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Study 1: Exiled, but not Defiled

Historical Background

From the beginning of Israel's history as a nation, God has promised blessing if they will love and worship him alone, but curses and eviction from the land if they follow other gods. (See Deuteronomy 28:1-9, 15-19, 36-37.)

It did not take long for God's people to turn away from him, and despite many warnings to repent they finally reached the limit of God's patience. (See Jeremiah 32:26-33.)

Daniel 1:1-2 sets the scene for the whole book, both historically and theologically. It's 605BC. Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar is the new world power. Jerusalem is under siege and exile is imminent. Complete destruction of Judah is still 20 years away, but in this attack Jerusalem's king and temple are overrun, and it looks like Yahweh has been defeated.

Read Daniel Chapter 1.

1. In verses 1-5, how is King Nebuchadnezzar presented to us?
2. What is the significance of placing items from the temple in Jerusalem into the temple of his god?
3. What are the king's plans for the young men including Daniel?
4. How does the changing of their names contribute to this?

Daniel: <i>God is my judge</i>	Belteshazzar: <i>Bel protect his life</i>
Hananiah: <i>Yahweh is gracious</i>	Shadrach: <i>Command of Aku</i>
Mishael: <i>Who is what God is?</i>	Meshach: <i>Who is what Aku is?</i>
Azariah: <i>Yahweh helps</i>	Abednego: <i>Servant of Nebo</i>

(Bel, Aku and Nebo are names of Babylonian gods.)

5. What decision does Daniel make?

6. What do we learn about King Nebuchadnezzar from the chief official's response?

7. What is the result of the "test"?

8. At the end of the three years (v5), what is the king's assessment of the four men?

9. Throughout this chapter, how has God been at work?

Making it personal

1. Daniel and his friends are expected to completely submit to an ungodly authority. What example does Daniel set for believers in this situation?

2. The four men completed the education programme, but refused the food from the king's table. How do we know where to draw the line?

3. Please read **1 Peter 2:9-12**. How does this passage help us think about our identity and behaviour as God's people in a hostile world?

Study 2: Revealer of Mysteries

Read Daniel 2: 1-13

1. What is troubling King Nebuchadnezzar? How is it affecting him?
2. Discuss how the situation spirals out of control.
3. What do we learn about the king?
4. What admission do the wise men make in verses 10-11?
5. What does verse 13 tell us about Daniel's status at this time?

Read Daniel 2:14-23

6. What do we learn about Daniel in verses 12-14?
7. Having secured some time, what does Daniel do?
8. What does Daniel prayer of praise teach us about God?
9. Recall verse 11 and contrast Daniel's experience of Yahweh with that of the Babylonians and their gods.

Read Daniel 2:24-30

10. How is Daniel presented to the King?
11. How is Daniel's wisdom shown to be different from that of the wise men?
12. How does Daniel ensure God gets the glory here?

Read Daniel 2:31-45

13. What would make this dream so disturbing to King Nebuchadnezzar?
14. What is God revealing to King Nebuchadnezzar about the nature of his own kingdom?
15. What is God revealing about the ultimate future of human kingdoms?
16. How can we know the identity of the rock?
(See Luke 1:31-33; John 18:36; Mathew 21:42-44)

Read Daniel 2:46-49

17. What is the status of Daniel and his friends by the end of the chapter?
18. The king pays homage to Daniel as a representative of his God (v46). What has King Nebuchadnezzar understood about Yahweh?

Making it Personal

19. Read **1 Peter 2:4-8**. How does God bring in his eternal kingdom through Jesus? Read **Revelation 11:15**. When will we see the kingdom of Christ fill the whole earth? Are you part of that kingdom?
20. Daniel knew God to be the God of heaven – absolutely sovereign yet intimately involved with his people. What does it mean for you to worship this same God?
21. In crisis Daniel and his friends prayed for mercy. When God answered, all praise was given to Him. How can we learn from this example?

