

Theme: To stand strong in trying times, we must know that God is Sovereign and faithful, even in the land of our exile.

I. Intro - Lord of the Rings

- A. Lord of the Rings, time of darkness and difficulty
- B. Frodo: 'I wish the Ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.'
- C. Gandalf: 'So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. There are other forces at work in this world, Frodo, besides that of evil. Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, in which case you were also meant to have it. And that is an encouraging thought.'
- D. I wonder if this is how Daniel and his friends felt!
- E. They lived in one of the darkest times in Israel's history
- F. We can learn a lot as we read their story and hear from the visions contained in this great book
- G. Our series on Daniel: Standing Strong In Trying Times

II. The Context: The Disaster of the Exile

- A. The events of 605 BC
In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. Daniel 1:1
 - 1. This describes events in 605 BC (Babylonian reckoning for the years of kings)
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar was General and son of the king and became King in late 605 BC

- 3. Babylon had crushed Assyria in 612 BC
- 4. Judah sided with Egypt - who was crushed in 605 by Nebuchadnezzar
- 5. Judah now surrenders to Babylon
 - a. Hebrew word translated 'besieged' can simply mean to show force - which is probably what happened
 - b. The first of 3 defeats at hands of Babylon - 605, 597, 586 (when all is destroyed and everyone goes into exile)

B. The disaster of the exile

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.
³Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility — Daniel 1:2–3

- 1. The nobles and royal family are carried away into exile - removing the cream of the crop and the leadership of the country
 - a. This is meant to cripple Judah, strengthen Babylon, and ensure Judah stays in line
 - b. Most Jews get to stay in the Promised Land - but not Daniel and his friends! They are exiled first!
- 2. Articles from the Temple are carried off and put in the treasure house of an idol temple!
 - a. Warfare was not just between armies - it was between the gods of the nations
On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn — both men and animals — and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. Exodus 12:12

1. In the Exodus Yahweh showed He ruled over the gods of Egypt
 2. This was drilled into the heart of every Israelite every year at Passover
- b. Now it appears Nebuchadnezzar's god Marduk is supreme over Yahweh
 - c. This is meant to communicate that Yahweh is defeated and must bow before Marduk - unthinkable!
3. The undoing and reversal of the history of Israel!
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. Daniel 1:2
 - a. Babylonia is literally 'Shinar' - pay attention
 - b. Shinar is where the Tower of Babel happened - the place of rebellion
 - c. Shinar is where Abram's family had come from - a land of idolaters and worshippers of false gods
 - d. And instead of Yahweh defeating the gods of Egypt and delivering His people, they have lost and history has been reversed!
 - e. Daniel is right back where Abram had left, right in the heart of idolatry and rebellion!
- C. The exile appeared to be the shattering of Israel's faith and her identity as God's covenant people. They were defeated, David's son had been removed from the throne, the people were in exile, the Temple destroyed, and the articles of worship carried off as booty to the house of a foreign god/idol. Where was the Lord in all of this? How can the people respond?

III. The Sovereignty of God For His Exile People

- A. God was Sovereign over all of this!
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. Daniel 1:2
 1. The Lord is the one Who had caused all of this!
 2. The Lord is "Adonai" - the Sovereign One
 3. It was not Nebuchadnezzar, nor his gods, who did all of this - it was the will and work of Yahweh!
- B. God had warned of the exile if they broke the covenant
 1. This was part of the Mosaic covenant of works
I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. ³⁴ Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. Leviticus 26:33-34
 - a. Part of covenant blessings and curses (also Deuteronomy 28)
 - b. If they broke the covenant God would send them into exile
 2. Hezekiah had made an unholy alliance with Babylon and Isaiah said this would lead to the exile

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁷ The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. ¹⁸ And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, that will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” 2 Kings 20:16–18

- a. Instead of trusting Yahweh to deliver him from Assyria, Hezekiah allied with unholy Babylon, showing them his treasures
- b. Isaiah declared this would lead to the exile
- c. Note both the treasure and the people are mentioned - just like Daniel 1:1-2
- d. Note it is specifically Babylon
- e. When God’s people compromise and trust in political alliances rather than the Lord, it will always lead to disaster in the coming years.

3. Jeremiah told them the exile would last 70 years, and God would care for them even in exile

This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:10–11

- a. Exile in Babylon will be for 70 years
- b. God is still working for their good even in exile
- c. God is Sovereign and working for His people, even when they are in exile among the nations.

4. The 70 years was to make up for lost Sabbath years He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. ²¹ The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah. 2 Chronicles 36:20–21

- a. The exile was in fulfillment of Leviticus 26:34, which mentioned Sabbaths, and Jeremiah who said it would be 70 years.
- b. God had warned the people for centuries and now fulfilled His word by sending the people into exile.

C. God’s redemptive purpose in the exile

But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. ³⁰ When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. Deuteronomy 4:29–30

1. God sent Israel into exile to cause her to turn to Him
2. For Old Covenant Israel the exile was radical surgery to remove a cancerous idolatry and to restore Israel to her relationship with Yahweh.
3. Jeremiah reminded the exiles of this!

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.” Jeremiah 29:11–14

- a. God's purposes and plans - even in the discipline of the exile - was for Israel's good
 - b. v13 - a direct recall of Deuteronomy 4:29!
 - c. God is reminding Daniel and the exiles of the purpose of the exile, and calling them to see Him and trust Him.
4. God is always working for the good of His people, even in the worst of circumstances.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I understand that I am an exile?

- 1. Daniel was an exile because of Israel's sin
- 2. In the Old Covenant God's people were meant to live in their own land in a theocracy, and only experienced exile because they broke the covenant
- 3. But this is not true in the New Covenant - in it, we are ALWAYS exiles wherever and whenever we live
Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout** Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 1 Peter 1:1

Dear friends, I urge you, as **aliens and strangers in the world**, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 1 Peter 2:11

- a. In the New Covenant, we are ALWAYS exiles, strangers, and aliens in our own country
- b. This is not due to our sin, but rather God's set purpose and plan for the Church in the New Covenant at all times and places.
- c. In the New Covenant, there is only one Christian nation - the Church. Every other nation is a place of exile.

- 4. As exiles, we will always be pressured to compromise our loyalty to God and His Kingdom, and we must always respond with faith, boldness, and wisdom, knowing this is part of being an exile.
- 5. The first step to standing strong is realizing our status as exiles! Until this is settled in our hearts, we will never live as God calls us to in our and of exile.

B. Trusting God's Sovereignty in the land of our exile

- 1. I can read Daniel as a manual for how I can become strong and brave, but this is to miss the point!
- 2. Daniel and his friends did well because they trusted in God - not because of their own strength and wisdom!
- 3. When you are an exile it is tempting to think God is not Sovereign! But He is on the Throne - and we can only stand strong if we know and trust Him!
- 4. Draw near to God in the land of our exile!

C. The Table of Home

- 1. This Table is a reminder that we belong to God!
- 2. This Table is a reminder that we are exiles and our true home is the New Jerusalem in the age to come!
- 3. Come to the Table and gather strength for your time of exile!

Strangers In A Strange Land

Daniel 1:1-2

June 20, 2021

Communion

Numbers 6:24-26

Teaching keywords: Two kingdoms; exile and return; Sovereignty of God;
God's character

The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24–26

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 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. Daniel 1:1–2