

Lake Cities Community Church
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Series: Be Faithful No Matter What

Introduction to the Book of Daniel

Daniel 1:1-2

Agree or Disagree. **“It is OK to punish a group – even if some in the group are innocent?”** What do you think? Is that OK or not OK? It is a hard question. On the one hand – how can you avoid it? How can you parse out the guilty and the innocent? Sometimes it seems that the group dynamic is best met with group consequences. On the other hand, it seems so unfair – contrary to the American way! We would rather have 10 guilty go free than one innocent person punished. But this is a common occurrence, if you think about it.

I would sometimes watch Trevor’s basketball practice. A few people would goof off or mess up a drill and the whole team had to run laps. Group punishment. I remember many times in grade school when the teacher punished the whole class – no recess – because of some troublemakers. Or even in a family – I remember we were driving somewhere to do something fun with our four kids – and two of the kids were fighting, and I had enough and said – “we are going home!” Group punishment.

Well, it is an interesting discussion – and it is exactly the situation a teenager named Daniel found himself in – as he found himself one day roused out of bed, taken captive and marched to Babylon. Judah was being punished for her sins – and Daniel (who was faithful to Yahweh) did not get a pass – he was taken into captivity for the rest of his life.

For the remainder of the summer we will study the first six chapters of Daniel and we will see Daniel as a positive example of **how to be faithful no matter what**. In good times and

in difficult times. Today our goal is to become acquainted with the setting of the book– our text is Daniel 1:1-2. Look at verse 1a:

Exposition

Dan. 1:1a *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah.* Now we are in narrative literature. The first two verses provide the setting and timeframe for the story, and some characters. The setting begins at the third year of Jehoiakim’s reign about 605 BC. Remember also the big picture - that about 300 years earlier - the kingdom was divided; Israel to the north and Judah to the south. Israel had already been captured by the enemy nation of Assyria in 722 B.C. And now our first character is Jehoiakim the king of Judah. We know from the book of 2 Kings that he was a wicked King who did evil in the eyes of the Lord. And now Judah is to be captured – line b:

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. Our second character in the story is also a king. Nebuchadnezzar was King of Babylon from 605 B.C. to 562 B.C. Did you notice something? This was his first year as King – after taking over from his father (who just died). The first year of his reign was spectacular – first he defeated the great empire of Egypt – and now in September of 605 B.C. he expands the empire to Palestine and he besieged Jerusalem – literally encircled around it – like a snake squeezing its prey. Sieges led to famine and death as the encamped enemy cut off supply lines and simply waited for surrender.

Now let’s draw some lessons from the text as we move through it. The first lesson is this: **God is patient, but He will eventually punish sin.** That is the lesson from our very first verse. I had our earlier Scripture reading from Deut 28 to remind us that God promised hundreds of years before that obedience would be blessed and disobedience punished. But when His people did disobey – God delayed his punishment. God is longsuffering – he wanted them to turn it around. He

gave them every chance. Punishment did not come to the first generation, or the next, or the next or the next – but God waited and waited – he sent prophets: Isaiah and Micah and Zephaniah and Jeremiah – and more, yet the Scripture says: [2Chr. 36:16](#) but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy. And in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim – God declared, “My patience has run out!” And Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem. You see... **God is patient, but He will eventually punish sin.** I don't know about you – but that is sobering to me - because I don't take sin as seriously as I should. Perhaps you are a little like me that way. Verse one of chapter one shouts for us to sin seriously. God's lack of activity is not his indifference, but his patience. Maybe for you, friend, tomorrow is God's “3rd year of Jehoiakim” in your life. God is patient, but He will eventually punish sin. Look at verse 2a:

[Dan. 1:2a](#) The Lord (*Adoni* - master – superior one) gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand (lit: set him in his hand). Here is our second lesson from the text – ready? **God is completely sovereign – He can do whatever He wants.** The book of Daniel emphasizes the fact that God is sovereign over everything! We have three characters so far – the King of Judah, the King of Babylon and the King of Kings! [Prov. 21:1](#) The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.

How are you doing with God's sovereignty this morning? Pertaining to those things you perceive as negative in your life, and those things you perceive as positive? God's sovereignty brings peace and hope. If God brought them into captivity – then what? God can bring them out again. If God is sovereign I can trust him. The major issue for us this summer is moving to a new facility. Do you believe God is sovereign over that? I believe that He is in control of over our church and where we meet. I don't want to pat myself on the back – but I can tell you I have not

worried about this move, like I did the previous ones. If God can move us to a bowling alley, and a movie theatre and a childcare center – than He can move us to a school or another facility he may be working out. God is sovereign so that even in a potentially negative situation you can have peace and hope.

Look back at the text the rest of verse two: **Dan. 1:2b along with some of the vessels of the house of God** (*bait* (house) *elohim* (God of gods – exalted one)) **and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god** (*bait elohim*) **and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.** Do you see what is going on? Nebuchadnezzar was not only interested in the military victory but a spiritual victory. The house of God has been shut down – and the items taken to a new house of god – Marduk. Here is the third lesson: **We are continual a spiritual battle between our True God and false gods.** There are two *bait elohims* – a true one and a false one. It appears that the false one is winning In verse two we learn that it is a spiritual battle, not only a military one.

We can even see this spiritual battle in the name of our two major characters. In the name of Daniel – the ending of his name “el” is reference to God. His name means, “God is my judge.” In very name, Daniel is entrusted to Yahweh.

Now take the name of Nebuchadnezzar. The root of his name is Nabu – the Babylonia God of wisdom – son of the great god Marduk. His name means “Nabu defends my inheritance.” In his name Nebuchadnezzar is entrusted to his god.

This battle we will see over this whole summer is set even in their names. Who will answer the prayers in the book of Daniel – Marduk and Nabu or the True God? Who will Daniel bow down to upon pain of death? God or an idol? Daniel was, and we are in continual spiritual battle.

The spiritual conflict around us always lead to a decision point – who will you follow and obey? The God of the Bible – or the gods of this world. Who will you obey this week? God and his word or your own desires? Will you bow down to the idols of our day – lust, greed, glutany? Or will

you stand up for Jesus Christ? There is an epic battle in the book of Daniel that makes the Lord of the Rings and Narnia and Indiana Jones look like walks in the park.

Conclusion:

And so we start the book of Daniel with these three lessons – first, God is patient, but he will punish sin – so repent – seek forgiveness and take sin seriously this week, tomorrow may be your judgment day. Second, God is completely sovereign – He can do whatever he wants - so we trust him, don't get all worked up this week. Be at peace. Rest in the hope of God. Third, there is a spiritual battle raging – we battle against spiritual forces that demand we identify our allegiances.

Our sermon series hymn for the summer is *Trust and Obey* – what an appropriate choice. Be faithful – no matter what. In 1886 Daniel B. Towner, director of the music department at Moody Bible Institute, was leading the music for evangelist D. L. Moody's series of meetings in Brockton, Massachusetts. A young man rose to give a testimony, saying, "I am not quite sure--but I am going to trust, and I am going to obey." Mr. Towner jotted down this statement and sent it to the Rev. J. H. Sammis, a Presbyterian minister and later a teacher at Moody, who wrote the Hymn Trust and obey – for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus.

Obey – because God will ultimately punish sin. Trust because God is sovereign over all things. We wage a spiritual battle – May God strengthen us to victory.