



LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Life Group Notes – 3rd January 2021

Courage in Captivity: Cultural Discernment Daniel 1:1-7

Please visit the LCC website to listen to the talk or read the transcript if available.

Daniel 1:1-7 Daniel's exile 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 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.

³ 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 – ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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.

⁶ Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

Note: This is the NIV2011 version of the text – it would be helpful to compare it with other translations.

Comment

The old Testament book of Daniel is a wonderful collection of stories and prophecies that were written to give its readers courage in captivity and hope for the future, and it is written in two halves. The first half, written in mostly in Aramaic is stories about 4 young men including Daniel who were taken captive to Babylon after Judah was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar in 605BC. Their bravery and experience of the faithfulness of the one true God sets the scene for the second half of the book written in Hebrew, which contains dreams, visions and prophecies concerning kingdoms to come and the end times. The stories about Daniel and his friends are designed to be read first because they anchor the reader in relationship before launching into the apocalyptic shape of things to come.

One of the primary themes running through this book (and also the similar book of Revelation) is that God is personally faithful despite national and global catastrophies that may surround us. God clearly allowed both Judah and Israel to be conquered and exiled because of their perpetual unfaithfulness and moral corruption, but we still see faithful individuals who prosper and are blessed as they hold fast to prayer, serve the Lord and endure the hardship. Written a couple of hundred years before Christ, Daniel was also extensively quoted by Jesus and the book's last chapter about multitudes rising to everlasting life and receiving their eternal inheritance provides the backdrop for the salvation work of Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and conquest over death itself.

As we live in an increasingly secular society, itself struggling with political turmoil and the challenges of the pandemic, we need to keep our eternal perspective and resist being ensnared by the digital Babylon that surrounds us. Over the next term we will study the characteristics of this resilient faith that will enable us to remain faithful to God and strong in our discipleship.

Questions

1. How do you react to the idea that we are living in a Digital Babylon?
2. In what ways are we vulnerable to being 're-educated' by secular values?
3. Why was it such a big deal that the Exiles were renamed?
4. Despite not having temple or sacred artifacts to help them, the Exiles remained faithful. How?
5. In light of this passage, what sort of Church do you think God wants us to be over the coming year?