

Gospel Centred - Daniel 1

Sermon: Melville Junction 26 July 2009

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- We spoke about being Gospel centred last week,
- If we were a people transformed by the gospel...
- But what does it mean, what is this gospel message and how do we respond to it.
- Where is the best place to find this gospel message?
- The gospel message is found all the way through the Bible, it is Gods message of hope and restoration for us.
- Let's look in the least obvious place, The Old Testament.
- Daniel1
- What is happening here in Daniel 1
- Here is a quick History Lesson.
- Saul ⇌ David ⇌ Solomon ⇌ Divided Kingdom ⇌ Northern Kingdom destroyed (lost tribes of Israel by the Assyrians)
- The northern kingdom of Israel no longer exist, Judah is under the rule of the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho.
- The Babylonians defeat the Egyptians and move in on their tributaries in which Judah is one.
- Nebuchadnezzar is not technically king at his stage, it is only during the siege on Jerusalem that he finds out about the death of his father and then needs to go back to Babylon to take control of his Kingdom.
- It is at this point that he takes Daniel and other young men of nobility as well as temple artefacts back with him.
- This is significant, Daniel 1 sees the beginning and end of the rule of Nebuchadnezzar as well as the beginning and the end of the exile in Babylon...²¹ And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

²And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. ³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility...

1. God is sovereign His kingdom surpasses all earthly kingdoms; He is a God of Justice and is true to his word.
 - We see here that God delivered Jehoiakim along with articles from the temple.
 - The articles of the temple are taken and placed in the temple of the Babylonian Gods so that the God of the Hebrews can pay tribute to their Gods.
 - Even though Babylon was the superpower of the day, we still get the message that if God did not allow it, it would not have been possible.
 - This reminds me of what Jesus says to Pilate... “you would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above”
 - The name used for God here in Daniel 1 is Adonai, not Yahweh. Adonai means sovereign God, ruler over all things including the King of Babylon.
 - Why would God allow such a thing to happen to His chosen people?
 - Let’s go back to the history lesson.
 - Saul ⇔ David ⇔ Solomon ⇔ Divided Kingdom ⇔ Northern Kingdom destroyed (lost tribes of Israel).
 - Because He said he would, He offered His people a way out but they did not listen so God did what He said he would do.
 - 2 Kings 20:16-18 (give brief intro)

¹⁶ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD : ¹⁷ The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. ¹⁸ And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, that will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

- After Hezekiah we see King Manasseh who led Judah astray...worshiping idols
- 2 Kings 23:27

²⁷ So the LORD said, "I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, 'There shall my Name be.'

- God said this time would come, and now it has come, Judah is now starting to live under the judgement of God.

- ❖ I think that we forget that God is Sovereign sometimes; we have a less majestic view of God.
- ❖ God has promised many things, but we don't seem to remember that God remains true to His word.
- ❖ The God we serve and this God of the Hebrews is the same God.
- ❖ When we are overwhelmed by the world, our jobs, the general sense of hopelessness. We are forgetting that we have a God that has overcome the kingdoms of this world.
- ❖ We forget that Gods eternal plan outlasts everything that we may be going through.
- ❖ In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the statue...The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. ³⁴ While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them.
- ❖ It talks about the Babylonian Empire, then Medo-Persian, then the Macedonian Empire, the Roman Empire. The Rock cut not by human hands – Jesus...the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.
- ❖ We live in those times... never be destroyed
- ❖ I think that we forget that, we are not here in exile... we are here under Gods rule through the victory that Jesus obtained on the cross.

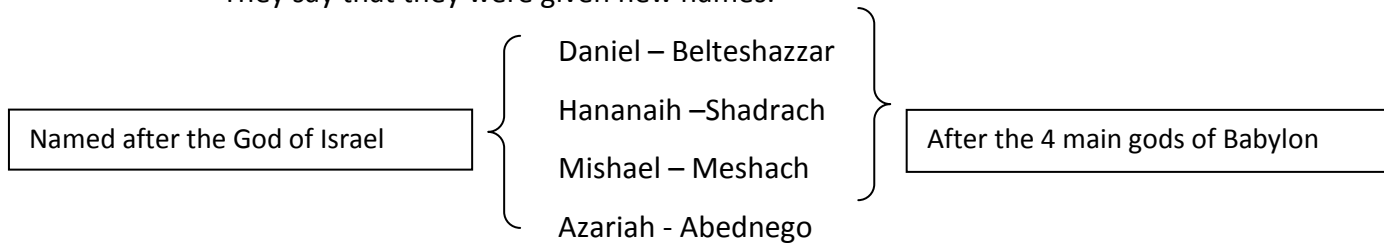
So the artefacts are placed in the Babylonian temple but what happens to Daniel and the other royals in Daniel?

