 12:1-3 (ESV)

Daniel Taken to Babylon

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. **3** Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family^[a] and of the nobility, **4** youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. **5** The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. **6** Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. **7** And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

Daniel's Faithfulness

8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. **9** And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, **10** and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king." **11** Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, **12** "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. **13** Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." **14** So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. **15** At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. **16** So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

17 As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. **18** At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. **19** And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. **20** And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. **21** And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus. – Daniel 1:1-21

How Shall We Sing the LORD's Song?

137 By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. **2** On the willows there we hung up our lyres. **3** For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" **4** How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? – Psalm 137:1-4

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. **9** By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same

promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. – Hebrews 11:8-10

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Submission to Authority

¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. – 1 Peter 2:11-17

Jesus, Founder and Perfecter of Our Faith

¹² Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Do Not Grow Weary

³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. – Hebrews 12:1-3

BIBLE PASSAGE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you in these passages? Did the Lord highlight anything to you? What do these passages teach you about the character of God? What do these passages teach you about mankind? What do these passages teach you about how mankind should respond to God? What do these passages teach you about how to respond to others?

Read these passages again (use a different translation if helpful). How did these passages help to convict, correct, or encourage you?

GROUP DISCUSSION

DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS WITH YOUR GROUP

1. When and how have you felt like a sojourner in this life?
2. What are some ways you have chosen to live set apart from this world? Are there areas of compromise in your life?
3. How can we live out Kingdom pursuits in the fallen world we live in?
4. Do you need prayer to be able to sing the Lord's song in hard places?

PRAYER

Take some time for prayer requests and pray over one another before wrapping up.

