

How to Stay Faithful in Exile

Summary and Goal

We are inspired by the courage and faithfulness of Daniel and his friends. Because they remained true to their identity as God's chosen people and because they were willing to demonstrate their trust in God through their actions, they provided a testimony to God's power and goodness while in exile. As believers, we are sojourners and exiles in this world, redeemed by the blood of Jesus and called to be a testimony to His grace by remaining true to our identity in Christ.

Main Passage

Daniel 1

Session Outline

1. Remember your true identity (Dan. 1:1-7).
2. Embrace the risk of holiness (Dan. 1:8-16).
3. Look for ways to testify to God's grace (Dan. 1:17-21).

Theological Theme

As Christians, we can trust in God's guidance even while we are in exile here on earth.

Christ Connection

Daniel stayed true to his identity, obeyed God, and was a testimony to God's grace. He points forward to the Son of God, who willingly embraced a sinful world without ever defiling Himself and through His death and resurrection became the greatest picture of God's grace the world has ever known.

Missional Application

God calls us to be a shining testament to His grace by remaining true to our identity in Christ and living in holiness.

Date of My Bible Study: _____

Session Plan

How to Stay Faithful in Exile

Pack Item 1: Exile and Return

Display this poster in a place that will help group members follow the storyline of Scripture, to remember where we've been and where we are going.

Pack Item 3: Daniel's Life

Display this timeline poster of Daniel's life, and reference it as needed through Sessions 1-4 to provide context for the events in the Book of Daniel.

? For Further Discussion

What similarities do you see between Daniel's circumstances of exile and our place in our culture?

What differences do you see?

Introduction

Begin by pointing out the need to stand on the Word of God while in the midst of our culture. In this session, we find some good examples of not conforming to the world (leader p. 10; personal study guide [PSG] p. 10).

- ? What are some Christian beliefs or practices that cause us to stand out from the world today?
- ? Why is it important for us not to conform to the world in these areas?

Summarize the session, making the connection between Christians and Daniel and his friends as exiles in a foreign land (leader p. 10; PSG p. 10).

1. Remember your true identity (Dan. 1:1-7).

Emphasize God's sovereignty in our circumstances of life and mission, and then read Daniel 1:1-7. Briefly recall the historical context of Judah's spiritual decline and deportation (*reference Jerusalem and Babylon on Pack Item 2: Exile and Return Map*) (leader p. 11). Then highlight the exiles' missionary opportunities made available by God (leader p. 12; PSG p. 11).

- ? How is our missionary identity as God's people strengthened by remembering that our present circumstances are no accident?

*Ask groups of 3-4 to work together through the chart in the PSG (**isolation, indoctrination, assimilation, confusion**), answering the first question below. Allow a few minutes for their discussion; then call on the groups for some responses for each section. Conclude this activity with a large group discussion of the second question below (leader pp. 12-13; PSG p. 12).*

- ? In what ways would it be easy for Christians to fall prey to these strategies of making us like the world (isolation, indoctrination, assimilation, confusion)?
- ? How can we strengthen our identity in Christ when facing the pressures of the culture?

2. Embrace the risk of holiness (Dan. 1:8-16).

Read Daniel 1:8-16. State the perspective Daniel had in order to resist the temptation of his circumstances (leader pp. 13-14; PSG pp. 13-14). If it is a question for your group, offer some possible explanations for why the food was problematic for Daniel (leader p. 14).

- What do you think prepared Daniel and his friends to resist this moment of compromise?

Show how Daniel walked with conviction *and* wisdom, holiness *and* humility, as he kindly and winsomely won over his superior (leader pp. 14-15; PSG p. 14).

- What did Daniel believe about God that made possible this kind of courage?
- In what ways does our commitment to holiness demonstrate our trust in God's goodness and power?

3. Look for ways to testify to God's grace (Dan. 1:17-21).

Ask a volunteer to read Daniel 1:17-21. Note how God blessed these young men for their faithfulness, and comment briefly on the significance of this wisdom for Daniel's ministry in Babylon (leader pp. 15-16; PSG p. 15).

