

Session 4: Exile

Scripture questions:

Daniel 1:1-15

In what ways do the Babylonians seek to separate these boys from the lives they knew? How do the Israelite boys respond? What is the result for both the Babylonian and Israelite boys?

Daniel 3:1-18

What does Nebuchadnezzar command? How does this challenge all of the Jews in exile, as represented here by the three young Israelites?

Which do you think is more important to the story: confidence that God can deliver them, or faithfulness to God regardless of whether He delivers them or not? Why?

How do you think later generations of Israelites who read these stories, and lived outside of Israel, would be impacted by this account?

Daniel 3:19-30

How does this story demonstrate God's presence with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego beyond just saving their lives?

In what ways does this miracle affect the king? What happens as a result?

Daniel 6:1-28

Based on the story, why does it seem that the king's officials are mad at Daniel? Why do they decide to set a trap for him? What kind of trap do Daniel's enemies set?

How does Daniel demonstrate that he is unashamed of his faith?

What similarities do you see between this story and the one you read in Daniel chapter 3?

Is King Darius a righteous or evil person? How do you know?

Esther 2:1-11

Esther 2:15-17

Esther 2:19-20

Who is Esther and what is she doing in the king's palace? Who is Mordecai and what is his role? Why do you think Esther isn't honest about who she is?

Esther 3:1-15

Who is Haman? Why is he so angry? What does he plan to do to all of the Jews?

Esther 4:1-17

What is Mordecai and Esther's plan to solve the problem?

Is Esther willing to go along with the plan right away? What changes her mind?

What similarities do you see between the attitudes expressed by Mordecai in Esther 4:14 and by the boys in Daniel 3:17-18?

Esther 5:1-4

Esther 7:1-10

In Babylon, if one entered the king's presence without being requested by the king, that person would be killed. How does the king respond to Esther when she enters his court?

What is the result of Esther's actions? Do you see any irony in the death of Haman?

The Israelites were forced to leave the land God had promised them, and watched as their

Temple, the center point of Jewish worship, was destroyed.

The key issue the books of Daniel and Esther explore is **maintaining a Jewish identity that is faithful to God**, even when the surrounding culture works against it.

Israelites now live in a land where:

- Yahweh is the foreign God.
- Their culture does not support their lifestyle and worship.
- They experience opposition from the leaders.

The Book of Daniel

- The first half focuses on recounting the experiences of the Israelites while they are in exile in Babylon.
- The second half is full of prophetic material described by scholars as “apocalyptic.”

The stories of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as well as Daniel and Esther, demonstrate how God’s people determined that the integrity of their faith was more important than the consequences of their actions. Esther boldly went before King Ahasuerus and intervened on behalf of the Jews. Although she was hesitant out of fear that she could be killed, she still chose to carry out God’s will.

These stories demonstrate God’s faithfulness to His people. They speak to us about our ability to be the people of God regardless of the settings we find ourselves in or the consequences of being faithful.

Application Questions:

The books of Daniel and Esther show that being people of God depends on who you are, not where you are. Do you live in an environment or culture that supports or opposes your faith? As you answer this question, consider how your country supports or opposes Christianity. How do you ensure that your faith is something personal, and not a faith inherited from society or even your family?

Daniel and his friends have a tremendous impact on the kings of Babylon, not by what they say, but by what they do. How does the way you live your life compel non-believers to glorify God as the kings of Babylon did?

Esther had a choice to remain silent or act, and she chose to speak out. Have you ever

remained silent or inactive when God called you to speak or act? How has God used you to speak or act in an unrighteous situation?

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