Study 3: Able to Save

Read Daniel 3:1-7

1. Why do you think King Nebuchadnezzar builds this statue and commands this festival?
2. What motivates the obedience of the peoples, nations and men of every language (v6-7)?

Read Daniel 3:8-18

3. What do you think motivates the men who denounce the Jews?
4. What motivates the disobedience of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?
5. How can they be so calm?

Read Daniel 3:19-23

6. How does the king respond to the challenge to his authority (v13,19)?
7. How is the severity of the men's situation emphasised?

Read Daniel 3: 24-30

8. What does God do for his people? (See also **Isaiah 43:1-2.**)

9. What does the king say about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

10. What does he say about God?

11. Instead of being united in worship of a statue, the people of Babylon are united by a decree honouring Yahweh. How is God already starting to fulfil the dream of Daniel 2?

Making it Personal

1. There is a lot of discussion about who the three men will serve. Whom do you serve? Do your actions show this?

2. The three men showed calm courage in the face of persecution. How can we have the same confidence when our faith is under challenge? (See also **Romans 8:31-39.**)

3. Spend some time praying for those persecuted for their faith in Jesus.

Study 4: The Most High Does As He Pleases

Read Daniel 4:1-8

1. King Nebuchadnezzar is writing to all his subjects. What does he want to tell them?
2. What has he learnt about God?
3. What circumstances lead to Daniel's involvement?

Read Daniel 4:9-18

4. What about the dream was terrifying?
5. What confidence does the king have in Daniel?

Read Daniel 4: 19-27

6. What do you observe about Daniel's manner towards the king?
7. How is King Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom described?
8. What lies in the king's future?
9. Why is he given this dream?

Read Daniel 4:28-37

10. What is the effect of verses 28-33 being written in the third person?

11. What was King Nebuchadnezzar's greatest fault?

12. What needed to happen for the king to be restored?

13. What has God revealed about Himself?

14. Consider all the events of the first 4 chapters of Daniel. How has God used his people to bring understanding to this pagan king?

Making it personal

1. Have you ever had the things that brought you contentment and pride stripped away? How did you respond? How does **Hebrews 12:1-11** teach us to respond?

2. What are the dangers of prosperity? How does Jesus' teaching in **Luke 12:16-21** help us think about this?

Study 5: To Set Oneself Against The Lord of Heaven

***Historical note:** King Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by a man named Nabodinus. It is likely that Nabodinus became ill, and appointed his son Belshazzar as regent in Babylon. The Persian King Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539BC (apparently to a hero's welcome). It is suggested that Darius the Mede was an officer of King Cyrus who was appointed to rule the city of Babylon.*

Read Daniel 5:1-4

1. What impression are we given of King Belshazzar?
2. How does he treat the holy vessels from the Temple?

Read Daniel 5:5-16

3. What is the king's response to the writing hand?
4. How is Daniel described?
5. How is Daniel contrasted with all the king's wise men?

Read Daniel 5:17-30

6. What is the message for King Belshazzar?

7. Why is God judging him in this way?

8. What lesson did King Belshazzar fail to learn from his predecessor?

Making it personal

1. Are there truths about God you would prefer to ignore? What are the dangers of that?
2. Read **Hebrews 10:26-39**. What warnings and encouragements are here for us?
3. How can we help each other remember and pass on the knowledge of the truth?

Study 6: Servant Of The Living God

Read Daniel 6:1-9

1. What is Daniel's position under Darius.
2. How are Daniel's character and conduct described?
3. What motivates the other officials to attack Daniel?

Read Daniel 6:10-11

4. What do we learn about Daniel from his reaction to the royal decree?

Read Daniel 6:12-18

5. How does the decree trap both Daniel and the King?
6. What hope does Daniel have?

Read Daniel 6:19-28

7. How and why is Daniel delivered from the lions?
8. What does verse 24 add to the story?
9. What has King Darius learnt about God? What does he do with this knowledge?