- Wisdom is often in short supply in our world. In what ways does a Christian's wisdom and understanding give glory to God?
- In what ways does such wisdom improve things in our world?

Explain how the young men stood out from the rest of their class and were rewarded with administrative posts within the kingdom of Babylon (leader p. 16; PSG p. 16). Additionally, point out how Daniel's faithfulness resulted in a long life of ministry and possibly a very extended legacy, including the wise men who sought the King born in Bethlehem (leader p. 16).

- How has your walk with God been impacted by the testimony of grace from people in previous generations?
- How might your walk with God impact future generations?

Conclusion

Recap the session, and show how Daniel and his friends, in their faithful example, point forward to Jesus. Because of His faithfulness to die in our place, we can live for Him and trust Him (leader p. 17; PSG p. 17). *Apply the truths of this session with "His Mission, Your Mission" (PSG p. 18).*

Point 2 Option

Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 1. Then ask the following questions to the entire group:

- What characteristics listed in this psalm remind you of Daniel and his friends?
- When has meditation on Scripture helped you endure difficult circumstances or temptations?

Point 3 Option

Prior to meeting, enlist a group member to read the article "Ten Objections to Christianity and How to Respond." Ask the volunteer to explain briefly 2-3 relevant objections and responses for the group's context to help the group testify to God's grace in Christ with wisdom and humility.

www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/evangelism/tcw-2000-002-7.62.html

Christ Connection: Daniel stayed true to his identity, obeyed God, and was a testimony to God's grace. He points forward to the Son of God, who willingly embraced a sinful world without ever defiling Himself and through His death and resurrection became the greatest picture of God's grace the world has ever known.

Missional Application: God calls us to be a shining testament to His grace by remaining true to our identity in Christ and living in holiness.

Expanded Session Content

How to Stay Faithful in Exile

Daniel in History

The contents of the Book of Daniel span a time period from 605–536 B.C. Using both narrative and apocalyptic vision, Daniel encouraged God's people—and still does—to trust in God's providence and to remain faithful no matter what because our Lord is in complete control.

Voices from the Church

"Sometimes God may allow hardship to reach us because he wants his mercy to reach beyond us."¹



—Dale Ralph Davis

Introduction

When we find our feet forcibly planted in the soil of an anti-God, anti-Christian culture, it is vitally important for our hearts to be drawn to God and our minds immersed in His Word. The apostle Paul told the early Christians, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). One of the best examples of such non-conformity comes from the story of four Hebrew teenagers who were plucked from their country and taken captive to the evil empire of Babylon.

The theme of the Book of Daniel is the sovereignty of God in working all things for good. He is sovereign over the big things (like international powers), and He is sovereign over small things (like the apparently insignificant lives of teenagers). He is sovereign over history and the future.

It has been said that among the persecuted church around the world, many believers say their two favorite books in the Bible are Daniel and Revelation. Why? Because both teach that in the end our God wins! As we begin our study of Daniel, we start with a story that shows God "winning" on behalf of four faithful Hebrew teens in a foreign land.

-  What are some Christian beliefs or practices that cause us to stand out from the world today?
-  Why is it important for us not to conform to the world in these areas?

Session Summary

In this session, we are inspired by the courage and faithfulness of Daniel and his friends. Because they remained true to their identity as God's chosen people and because they were willing to demonstrate their trust in God through their actions, they provided a testimony to God's power and goodness while in exile. As believers, we are sojourners and exiles in this world, redeemed by the blood of Jesus and called to be a testimony to His grace by remaining true to our identity in Christ.

1. Remember your true identity (Dan. 1:1-7).

How do we live in exile? To begin, we must recognize the hand of God in our circumstances. God may send you to a difficult place to spread His name among the nations. God often brings suffering into the lives of His people to demonstrate His sovereignty, strengthen their faith, show Himself wise and strong, and put His glory on display among the nations that they might be drawn to Him.

