

A Long Way from Home

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[0 : 00] So today we're starting a new series in the book of Daniel called Daniel's World. Daniel's a great book, also a great name if you're having a baby anytime soon.

Really strong name. And today we're going to do chapter one, which is called A Long Way From Home. When God wants to drill a man and thrill a man and skill a man, when God wants to mold a man to play the noblest part, when he yearns with all his heart to create so great and bold a man that all the world shall be amazed.

Watch his methods, watch his ways. How he ruthlessly perfects whom he royally elects, how he hammers him and hurts him and with mighty blows converts him into trial shapes of clay which only God understands.

While his tortured heart is crying and he lifts beseeching hands, how he bends but never breaks, when his good he undertakes, how he uses whom he chooses and which every purpose fuses him, by every act induces him to try his splendor out.

God knows what he's about. That anonymous poem speaking about how God shapes and molds and uses unlikely people in his world to bring him glory.

[1 : 32] And this would be so true of Daniel and his three friends. These people that we're going to take ten weeks to look at together. How God used Daniel and his three friends to influence the most pagan nation on earth.

How God shaped, gifted and transformed Daniel to be his man in the courts of four different emperors and two different empires over a span of seven decades.

These men who refused to let a hostile society squeeze them into its mold. Daniel a book that is vital in encouraging us to remain faithful to God despite pressures to compromise and conform.

Daniel's Babylon, as we shall see, is very similar to our Edinburgh. Our gods just have different names and our temples are less clearly defined.

Daniel is a believing individual swimming against the tide of the surrounding culture. And so his story resonates with our experience.

[2 : 47] We know what it is to be vastly outnumbered. To be the only believers in our families, our workplaces. To be the only believers in our friendship groups and social spheres.

Daniel and his friends, who from their teenage years set their faces like flint to remain believers both publicly and privately.

In a society dripping with idolatry. At great personal cost. And so it has so much import for us today. As we're called to glorify God both publicly and privately.

Even in a hostile culture. Daniel is a unique book in many ways. It's a book of two halves. The first six chapters are six narrative stories.

The final chapters are four apocalyptic visions. It's also written in two different languages. Chapters one and the first bit of chapter two are in Hebrew.

[3 : 55] Chapter two to the end of chapter seven are in Aramaic. And chapter eight to the end of the book are back in Hebrew. So in the middle of the book you have an evangelistic tract.

In Aramaic, which would be the language that most of the world spoke. An evangelistic tract talking about the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar.

What a useful book this would be. It's also a wonderfully accurate book. We know lots about the Babylonians. We have loads of extra biblical evidence that perfectly line up with what we read in Daniel.

They write their voracious chronologists. They chronicle everything in this weird cuneiform language which Daniel and his friends would have to master.

So let me read Daniel chapter one for us and then we'll have a few thoughts. Daniel chapter one. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

[5 : 04] 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. Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his courts, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility.

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. 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. Among those who were chosen were some from Judah. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

[6 : 04] The chief official gave them new names. To Daniel, the name Belteshazzar. To Hananiah, Shadrach. To Mishael, Meshach. And to Azariah, Abednego.

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 in this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel.

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 men of your age? The king would then have my head because of you.

Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, Please test your servants for ten days. Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.

Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food and treat your servants in accordance with what you say. So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

[7 : 07] At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the younger men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

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. At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.

The king talked with them and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. So they entered the king's service. 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.

And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus. Let's pray. Father God bless us as we look at your word. Teach us and change us.

Glorify your son. Father thank you that you are the same God who was with Daniel in Babylon who's here with us this morning. So Father help us we pray in Jesus name.

[8 : 22] Amen. First thing I want us to see is the deportation to Babylon. Verses 1 and 2 are absolutely shocking.

It is the day that no one in Judah ever thought would come. The sacking of Jerusalem was close a hundred years before during the reign of King Hezekiah.

Sennacherib, the Assyrian emperor, had marched on Jerusalem. And then just as they were about to engage, Sennacherib unexpectedly withdrew and Jerusalem was temporarily spared.

Over the preceding century, the geopolitical scene had totally changed. Sennacherib, the emperor of Assyria was the big man.

He was the one in charge. But a hundred years later, Babylon is the big power. They are the unrivaled superpower in the world.

[9 : 23] And their position had been swelled, particularly through a coalition with the Medes, who are going to turn up a little bit later on in the book of Daniel. This unstoppable force, this Babylonian war machine, had in 612 BC decimated Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire.

