

RESOLVED

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STAND STRONG AND LOVE WELL

Thriving in Babylon ... God's Way!

Pastor Doug Heisel – March 4, 2018

Historical Context: Because of the rebellion and idolatry of God's people, both the Northern Kingdom (Israel), the Southern Kingdom (Judah) have fallen, and key Israelites have been deported to Babylon — the political and economic epicenter of their day. Moreover, Babylon's ways and culture are openly pagan. Wealth and sexual freedom are worshipped. Injustice and oppression are the norm. Honoring the One True God is not only absent, there is open hostility towards it. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, are among the people of God now living in exile, in Babylon.

Purpose of the Book of Daniel: It is a revelation about an extraordinary redeeming God, who is not only with us, but is leading us and equipping us, to ***shine out as stars in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.*** (Philippians 2:15) It's about **"Thriving in Babylon, God's way."**

Jeremiah 29:4-11 — This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. **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."**

How to thrive in a post-Christian culture (and raise a family to do the same)

- 1. Believe that we serve an EXTRAORDINARY God, who is not only WITH us, but can USE us, wherever we currently are.**

Daniel 1:1-6 — In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 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.

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— 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. 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. Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Daniel 1:17 — To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

2. Believe that God's WAYS are best, and can produce a life of EXCELLENCE, which is a key to influencing people whose worldview is radically different from ours.

Daniel 1:8-10 — But **Daniel resolved** not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

Daniel 1:18-21 — At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. **In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers in his whole kingdom.** And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Life Group Discussion & Questions

BREAKING THE ICE: Do you (or would you) enjoy traveling outside the USA, to cultures different from ours? Explain. Is there a destination you'd like to visit or revisit?

DIGGING IN: Sociologists now describe the United States as a post-Christian nation. That means that true followers of Jesus are a minority group. Such was the case for Daniel and the three Hebrew boys. Yet the Lord still had plans for them, and wanted them to thrive in the world they lived in. Part of that involved influencing others. Read some of their story in Daniel 1:1-21.

1. How much, (and in what ways) does living in a post-Christian world affect you personally? What kind of impact does that have on your thoughts or emotions?

2. When you read about Daniel, and his three companions, and see the word “Resolved” — does that motivate or help you in some particular way(s)? Explain.
3. Review the two main points from this Sunday. Do either (or both) of those statements have a practical impact on your thoughts or emotions? Explain.

BRINGING IT HOME: The book of Daniel is so relevant to where we live today. God’s plan is not about isolation, its about influence. It’s not about surviving, its about advancing the ways of Jesus, in loving but courageous ways. We are to be engaged non-conformists, to the culture we live in. We are to believe that God’s ways are still best, and that it is our mission to model that, in all its beauty and value.