The hero of the story we are about to read is not the Hebrew teenagers but the all-powerful God of grace who keeps His promises. As we begin the Book of Daniel, we are introduced to four remarkable young men who were uprooted and replanted in the harsh and wicked soil of the Babylonian Empire. They may have been away from home, but they were not outside the sovereign plan of God.

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 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.

As we saw in the previous volume, the Southern Kingdom of Judah had been in political and spiritual decline for a long time. By the will of God, King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and took many Jewish people captive. (In time, there would be three deportations to Babylon—605, 597, and 586 B.C. The one referenced here took place in 605 B.C.) Nebuchadnezzar ordered an official named Ashpenaz to deport members “both of the royal family and of the nobility.” This was intended to strip the nation of its best and brightest and to benefit Babylon (v. 4).

Further Commentary

“Some commentators deny the historicity of this invasion [Dan. 1:1], yet Babylonian documents record that Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish in late spring of 605 B.C. and quickly subdued northern Syria. Immediate threats against Egyptian allies such as Judah’s king Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:34) would be expected, and the Babylonian priest-historian Berosus (ca. 300 B.C.) reported that Nebuchadnezzar took Jewish captives in his 605 B.C. campaign (Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.19). Jeremiah dates the battle of Carchemish to Jehoiakim’s fourth year (Jer. 46:2), whereas Daniel (Dan. 1:1) places the siege of Jerusalem, which took place shortly after that battle, in Jehoiakim’s third year. During this period the Jews used both the Babylonian spring and Judean fall calendars (cp. Ezek. 29:17; 30:20; 32:17 where the ‘first month’ reflects a spring new year). The months between Nisan (March–April) and Tishri (September–October) 605 B.C., when the events took place, fell in the fourth year of Jehoiakim’s reign according to the Babylonian calendar but were still in Jehoiakim’s third year following the Judean system. Nebuchadnezzar was crowned ‘king of Babylon’ subsequent to the siege of Jerusalem, but Daniel wrote after Nebuchadnezzar’s coronation and likely spoke of the king’s position from the standpoint of a later time (also Jer. 46:2). Moreover, a Jewish writer could appropriately refer to the crown prince as king because father-son co-regencies were commonplace in Judah.”²

—Stephen R. Miller,
The Apologetics Study Bible

Voices from Church History

“For those who love God do not seek after the God of all in just one place, but even in the midst of this misfortune they worshiped as if in the house of the Creator.”³

—Theodoret of Cyr (circa 390-457)

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

82. *New Identity of the Believer*

When a person places faith in Christ, that person undergoes a fundamental change of identity. He or she goes from being an enemy under God’s wrath (Eph. 2:1-3) to being welcomed into God’s family as a beloved child (Eph. 2:19). The believer in Christ is declared righteous on account of Christ’s perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. The person has been delivered from the realm of darkness and now belongs to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Christ is a “new creation” in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive and progressing, becoming more and more like Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

But don’t miss what God was doing. On the surface, God’s people were invaded and taken captive. But from a different perspective, we see that God’s people were now free to bring God’s light into enemy territory. Babylon—also known as Shinar, the land of ziggurats (remember the tower of Babel in Genesis 11?)—this place teeming with idols was now being infiltrated by the Lord’s “army.” Israel would be oppressed and her people scattered, but the nations would now have a witness among them to the one true and living God.



How is our missionary identity as God’s people strengthened by remembering that our present circumstances are no accident?

In order for God’s people to be salt and light in the evil empire of Babylon, they would need to be prepared for the challenges such a culture would throw at them—challenges designed to lead them away from God. These challenges are relevant for us today, considering our post-Christian context. We too are pressured to conform to the ways of this world. Look at the pressures Daniel and his three friends had to face.

Isolation. The first step in making Babylonians out of the four Hebrew teenagers was isolation from their homeland, family, and friends (v. 3). The Babylonian strategy was to seize upon their vulnerability once they were separated from all that was familiar. Over time, they would be more likely to abandon their faith and become like the Babylonians.