Seven years later, Babylon had struck the decisive blow against the Egyptians at the enormous battle of Carchemish. They are now the unrivaled superpower in the world.

The undisputed champion of the world. The Tyson Fury of the global scene. Having dispensed with Assyria and Egypt, the Babylonian war machine fixes its gaze on minute Judah.

Judah standing all alone. 605 BC, the northern territory of Israel had been conquered and decimated by Assyria many years before and consigned to the pages of history.

So in 605 BC, the third year of the ineffective puppet king, King Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar having conquered all that stood in his way, now besieges Jerusalem.

[10 : 49] The outcome is a foregone conclusion. It is a highly skilled, mechanized, battle-hardened, gargantuan Babylonian force coming up against parochial Jerusalem.

It is challenger tanks versus pea shooters. And Babylon is bound to win. And as we read in verse 2, Jehoiakim is defeated.

Jerusalem is occupied. And the temple articles are plundered and placed in the treasure house of Marduk, King Nebuchadnezzar's chief god in Babylon.

This is a crushing blow to the Jewish people. What does it say about everything they believed? What does it say about their gods?

Their god who was supposed to be supreme and in charge. The only real god in the whole world who made the heavens and the earth. What does it say that these pagan hordes have just destroyed and robbed his nation's capital?

[12 : 01] Perhaps Yahweh wasn't that big a deal after all. Perhaps he was just a tribal deity for a small people who told great stories to improve their self-esteem.

What does it say about God that his people have just been utterly routed by the Babylonians? And not only that, but what does it say about God's promises?

That God's people living in the land that God had given him, who had placed his name in a very symbolic and special way in Jerusalem. What does it say now that that has the Babylonian flag hoisted up?

The Jerusalem flagpole. And what about the promise of a king? The promise that a Davidic king would reign on David's throne forever, ushering in peace and prosperity on earth.

And now King Jehoiakim, who was a rubbish king, gives way to no king. Not just not a Davidic king, but no king at all.

[13 : 07] Was it time to write God off? Was it time to say that Yahweh had utterly failed and had made promises beyond his ability to deliver? And just to top it off, it wasn't any invading party, it was the Babylonians.

The Babylonians from Babylon or Babel on. That place that symbolically shakes its fist at God.

That place from Genesis 11 that said, let's build a tower for ourselves. That reaches up to heaven to make a great name. Utterly defiant of God.

And though it seems to be a great tower in their eyes, what does it say in Genesis 11? That God had to come down to see it. It was so small in his eyes.

That tower on the plains of Sheena. If you look at the footnote in verse 2, these he carried off to the temple of his God in Sheena, it's the same place.

[14 : 13] Almost like going back to square one. Almost like God's dealings with his people over the last millennia have been utterly in vain.

Now they find themselves back on the plain under the heel of a people who have got no time for Yahweh, no time for his promises and real hatred for his people.

Had it all been utterly in vain? Well, to the secular historian, it makes perfect sense. The dog with the biggest teeth gets the biggest dinners. The one with the biggest army conquers the biggest territory.

The conclusion was obvious. Of course Babylon overran Judah. It's to be expected. But this is not how Daniel saw it.

This is not how he writes his book many years later as he's reflecting on this. Eighty years in Babylon court. What does he say? Look with me at verse 2.

[15 : 15] And the Lord and Yahweh delivered Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. The first thing Daniel says about his God in this book is that God is in charge.

God is sovereign. He's involved. Daniel doesn't just inform us of what happened. He tells us why it happened. Why did it happen?

Because God allowed us. The God of the universe allowed his people to be vanquished by the Babylonians.

Daniel is a Bible guy. He's been well taught by his parents. He was nurtured during the wonderful reforms ushered in by King Josiah.

Daniel had heard the words of Jeremiah ringing in his ears who had warned Judah a few years before Nebuchadnezzar arrived. God warns Judah through Jeremiah telling them to do what is just and right with the warning.

[16 : 27] But if you do not obey these commands, declares the Lord, I swear by myself that this place will become a ruin. For this is what the Lord says about the palace of the king of Judah.

Though you are like Gilead to me, like the summit of Lebanon, I will surely make you like a wasteland, like towns not inhabited. I will send destroyers against you, each man with his weapons, and they will cut up your fine cedar beams and throw them into the fire.

People from many nations will pass by this city and will ask one another, why has the Lord done such a thing to this great city? And the answer will be, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and have worshipped and served other gods.

This was not purposeless suffering as a result of chance in a pointless, rudderless universe. This isn't the result of might is right.

