



MOTION
SNAPSHOTS FROM THE LIFE OF
DANIEL

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DANIEL

Things were not as they once were...

Read Daniel 1:1-5

The historic days of a united nation and life in the Promised Land ruled by a man after God's own heart must have seemed like a distant dream for the people of Judah. Following a split in the kingdom, their northern countrymen (the Israelites) were overrun and led into captivity by Assyrian armies. After a catalogue of warnings¹ and pronouncements of impending disaster, Judah's time had come. The southern kingdom experienced defeat and exile at the hands of the Babylonians² through the exercise of divine judgement upon their idolatry and rebellion³.

Things were not as they once were, as life for some of the survivors of the conflict meant exile to a foreign land – Babylon. For those in Babylonian captivity everything had changed; the social, political, religious, and cultural environments were dramatically different to how they were in Judah. Life was lived out in foreign surroundings in a reality full of encounters with the unfamiliar. This was the dawning of a new era with significant consequences for everyday life.

¹ For example see Isaiah 39:5-7, Micah 4:10, Jeremiah 32:26-35, Habakkuk 1:6, Ezekiel 17:12-24.

² Chaldeans refers to a Babylonian sub-tribe. (See <https://www.gotquestions.org/Chaldeans.html> to learn more.)

³ See Jeremiah 2:7-13, 26-28 for a description of the context which brought judgement.

Q: What led to this dramatic change in the life and circumstances of the people of Judah?

Q: What does this show us about God's dealings with them?

Q: How might the exiled Judeans have felt following their capture and transportation to Babylon, which for them was the beginning of an entirely new existence?

Q: What sort of challenges would these people have faced in their day-to-day living?

Q: What sort of changes would they have needed to make for life in this new era?

Righteous Resolve...

Read Daniel 1:6-21

For Daniel and his friends life in this new context was certainly a challenge. The chief official, asserting Babylonian rule, issued Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah with new names and therefore tried to call their very identity into question. This was designed to impress upon the exiles the new direction their lives had taken and to coincide with their new existence in Babylon.

We read of no protest and this was not the first time that this sort of thing happened to some of God's people⁴. However, when orders regarding the eating arrangements were given we see the resolve to be righteous rise up within Daniel. He was determined to avoid defilement and remained committed to living a life that honoured God.

This determination led him, and others, into potentially dangerous territory. Yet the favour of God rested upon him. A plan was hatched and as the time of testing passed, Daniel's desire to honour God was rewarded with blessing that marked him and his colleagues out from the crowd.

The principle revealed by the man of God to Eli⁵ many years earlier was certainly true for Daniel. Daniel and his friends were put into a position of incredible impact allowing them ultimately to demonstrate their faith in God before King Nebuchadnezzar and his people, which had no small effect. Read the following to find out more: Daniel 2:47, 3:28-29, 4:1-3, 4:34-37.

⁴ Joseph and Moses experienced similar changes.

⁵ See 1 Samuel 2:30.

Q: Facing the challenge of such a profound change in circumstances which impacted his very identity, how might Daniel have reacted differently to life in exile and how could this have impacted his relationship with God?

Q: What might the result have been if he had taken a different attitude or approach?

Q: What is it that shapes and informs the way you think about your identity?

Q: How have you felt the pressure of cultural expectations or shifts in society which challenge your faith?

Q: What encouragement can you take from Daniel's actions?

Q: What do we learn about God from this short passage?

Life here and now...

Daniel's exile experience, with its social, political, religious and cultural changes, took place in approximately 605BC. Yet his experience contains a number of similarities with present day life for many followers of Christ.

For Daniel, being thrust into a different way of life meant that his theological convictions were no longer the widely accepted beliefs of the populace. He experienced a cultural upheaval which challenged his values and identity, and he found himself living in a significantly different setting.

Change was no doubt painful for Daniel, but it did provide him with the opportunity to demonstrate his faith through a God-honouring lifestyle which caught the eye of his contemporaries. Babylon may have been a place of spiritual darkness but God used Daniel and his friends to illuminate that darkness. In doing so, God drew worship and recognition of His glory from those who previously knew Him not.

It may be that your life experience today bears some similarities with Daniel's exile existence. Do you see your circumstances as a terrible state of affairs? Are you often bemoaning change and social shifting? Or could in fact your situation be an opportunity for God to shine out into darkness once more through the light of your life illuminated by the Holy Spirit?

***What does righteous resolve
look like in your circumstances?
How will you impact others
for God's glory?***



L I G H T I N T H E D A R K N E S S

...LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE
BEFORE OTHERS, SO THAT
THEY MAY SEE YOUR
GOOD WORKS AND GIVE
GLORY TO YOUR FATHER
WHO IS IN HEAVEN

MATTHEW 5:16

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DANIEL

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