Even today, isolation from other believers or separation from Christian family members or the church can lead to the abandonment of the faith. In order to survive in exile, it is important that we not underestimate the power of one’s environment (whether the workplace, a college or university, or any setting where people are hostile or indifferent to the Christian faith).

Indoctrination. The second step was to take these sharp and impressive young men and enroll them in an educational school for three years (vv. 4-5). They needed to be indoctrinated in the ways of the Babylonians—to become experts in the Babylonian language, philosophy, literature, science, history, and astrology. Religion would have been part of the curriculum too. They would have been taught the mythologies of Babylon, the greatness of Marduk (also known as Bel), and the pantheon of deities that dominated the ancient Near Eastern world.

Assimilation. The third step was to totally immerse these followers of God into the world of Babylon (v. 5). They would need to change their minds and their lifestyle, to eat and drink like the Babylonians. The strategy was to entice them with the delicacies and privileges of their new life. Such an immersion would wear them down and eventually win them over to the dark side.

Confusion. The final stop was to give them new names (v. 7). Their Hebrew names honored the one true God. Daniel meant “God is my judge.” Hananiah meant “The LORD is gracious.” Mishael meant “Who is like God?” Azariah meant “The LORD helps.”

In the ancient world, changing one’s name was a big deal. It went to the core of a person’s identity. Giving the Hebrews new names in Babylon was a way of confusing them, reorienting their lives away from their past and toward the pagan gods of Babylonian culture, such as Bel, Aku, and Nebo. Daniel and his three friends would have to *fight* to remember their identity and remain faithful.

- ? In what ways would it be easy for Christians to fall prey to these strategies of making us like the world (isolation, indoctrination, assimilation, confusion)?
- ? How can we strengthen our identity in Christ when facing the pressures of the culture?

2. Embrace the risk of holiness (Dan. 1:8-16).

The story of these four Hebrew teenagers brings Psalm 1 to mind. This psalm affirms the one who refuses to be seduced by “the counsel of the wicked” and instead finds delight in the law of the Lord (Ps. 1:1-2). Daniel and his friends were determined not to abandon their convictions or their commitment to God. Watch how they responded when put in a place of compromise.

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.

Voices from Church History

“But, though they might change Daniel’s name, they could not change his nature, nor would he give up anything that he believed to be right. Captive as he was, he had a right royal soul.”⁴

—Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Further Commentary

“Daniel acts faithfully, but God provides the protection and provision necessary for such righteousness. ‘God gave’ the young man favor from the chief of the eunuchs (vv. 9-10). God also gives better health to the four young men who do not eat the better food. God is working prior to, through, and beyond Daniel’s own resolve to act righteously. Such care reminds us to act righteously and let God take care of the rest that is needed for his purposes to be fulfilled.”⁵

—Bryan Chapell, *Gospel Transformation Bible*

Further Commentary

“Due to a fear of defilement, Daniel and his friends refused [the food from the king’s table] and instead asked for water and vegetables. Numerous factors could have led them to this decision. The food and drink could have come from a temple, having been offered to a pagan deity. This seems unlikely as the vegetables would have been offered as well. Refraining from food and wine may have been a sign of mourning for their being in exile or a way of avoiding or conforming to the captor’s customs and culture. Perhaps the best understanding of their refraining was due to their desire to follow their dietary laws. Certain animals the Babylonians consumed (pig and horse) were unclean for the Hebrews (Lev. 11; Deut. 12; and 14). Also the meat had to be prepared in a certain manner by properly draining the blood from the meat (Lev. 17:13-14). To eat unclean or improperly prepared meat would be sinful and render them ceremonially unclean (defiled).”⁷

—Daniel P. Caldwell,
Biblical Illustrator

Notice how Daniel resisted the temptation to defile himself (v. 8). The immersion into the world of pagan Babylon had not won over his heart or mind. Babylon was where he lived, but Babylon would never be his home. Like his forefather Abraham, Daniel was “looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10).