This was discipline enacted by the sovereign Lord for his glory and the ultimate benefit of his beloved, but wayward people. Daniel was a Bible guy, and it enabled him, it enables him to remain faithful to his sovereign Lord, even when it seemed everything was crumbling around his ears.

[17 : 48] It means that even when he is taken as a prisoner of war to the capital of a distant land for a radical program of social education and indoctrination into Babylonianism, he will not capitulate, because he understands the ways and the will and the discipline of the sovereign Lord.

If we too interpret our circumstances through the lens of God's word, resting in its truth, understanding the God who reveals himself to us, then it will ensure we will not be swamped, even when what we see with our eyes doesn't line up with what we believe in our hearts, even when it involves suffering, we'll still be those who can say, God, you're in control and I trust you.

Isn't that what we learn in the book of Job, who loses everything? And yet, what does he say? I'm better for it because I now see you better.

I now see you, Lord, and understand your ways more. If there's one thing we learn from Daniel chapter 1, it is that we're to build our lives on the unshakable truth of God's eternal word.

And this will enable us to stand firm even when the storms blow and the floods come up. First thing we see is the deportation to Babylon.

[19 : 17] And then they arrive in Babylon and they undergo a process of assimilation. Look at verses 3, 4, and 5. Look at the criteria you need to reach in order to be deported.

From the royal family or nobility, young men without physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well-informed, quick to understand, qualified to serve in the king's palace.

Think I'd probably be able to remain at home. But this was part of Nebuchadnezzar's genius. He would take the top 1% of a conquered civilization, he would deport them to Babylon, he would then indoctrinate them with all things Babylonian.

He would assimilate them into the Babylonian society, and then he would send them back to be vice-regents of the conquered nation. It was a political bit of genius that he shored up his conquered territories.

Daniel and his friends are selected, and the package they receive is remarkable. A three-year scholarship at the Babylonian University, the most highly reputed educational institution in the ancient world.

[20 : 34] Then they would be fast-tracked to the top of the civil service. Not only that, but they would get full board and lodging consuming food that was literally fit for a king.

It's a pretty good deal. 15-year-old, full scholarship, highly reputed institution, banqueting like a king.

And the city of Babylon would make Jerusalem look like a small market town. It would be like moving from Edinburgh to the city of London in scale terms.

The architecture was awesome in every sense of the word. Nebuchadnezzar, whose wife was from the countryside, had built the hanging gardens of Babylon so she could walk out of the palace and feel at home.

This, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, just so your wife could feel at home in a sprawling metropolis. That's real love. Nebuchadnezzar's palace was a picture of opulence and grandeur, with his throne room being 50 feet by 160 feet, which is enormous.

- [21 : 44] Protruding out of the skyline was the ziggurat Etimanki, the cubic skyscraper, which is called the foundation of heaven and earth, with its seven platforms rising 100 meters in the air as a reimagining of the ancient tower that once stood on this site in a culture just as defiant as the one back in Genesis.

Around the city was 120 feet high wall, 80 feet thick. He could ride a chariot around the top and it would go all the way around the 56 mile diameter of the city.

Entrance into the city was through one of the gates dedicated to various gods, the most famous of which is this one, the Ishtar Gate, which you can see the actual gate, which has been reconstructed in the Pergamum Museum in Berlin.

Has anyone seen that? Pete Buvert, he'll tell you how impressive it is, with its blue tiles and pictures of lions all over it.

Babylon was dripping with idolatry. Within its walls were 1,197 temples. Every emotion, every phenomena, every bit of produce would have its own gods.

- [23 : 12] The temples were libraries, training institutions, trade guilds, and cultural centers all rolled into one. It was a city submerged in idolatry, drowning in idolatry.

The pinnacle of the year was the spring festival, where King Nebuchadnezzar would go out in front of all his people and would be slapped by various priests until the tears ran from his face, showing to everyone that it was in fact the gods and their priests that were in charge, not the king at all.

As Daniel and his friends roll into Babylon, imagine the awestruck wonder at beholding such a sight of civilization. A culture centered on learning, making great strides in astrology, science, literature, architecture, and the arts.

Everyone on their wrist has a mark of the genius of the Babylonians who invented the sexy decimal system, which splits minutes into 60 seconds and hours into 60 minutes.

That is preserved by us today. Daniel and his friends were in Babylon to become Babylonians. They would be fully immersed in the culture, affronted by the idolatry and indoctrinated with the learning and language.

- [24 : 37] They were there to be rewired from their antiquated Hebrew ways into the cutting edge life of Babylonianism. And look at verse 6.