Making it personal

1. Could you be described as a “servant of the living God, whom you serve continually”? What needs to change for this to be a true description of you?
2. How does Daniel’s continual service of God point us forward to Jesus? (See also **Hebrews 2:2-3; 5:7-9.**)
3. How is Daniel an example of Jesus’ teaching in **Luke 12:4-6**?

Concluding Thoughts:

This is the end of the history section of Daniel. We have seen the activity of God in and through the lives of Daniel and his friends. How would this have been an encouragement to God’s people in exile? How is it an encouragement to us?

Study 7: Receiving the Future Kingdom

Read Daniel 7:1-14

1. What does Daniel see? Write the descriptions in the table below.

On the Earth	Beast 1	
	Beast 2	
	Beast 3	
	Beast 4	
	The little horn	
In the heavens	The throne room	
	The Ancient of Days	
	The Son of Man	

2. What happens to the beasts?
3. What happens to the son of man?

Read Daniel 7:15-28

4. What is Daniel told this all means?
5. What further explanation does Daniel want?
6. What explanation is he given?
7. What should the people of God expect? (v18, 21-22, 25-27)

8. Why does Daniel respond the way he does (v28)?

What encouragement would this vision have been to Daniel and the exiles?

Daniel 7 for us

Looking back...

9. Recall what we learnt from Daniel 2 about the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God. What's the same here? What's different?

10. How can we know the identity of the son of man?
 - a. **Mark 14:61-62**
 - b. **Matthew 28:18**
 - c. **Hebrews 1:1-3**

11. When is the kingdom given to Jesus? What does that mean for us, his people? (See **Ephesians 2:6**)

Looking forward...

Read Revelation 11:15; 22:4-5

12. When will the reign Jesus be fully revealed?

13. What will that mean for us, his people?

What encouragement do you have from Daniel 7?

Study 8: Severe Persecution for a Limited time

Read Daniel 8:1-12

1. What did Daniel see? Complete the **middle** column of the table below.

What was it?	What did it do?	What does it represent?
Ram		
Goat		
4 horns		
Little horn		

Read Daniel 8:13-14

2. How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled?

(Note: rather than reaching for our calculators, we should understand this to mean a measured, limited time.)

3. What will be the outcome?

Read Daniel 8:15-27

4. Use the interpretation given by Gabriel to complete the table above.
5. What was Daniel's response? Why would he be so appalled?
6. The vision concerned the distant future. How would it help to know in advance what would happen?

What encouragement would this vision have been to Daniel and the exiles?

Daniel 8 for us

Looking back...

Indeed the Babylonian kingdom was replaced by the Medes and the Persians, who were in turn overpowered by the Greeks. Following Alexander the Great the empire was split four ways.

Some 360 years after Daniel's vision a man took the throne of the Seleucid kingdom in Syria. His nephew was the rightful heir, but through bribery Antiochus IV became king.

He invaded Egypt (toward the South); conquered Persia, Parthia and Armenia (toward the East) and occupied Canaan (the Beautiful Land). From the books of Maccabees we have records of the persecution and violence of his reign. Jerusalem was devastated and thousands were killed. In 167BC he issued the order forbidding the regular ceremonial offerings to Yahweh, and erected an altar to the Greek god Zeus in the temple. He later entered the temple, seized the sacred vessels and defiled the altar with pagan sacrifices. His decrees also commanded the burning of the books of the Law, and anyone found possessing a copy of the covenant or practicing the Law was sentenced to death. He even called himself Antiochus Epiphanes, "God made manifest".

He died an early, apparently gruesome, death in December 164BC.

Looking forward...

The persecution of the Jews under Antiochus IV foretold in Daniel 8 foreshadows an even greater persecution of God's people in the last days.

Read Matthew 24:15-25 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11

7. What reassurances do these passages have for God's people today?

How does Daniel 8 help us to pray for Christians undergoing persecution?