The text doesn’t explain why the food was problematic for Daniel. It may have been that the food was unclean for a Hebrew (Lev. 11:1-23). It may have been that the food was offered to idols or that it may have communicated an absolute allegiance to the king that Daniel reserved for God alone (Deut. 6:13-19).

Commentator Dale Ralph Davis gives this explanation: “Babylon was simply smothering Daniel and his friends. Daniel may well have thought, ‘There is a real danger here; I could get sucked up into this and neutered by it all.’ He recognized that if Babylon [the world and its values] gets into you, the show is over.”⁶ Daniel and his friends were forced into Babylon, but they would not be forced to let Babylon into them. So with courage and conviction, Daniel requested the freedom to disregard the king’s order and not defile himself.



What do you think prepared Daniel and his friends to resist this moment of compromise?

Daniel not only had conviction, but he also had wisdom. He walked in holiness *and* humility. He shared his faith and convictions with Ashpenaz, and God “gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs” (Dan. 1:9). Daniel stood his ground, but he did so with grace and humility. He was not arrogant or rude. He was not obnoxious or stubborn. He kindly and winsomely won over his superior.

Still, as impressed as Ashpenaz was with Daniel, he feared the wrath of the king and the possibility of losing his head! If Daniel and his friends were to look poorly on inspection day, it would be Ashpenaz who would suffer the most. He would be held responsible.

But Daniel exhibited wisdom far beyond his years, a wisdom that must have come from God. It appeared there were only two options. Option 1: They defile themselves. Option 2: Their new friend Ashpenaz loses his head. Daniel, however, proposed a third way, one where everybody could win.

He dropped down the chain of command to the guard (or steward) that Ashpenaz had assigned over them and proposed an alternative solution: “Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance...be observed” (vv. 12-13). Daniel believed and trusted God to honor his commitment to obedience.

Charles Swindoll summarizes the lesson we learn in Daniel’s risky holiness: “In a world filled with people who rebel against the divine King, it is inevitable that believers of all ages will face situations in which their convictions will be challenged. We who are parents need to prepare our children for those occasions by both teaching them God’s truth and modeling integrity. And all of us who are Christians need to personally commit ourselves to living God’s way regardless of the temptations to live otherwise.”⁸ This is what Daniel and his friends had been taught. This is how they would live or die.

- ❓ What did Daniel believe about God that made possible this kind of courage?
- ❓ In what ways does our commitment to holiness demonstrate our trust in God’s goodness and power?

3. Look for ways to testify to God’s grace (Dan. 1:17-21).

Daniel and his friends had faith that God would honor the risk they were taking in seeking to be holy. It was already settled in their hearts that they would remain faithful to their God, no matter what. In the following verses, we see Daniel and his friends testifying to God’s grace and power through their service, their wisdom, and their understanding.

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.

Here, for the third time in one chapter, God gives something (see also vv. 2,9). In this case, He gave the four youths “learning and skill in all literature and wisdom.” These were “Proverbs men” with the ability to see the things of life and this world from God’s perspective and to act accordingly.

Voices from Church History

“Unless there is the element of extreme risk in our exploits for God, there is no need for faith.”⁹

—Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)

Further Commentary

The test was a resounding success as God blessed these four men and rewarded their devotion to Him. They “were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king’s food” (v. 15). Daniel and his friends had resisted what Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) called the king’s “sweet poison.”¹⁰ The steward, as a result of their appearance and strength, “took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables” (v. 16). Daniel and his friends had honored God and God had honored them by giving them favor with the guard and a healthy body. Tremper Longman summarizes it quite well: “[Daniel] proposes this time a brief ten-day test... the guard agrees; the test works; and the four eat vegetables to the glory of God for three years.”¹¹



Voices from Church History

“Therefore that which others saw only in a shadowy appearance [Daniel] could perceive clearly with the eyes of his understanding.”¹⁴

—Jerome (circa 345-420)

There is striking irony in the situation. God gave the four Jewish boys “learning and skill.” Tremper Longman writes, “Of course, Nebuchadnezzar and those involved in their education would take the credit for their brilliance, but Daniel and the others would know to whom the credit was due...For now, however, the divine origin of Daniel’s success is only understood in private by the four.”¹² And now, by the gift of God’s divine revelation, we know the real story too.