The curriculum starts with their names being changed. As they matriculate at the Babylon University, they're told that they need some better identifying names.

To name someone is to show your power over them. And so their names are changed. And it's not just for convenience. It's an attack on their very identity.

Daniel, whose name means Yahweh is my judge, has his name changed to Belshazzar, which means Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonians.

He protects my life. Yahweh is judge too. Marduk protects my life. Hananiah, whose name means the Lord shows grace, has his name changed to Shadrach, which means I am under the command of Aku.

- [25 : 48] Aku is the moon god. Again, totally changed. Mishaël, there is no one like Yahweh. And his name is changed to Meshach.

There is no one like Aku, the moon god. Azariah, whose name means the Lord is my help, has his name changed to Abednego, which means servant of Nabu.

And Nabu, in case you were wondering, is the prince of the Babylonian gods, the son of Marduk. Every part of their life in Babylon is designed to strip away their witness and dismantle their identity.

Daniel and his friends are powerless to stop their name being changed. They also give themselves fully to their studies, engaging wholly and heartedly in their learning, understanding and gaining wisdom with the aim of mastering the subject.

Look at verse 20. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned these men, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers in his whole kingdom.

[27 : 06] Literally ten hands better. They could do everything better than even the most established professors, priests, enchanterers and magicians.

so well had they taken to their studies. But the reason wasn't so much their industry, it was their devotion to Yahweh. Because verse 17 says, but to these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding.

However, Daniel and his friends are in Babylon, they are learning about Babylon, but they never are of Babylon. Their hearts continue to beat wholeheartedly for Yahweh even when saturated by their surrounding culture.

May that be true for us. We as Christians are immersed similarly in exile and a different version of Babylon, bombarded by worldviews from every side that are an affront to our identity in Christ.

A society that tries to strip us of our confidence permits only a privatized faith and relentlessly tries to squeeze us into its secularized anti-theistic mold.

[28 : 22] So what do we need? We need the two things that Daniel and his friends have, discernment and devotion. Discernment to understand that nothing is neutral or objective, that everything is proselytizing a worldview in our culture.

Every film, every news report, every article, every advert, every political standpoint, all of them are sponsored by different modern day versions of the king of Babylon.

We need to be discerning, not necessarily shutting our ears or adversely our eyes, though that might sometimes be necessary, but using our God-given discernment not to be naively taken in by their message and assimilate it into their way of thinking.

An example would be children going to school and they're told repeatedly that they are the products of matter plus time plus chance and have no dignity or value and are just like the animals.

They're just a little bit further up the evolutionary chain. We must be those who offer them the true minority report that they are known, loved and made in the image of the creator God and are therefore those of intrinsic value, dignity and worth, not allowing our children to be assimilated.

[29 : 46] We need discernment. Our workplaces tell us that it isn't appropriate to talk about God at work. Again, we need discernment. Why should the public propaganda of secularism demand an absolute silencing of believers?

Persecution is when believers are punished for speaking about their faith. Assimilation is when believers don't talk about their faith, having swallowed wholeheartedly the worldview that it's not appropriate.

When we do, just privatize our faith. We'll do it on Sunday and behind closed doors, but never publicly before a watching world. We also need devotion.

A Red Hawk deep devotion to the Lord our God. A heartfelt faith in the truth of God's word and a sheer dependence on the grace of our God. Unless our heart is beating wholly for the Lord Jesus, we will easily be assimilated and swamped by the competing worldviews propagated in our society.

And our identity will be eroded in the process. The final part of Daniel chapter one is taken up with the stand that him and his friends take.

[31 : 03] Keeping with the sound, the postulation, the taking of a stance in Babylon. It seems like a really weird thing, doesn't it? Seems like a really weird thing out of all the learning and the name changing, out of being deported from your home in Judah, that the thing you're going to take your stand on is your food.

And commentators write endlessly about what is going on in this scenario. And they offer things like this. perhaps they didn't eat the food because of the Jewish food laws.

They weren't sure of the origin. They thought actually Nebuchadnezzar might be partial to a bit of rock badger, which they weren't allowed to eat, and therefore we won't eat it because we can't trace where it's come from.

And rather than defile Yahweh, we'll just eat veg. The problem with that is they also refuse the wine. And there's nothing in Leviticus 11 and 12 about the food laws saying that wine, under any circumstances, makes you defiled.

Which brought them to the second view. Perhaps they didn't eat the food because it was offered to idols. That would be very in keeping with the teaching of Deuteronomy, and particularly Deuteronomy chapter 6.