Study 9: Restoration at a Decreed Time

Read Daniel 9:1-3

1. What circumstances lead to Daniel's prayer?
2. How would the following scriptures have shaped his thinking?
 - a. **Jeremiah 25:11-14**
 - b. **Jeremiah 29: 10-14**
 - c. **Leviticus 26:40-42**

Read Daniel 9:4-19

3. What does Daniel know about God? (v4-15)
4. What does he acknowledge about Israel? (v4-15)
5. What does he ask God to do? (v16-19)
6. What is the basis of his request? (v17-19)

Read Daniel 9:20-23

7. What is the immediate result of his prayer?

Read Daniel 9:24-27

8. Use the following table to clarify the 70 sevens

When	Who	What
7 sevens		
62 sevens		
Last seven		

9. Daniel has asked God to restore his people to the land and Jerusalem. This will be done by the first 7 sevens. What more does God promise to do by the end of the 70 sevens (v24)?

What encouragement would this vision have been to Daniel and the exiles?

Daniel 9 for us

Looking back...

The rededication of the temple and the people under Ezra can be seen as the fulfilment of the first 7 sevens.

For the next period of history (62 sevens) Jerusalem was occupied by Alexander the Great of Greece, then by the Ptolemies of Egypt, then by the Seleucids of Syria during which they suffered terrible persecution under Antiochus IV, before being occupied by the Romans in 63BC.

Finally in AD 70 the Roman general Titus defiled the temple before destroying both it and Jerusalem.

10. From the following verses, how do we see Jesus accomplishing the events of the last seven?

a. **Isaiah 53:8**

b. **Luke 22:19-20**

c. **Matthew 27:50-51**

d. **Hebrews 9:11-12**

e. **Ephesians 1:7-8**

f. **John 6:69**

Looking forward...

11. What still remains for the 70 sevens to be complete?

12. Why the delay? (See **2 Peter 3:4,8-9**)

What encouragement do you have from Daniel 9?

Study 10: Persevere to the End to Receive the Inheritance

Read Daniel 10:1-3

1. What are the circumstances in which Daniel receives his final vision?

Read Daniel 10:4-14 and Daniel 10:18-11:1

2. What glimpse do we get here into activities in the spiritual realm?
3. Why has this angel come to Daniel?

Daniel 11:2-35 outlines in remarkable detail the manoeuvres of future kings, especially the conflict between the Kings of the South (Egypt) and the Kings of the North (Syria). Verses 29-35 again focus on a particularly wicked king who will oppress God's people.

Read Daniel 11:26-35

4. What assurance is found in the repetition of the phrase "the appointed time" (v29,35)?
5. What will the experience be of those faithful to God?

Read Daniel 11:36-12:1

6. What will this final king be like?
7. What hope is there? (v36b,45,1)

Read Daniel 12:2-4

8. What happens at the end?

Read Daniel 12:5-13

9. How long until these things are fulfilled?
10. What will the outcome be?
11. What is Daniel to do with this vision? Why?

What encouragement would this vision have been to Daniel and the exiles?

Daniel 10-12 for us

Looking back...

History saw the kingdoms of the Ptolomies (in Egypt) and the Seleucids (in Syria) in conflict just as the angel describes. We can see how Daniel 11:29-35 again refers to the suffering of the Jews under Antiochus IV.

Daniel 12:2-3 clearly speak of a resurrection day, and at the very end Daniel is given a personal assurance of his eternal future.

12. What do we learn about resurrection from Jesus?
 - a. **John 11:23-25**
 - b. **John 5:24-29**

Looking forward...

Read Daniel 12:9-10 and Revelation 22:10-11.

13. What is different about the times?
14. What is the same?

15. From the following verses, what do we learn about the resurrection and judgement?

a. **Revelation 20:11-15**

b. **1 Peter 1:3-5**

c. **1 Thessalonians 4:14-18**

What encouragement do you have from Daniel 10-12?