God blessed Daniel spiritually by giving him “understanding in all visions and dreams” (v. 17). This gift from God would prove extremely valuable in chapter 2 and beyond (cf. 4:4-27; 5:11-31; 7:1–8:27; 9:20-27; 10:1–12:13).



Wisdom is often in short supply in our world. In what ways does a Christian’s wisdom and understanding give glory to God?



In what ways does such wisdom improve things in our world?

After their three years of education, the four Hebrew teens were brought by the chief official to stand before King Nebuchadnezzar (1:18). They were head and shoulders above all the rest. “None was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah”; therefore, “they stood before the king” (v. 19). They were brought right into the palace and into the king’s court—they were that impressive!

Nebuchadnezzar gave the four Hebrews key administrative posts. He was confident they would serve and represent him well. Already in this Old Testament narrative, we see the living out of that cardinal principle in Colossians 3:23-24: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” Yes, “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

Daniel 1:21 is not so much a footnote as it is a summary of the long life and ministry of Daniel on account of his faithfulness to God. John MacArthur notes just how far the influence of the exiled teen possibly extended:

Daniel served in an influential position for seventy years. His integrity and uncompromising character had far-reaching results. God gave him the influence that led to the decree of Cyrus to send the Israelites back to their land; influence that led to the rebuilding of the wall under Nehemiah and the reestablishing of the nation of Israel; influence that eventually led the wise men to crown the King who was born in Bethlehem. Daniel was behind the scenes of the history of the Messiah as well as the Messiah’s people. His prophecy glorifies the “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16) who reigns forever.¹³

- ❓ How has your walk with God been impacted by the testimony of grace from people in previous generations?
- ❓ How might your walk with God impact future generations?

Conclusion

Daniel and his three companions remained faithful to their true identity, obeyed God, and became a shining testimony and witness both to God's providence and His grace. He sent them on a missionary journey, leaving behind all that was familiar, that they might bear a faithful and true witness to kings and nations in foreign lands.

Daniel and his friends point forward to another Hebrew who would arrive six hundred years later. He also was sent to a foreign land to bear witness to the one true God. Like Daniel and his friends, the Son of God would leave His home and willingly embrace a sinful world without defiling Himself even once (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-25). Like these Hebrew boys, He would grow "in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:40,52). When He was still a child, His teachers "were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:47).¹⁵ Jesus is the embodiment of the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:30; cf. Col. 2:3).

There is divine irony in this story. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah gave a faithful witness before Ashpenaz and Nebuchadnezzar and were brought to live in the king's palace. Jesus, in contrast, gave a faithful witness before Herod and Pilate and was nailed to a cross. And yet, it is by His death that all who trust Him will live forever with the King of kings and Lord of lords in His eternal palace. So be strong and exercise good courage in whatever it is God calls you to do. He is with you and He is accomplishing so much more than meets the eye!

CHRIST CONNECTION: Daniel stayed true to his identity, obeyed God, and was a testimony to God's grace. He points forward to the Son of God, who willingly embraced a sinful world without ever defiling Himself and through His death and resurrection became the greatest picture of God's grace the world has ever known.



Voices from Church History

"Therefore, their faith is not mistaken. God does not desert those who firmly cling to the word of God. From this it is apparent that humankind does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord."¹⁶

—Heinrich Bullinger
(1504-1575)

Additional Resources

How to Stay Faithful in Exile

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Study Material

- "Daniel: Cosmic Authority"—Chapter 24 from *How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens* by Michael Williams
- "Against the Flow"—Article by John Lennox; find a link to this article at GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources
- Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles, including "Life in the Royal Court of Babylon," can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator. Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

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