

ORDER FOR THE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF GOD
A Service of Celebration and Covenantal Renewal
January 03, 2010

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

CALL TO WORSHIP GOD

We gather to worship our God in spirit and in truth...

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2 NIV)

WORSHIPPING GOD THROUGH SINGING

CONFESSING OUR GOSPEL FAITH—

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Maker of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell.
The third day He arose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand
of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge
the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit;
the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR THE GOSPEL TODAY—

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 1

THE BOOK OF DANIEL :
Our Sovereign God, Servant Calling and Certain Hope

I. Why Study the Book of Daniel? – So we can learn to live as citizens of heaven and resident aliens, in God's broken and beloved world.

What does this look like?

Daniel 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And 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- ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

⁶ Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

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 Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

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.

²¹ And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

What do we see as the Book of Daniel begins? God is Sovereign: He is in control of Babylon's King, Nebuchadnezzar... Judah's King, Jehoiakim... Israel's Temple treasures... the people of God... the chief of Eunuchs... learning skill and wisdom... and the whole Babylonian Captivity. This is **HIS** Story!

GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS—

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 2

II. Becoming a better Babylonian than the Babylonians!

Notice the two plans and strategies at work as the Book of Daniel begins...

1. Nebuchadnezzar's strategy for assimilating God's people into Babylonian culture: Start with the "best and brightest" leaders, then capture them through...

The Temptation of privilege and power... "standing in the *King's* palace;"

The Seduction of the "good life"... consuming the *King's* food and wine;

The Enculturation of new names... Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and,

The Indoctrination in Chaldean literature and language.

2. God's strategy for revealing his glory and grace to the Babylonians:

Gifting his sons and daughters with great competencies to serve and excel in every cultural endeavor;

Grounding his sons and daughters in His Story, grace, wisdom and discipline;

Placing his sons and daughters throughout the world, and in every sphere of society and cultural life; and,

Providing the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish his purposes.

SONG OF REFLECTION

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 3

III. Five Ways Christians Have Historically Related to the Prevailing Culture

Over-adaptations to the Prevailing Culture

- THE "UN-CULTURE" - The "Accommodationist" or "Immigrant" Model
- THE "SUB-CULTURE" - "Privatization" or "Oreo" Model

Under-engagement with the Prevailing Culture

- THE "ANTI-CULTURE" (Psalm 137) "Ghettoization and/or Militancy" or "Soldier" Model

- THE "PARA-CULTURE" (Jeremiah 28) "Revivalist" or "Tourist" Model

The Third Way... the Way of the Gospel of the Kingdom

- THE "COUNTER-CULTURE" - (Jeremiah 29) "Engagement" or "Resident Alien" or "Colony of Heaven" or "Ambassador" Model (Daniel, Esther and Joseph are great example of this way of life)

"Perhaps the best analogy to describe all this is that of a model home. We are God's demonstration community of the rule of Christ in the (unbelieving) city. On a tract of earth's land, purchased with the blood of Christ, Jesus the kingdom developer has begun building new housing. As a sample of what will be, he has erected a model home of what will eventually fill the urban neighborhood. He now invites the ... world into that model home to take a look at what will be. The church is the occupant of that model home, inviting neighbors into its open door to Christ. Evangelism is when the signs are up, saying 'Come in and look around' ... As citizens of, not survivalists in, this new city within the old city, we see our ownership as the gift of Jesus the Builder (Luke 17:20-21). As residents, not pilgrims, we await the kingdom coming when the Lord returns from his distant country (Luke 19:12). The land is already his... in this model home we live out our new lifestyle as citizens of the heavenly city that one day will come. We do not abandon our jobs or desert the city that is... We are to 'seek the peace and prosperity of the city' to which God called us in exile (Jer. 29:7). And our agenda of concerns that seeking becomes as large as the cities where our divine development tracts are found." (Harvie Conn - *Planting and Growing Urban Churches*)

SONG OF RESPONSE

BENEDICTION—

Go and "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jer. 29:7) In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What had the most impact on you from our time in God's worship and Word this morning? What was encouraging... convicting... and/or calling for more clarification?
2. What questions did this study raise for you about the sovereignty of God? What is encouraging about seeing how involved God is in every facet of history and culture? How does God's sovereignty both humble us and encourage us?
3. If you threw your heart into "cruise control" and became fully assimilated into our prevailing culture, describe the worldview and values you would embrace. What would you think about money, marriage, success, God and church?
4. How does Daniel serve as a model for us as we think about living to God's glory in our pagan culture? What is involved in setting our hearts "not to be defiled?" Why is this impossible to do apart from the truth and power of the gospel of God's grace? Close with a good season of prayer for one another.