- They are given food & wine from the kings table.
- They receive the best education around
- They have been given new names and are being groomed for positions of honour.
- It doesn't sound so bad?

⁸ But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. ⁹

2. In the midst of Gods judgement on Israel, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah choose to remain faithful to God even though this could cost them their lives.

- Why would they do this?
- The NIV translation of the word royal food is misleading. A better translation is portion of the kings meat (dainty) Which demonstrated a position of honour.
- They say that they were given new names:



- Here they are, in a foreign land, getting preferential treatment
- They could have accepted this treatment and gone with the flow. No one was watching, no one would have cared but they did not.
- The refusal of the king’s meat is not a dietary preference.
- It’s an issue of loving obedience to God.
- The king’s meat and wine would have been sacrificed to the Babylonian gods, the meat would often be pork and the meat would have been strangled to death.
- These were all against the Law of The Lord.
- Here are 4 guys, with no one forcing the law on them showing a profound sense of obedience to God out of love.
- A better example of this comes later in Daniel where Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are pulled before the king because they won’t bow down to the golden statue. The furnace is heated up extra hot. All they have to do is bow down. No, how do they respond?

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

- But even if He does not...
- If we could somehow grasp that concept, in our hearts.
 - The other day I bought some art supplies...

- ❖ These 4 were immersed in Babylonian culture but did not conform to it, instead they started to shape the culture around them.
- ❖ How often do we find ourselves in situations like this?
- ❖ God seems far away, the world around us is inviting, and no one will know what we are doing?
- ❖ It's the same at work, just because you are renamed after your profession (accountant, banker, architect etc) it does not mean that you let God submit to the god of commerce.
- ❖ No the God of commerce submits to our God – Adonai.
- ❖ When the world beats us in this area, we need to ask the question – Do we live the way we do because someone tells us to, or do we do it because we love God?
- ❖ If it is because we love God, then we should be able to overcome the world no matter what situation we find ourselves in.
- ❖ I have been on this mission with people lately, did you make this decision based on something I or the church would tell you to do or did you make the decision because you love God.
- ❖ What was the result of this obedience?

¹⁸ At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

3. God will make His name great and will use his faithful servants to do it. He does not pay tribute to anyone, let alone false gods.
 - What is happening here?
 - Nebuchadnezzar places Yahweh's temple treasure in the temple of his God, so that Yahweh can pay tribute to his god.
 - He makes the 4 pay tribute to their gods by giving them new names.
 - They are schooled in the language and sciences of the day for 3 years...
 - That means they were around 16-20 yrs old at the end of this training.
 - These 4 were not only better than the other "graduates", they were found to be better than all the magicians & enchanters in his whole kingdom.
 - These were the wisest of the wise men – competing in the area of their strength.

- Imagine a bunch of teenagers, talking a foreign language about subjects that they knew very little about 3 yrs ago outstripping the raining brains in their field.
- Then I ask you, whose god is subject to who here.
- ❖ This is an important thing to remember, we try hard to defend God, make His name known, grow His church etc.
- ❖ We spend our time arguing with people that there is a God, and that He is the one true God
- ❖ God can and will look after himself though.
- ❖ History tells the story, I have spoken about the Assyrian empire, Egyptian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Macedonian, Roman empires all come and go but the kingdom of God continues.
- ❖ That is the message of the gospel.
- ❖ It is repeated over and over in the bible and culminates in Jesus – the rock cut out not by human hands

Conclusion

- We see God at work throughout history, calling a people to Himself.
- He makes a way for people to come into relationship with Him.
- People turn away, God provides a way out.
- People continue to turn away – God brings judgement...then He provides a way back to Him.
- The banishment from the garden, the flood, the destruction of the Northern tribes of Israel, the exile...
- That is why this message of Jesus is such good news.
- In Daniel, we see God undoing the greatest empire on earth at the time, not by force.
- In Jesus we see a suffering servant dying a horrific death, being raised from the dead. The very opposite to force or might...
- How did Daniel and the 3 respond to God – loving obedience?
- What is our response to Jesus– loving obedience?
- If you love someone, you do things for them like buying flowers, spend time with them, sacrifice the things you like and want for them.
- You don't need someone standing next to you saying... to love this person you need to do a b c.
- No you do it simply out of love.
- That is what it means to truly understand this Gospel message, this good news.