

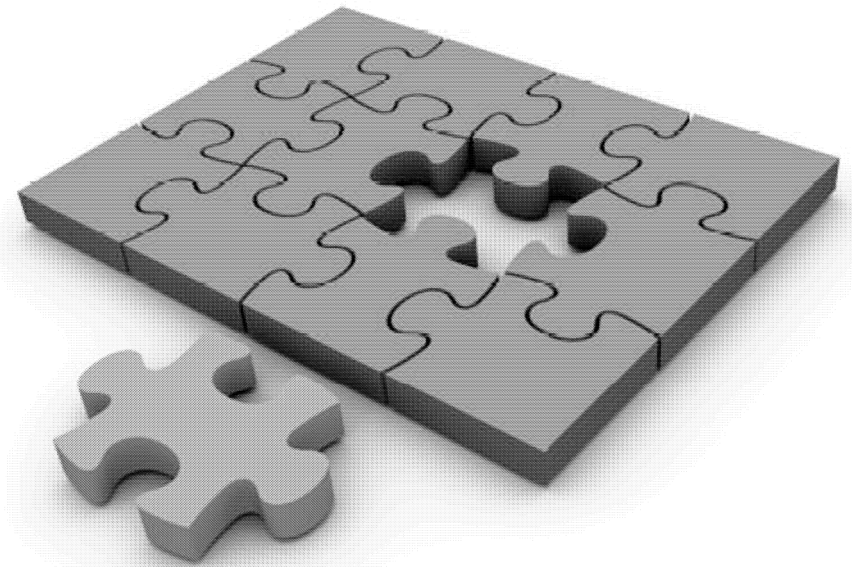
Studies in Daniel – (Introduction)

Reading: Daniel 1:1-7

- 1) What do you find to be the main challenges in living for God in an ungodly world?
- 2) Why is it important that we should even be considering this theme?
- 3) Suggest some Bible verses which are helpful to us as we seek to live well for the Lord (e.g. 1 Pet 2:9, Phil 4:8, Rom 12:2).

Read Daniel 1:1-7

- 4) If you were there at the time, who would seem to be in control of events? Why?
- 5) Who does the passage see to be in control? What two things does He allow and why?
- 6) What impact would the looting of the temple have on the people in Jerusalem?
- 7) List the qualities that Nebuchadnezzar wanted in these young men. What were they preparing for?
- 8) Why were the names of these young men changed?



Living a godly life in an ungodly world

The book of Daniel is set during the period of a great watershed in the history of the Israelites as a nation. We know it as **the Exile**.

After the death of Solomon the kingdom had been torn apart. The northern tribes (from then on referred to as 'Israel') went their own way (you can read about this in 1 Kings 12). They strayed further and further from God's Laws during the reigns of successive kings and were eventually taken over and deported by the great might of the Assyrian Empire (this takes us through to 2 Kings 17).

The events of the beginning of the book of Daniel find us at a point some 116 years later. The southern tribes (now collectively referred to as Judah) remain; just about!

For much of the intervening time they had been little better than Israel. To be fair there had been moments of hope as kings like Hezekiah and Josiah attempted to stop the spiritual rot.

It is true to say that for decades God had warned His people through the prophets that their idolatry, immorality and injustice towards the poor and needy would lead to their ruin.

Stephen Travis, in his book 'The Bible as a Whole' refers to the 'if-ness' of God's promises. Just read **Jeremiah 7:3-8**. Travis writes, *"The 'if-ness' of God's promises is a constant theme in the Bible. God is full of generosity, constantly seeking to pour his blessings on people. Yet nothing is automatic. He guarantees nothing to people who want his gifts without his rule."*

Time and time again God's messengers urged them to turn from their rebellion but as we reach the seventh century BC, exile was inevitable. The Babylonians were now the leading force in the world. Nebuchadnezzar was on the throne, having smashed the power of Egypt and set himself up with an awesome reputation.

In 2 Kings 24 Jehoiakim is King of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar invades Judah but allows the king to continue to rule in exchange for his homage and allegiance to Babylon. It is at this time that items from the temple, together with members of the aristocracy and royalty are

taken back to Babylon. Among that number is a young man named Daniel.

Jeremiah continues to plead with the people to return to the Lord, but his message largely falls on deaf ears. Eventually Jerusalem will be destroyed and the rest of the nation taken into exile in Babylon.

In this series of Homegroup studies we will look at the story of Daniel and his friends; young men who discover what it is like to live for God in a world that rejects God. Although set some 2600 years ago, we find many lessons that challenge and help us today as we seek to be faithful to God's word.

