

The Watford Word

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What's on

Sunday 11 February - 10:30AM. Archie Higgin speaking on the Apostle Peter

Sunday 18 February - 10:30AM. Stefan speaking

Sunday 25 February - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking

ADVANCED NOTICE

Pentecost Sunday 19 May - 10:30AM.

International Sunday with food from around the world. Would someone like to coordinate the food?

A New Thing – Daniel

For today's article on Daniel I am indebted to my friend Chris Birtles from the Thames Valley churches of Christ.

Dates

The book of Daniel encompasses the 70 years of exile:

- 605 BC – Judah was a vassal of Egypt and therefore under its protection. Egypt though is defeated by Nebuchadnezzar who then lays siege to Jerusalem. As a result a select number of young men from the royal court of Jerusalem, including Daniel and his friends, are taken as captives to Babylon.
- 597BC – Jerusalem falls to Nebuchadnezzar, the first major deportation from Jerusalem to Babylon takes place including king Jehoiachin, skilled craftsmen and priests (including Ezekiel)
- 587BC – the Temple is destroyed
- 536BC – the first deportees, including Zerubbabel, return to Jerusalem and set up an altar. This is the 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29:10)

General and Cultural Situation

Daniel and his friends find themselves taken as captives to Babylon. They face the challenge of being obedient to the Law within a pagan environment in which their ability to make personal choices is severely restricted.

General Facts About Daniel

Daniel was from Jewish nobility, handsome, intelligent and well-educated. (Dan. 1:3,4) At a young age Daniel and his friends are taken into captivity and deported to serve in the royal palace in Babylon (Daniel 1:3). By the end of the book 70 years have elapsed.

Jesus quotes 'the prophet Daniel' in Matthew 24:15 when he warns of the second fall of Jerusalem. In Ezekiel 14:14 Daniel is referred to as an example of righteousness. Some scholars reject this identification with the prophet Daniel but all three (Noah, Daniel and Job) present examples of individuals who are vindicated for their faithfulness

"Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:18-19 NRSV)



A New Start

A new start is sometimes forced upon us by circumstances beyond our control. This may be due to wider political events like war as in this case or more personal circumstances like ill-health, accident, redundancy, breakdown of a relationship etc.

In such circumstances it is tempting to feel that we have been abandoned by God – maybe we are being punished? Daniel never experiences such doubt. From the outset he shows confidence that God is with him and his friends.

Daniel is a captive, he has no free-will. But Daniel understands that despite appearances to the contrary the ‘gods’ of Babylon are powerless against the will of Yahweh. Through prayer he has influence way beyond his human status. As a result of this faithfulness Daniel becomes a highly significant prophet and a demonstration that the faithful will be vindicated.

What do we learn about God ?

After it's defeat of Assyria (612BC) and Egypt (605BC) Jerusalem is powerless to resist Babylon. It appears that the God of Israel is no match for the gods of Babylon.

Yet God reveals His power by responding to the prayers and faithfulness of Daniel and his friends. Although the exile was part of God's plan abandoning the faithful was not. The events depicted by Daniel demonstrate that God was using Babylon. The dreams revealed to Daniel show that Babylon and subsequent kingdoms would fall until His everlasting kingdom came.

In response to Daniel's faithfulness God equips Daniel and his friends for their struggle (Daniel 1:17).

We can we learn for ourselves ?

We may face a new start that we do not choose. It may feel like a kind of captivity or imprisonment that may make us feel like we are

being punished. The lesson of Daniel is to remain faithful, lean on God and call to Him for help.

For Reflection

- Are you experiencing a ‘new start’ in some area of life?
- Can you see God in that ‘new start’ — even if it is uncomfortable or annoying?!
- How do you think Daniel - or Jesus - would respond and how can that be an inspiration to you?

God bless, Malcolm

These points and more are covered in the daily devotional podcasts accompany the ‘A New Thing’ teaching and preaching series. The relevant episodes are numbers 466-469. You can find them in the Watford podcast feed (below) or my personal podcast — RSS feed: <https://audioboom.com/channels/4909728.rss>

AIM – Spiritual Life

The next AIM module is ‘spiritual life’. Topics include: Personal spiritual growth; men and women of the word; personal righteousness; prayer; fasting; biblical meditation; spiritual disciplines; creative spirituality; spiritual reading; spirituality and suffering; finances; time management and more. If this is something of interest to you, please book the date: 23 March 2024. Anyone who would like to attend on the day, without taking the rest of the course can do so for £20. More details on the website (<https://aimukandireland.com/>). More information contact us on: courses@aimukandireland.com

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