[32 : 21] I'm sure that is part of what is going on. But so imbibed with idolatry is Babylon, that there is a God of agriculture and farming.

there is a God of produce and vegetation. So to think these vegetables weren't also offered to the gods first, is probably not the case. Ishtar, the one that gate is named after, has a real part to play in farming.

And almost certainly the farming guild would offer their produce, their veg, to her first, before it made its way to Daniel and his friends.

So perhaps they were just making a point. Perhaps this was just their only means of protest. Well it's a bit weird going on some kind of hunger strike, but not doing it publicly, but going to see the person in charge of you and saying, I don't really want your meat, please can we just have veg and water?

Oh and if it doesn't work then in ten days we'll revert to exactly what you want us to eat. No problem. So I wonder what are they doing in their vegetarianism?

[33 : 33] Well here's the kite I'd like to fly. What if their vegetarianism is a means of them showing their dependence on God to supernaturally intervene in their situation?

What if they were disciplining themselves and reminding themselves that the source of their health provision and sustenance wasn't ultimately from Nebuchadnezzar and his plethora of gods but was from their God Yahweh the God who is over all?

Let me try and show you where I get this from. They only eat vegetables for ten days and are then set to be compared with their peers. The official is fearful.

Why is he fearful? Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men of your age? Worse is a word for scrawny. Why should he see you looking thin and emaciated amongst your peers?

And then verse 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. That phrase healthier and better nourished is a bit to our 21st century sensibilities.

[34 : 48] It says they were fatter and fuller in flesh. flesh. It seems that in Babylon overall diameter was something you were looking for. And so it seems to my eyes that they said let's just eat vegetables.

Trusting that God was able to take vegetables and supernaturally intervene in order that they would outperform their peers in their kind of anti-weight watchers kind of society.

I've never seen a fat vegetarian and therefore it seems that God has so intervened that they look fatter and fuller in flesh even on this diet of veg and water.

It must be supernatural intervention. If you're banqueting at the king's table breakfast, lunch and dinner and you're doing that for ten days you might put on a bed of timber I think and yet the guys eating veg are fuller and fatter in flesh.

If that is so then what an interesting application for us. What choices are we making or my making or you making in your life to show that our ultimate dependence, our ultimate security, our ultimate joy is bound up with God.

[36 : 14] My fear is that we're all too self-sufficient, too self-sustaining, just doing what we can do and never trusting.

Our society says that security is to be found in money in the bank for the rainy day. And therefore I wonder is the way we use our money a way to show that our ultimate dependence is on God.

To be generous, to hold it loosely, to not stockpile the blessing we receive but be a reservoir of it funneling to other people. A way of showing that by the use of our treasure that our treasure is not our treasure but Jesus is our treasure.

Our treasure says that academic success is of the most paramount importance to forge a good future for yourselves. So when coursework, revision and studying comes, it takes priority over everything else.

even gathering together on a Sunday is forsaken for time in the library. Is committing to local church at the sacrifice of a few hours of study a way of showing that actually our future is not ultimately bound up in our ability to comprehend textbooks but is bound up in a red hot devotion to the Lord Jesus.

[37 : 36] Worshipping him through our work, not worshipping our work. our society pedestals family and silos family life away from and over everything else.

Is having a permeable family life, open homes and a sacrificial investment in our wider church family, a way of showing that our supernatural family formed in Jesus is of equal and eternal worth when placed alongside our natural families?

God is the ultimate source of our faith in Jesus Christ is the ultimate source of our identity, the ultimate source of our worth, the ultimate source of our security and the ultimate fountain of our joy.

What for us is going to be like the vegetables of Babylon? How we do life differently to show all that we have in Jesus? us. Daniel and his friends lean wholly on Yahweh to intervene and provide in their lives in a way that marks them out from their peers and testifies to God's goodness to them and his sovereignty over them.

The deportation to Babylon, our God, is sovereign and in control. The assimilation by Babylon, our God, they say, is the source of our identity.

[38 : 59] The postulation in Babylon, our sovereign Lord, is our hope and our help. And see how God intervenes. He intervenes in history, verse 2.

He intervenes in relationships, verse 9. He intervenes in the life of the individual, verse 17. He's interested in the big stuff and the little stuff.

He does global politics at the same time he does your individual academics. Behind the relaying of history, there is the sovereign Lord who is working out his purposes in and through individuals in the course of his history.

And this phrase in verse 2 and verse 9 and verse 17, God gave, just building up as this small story in the story of God's enormous intervention, that it would be this God who gave his only son to transform absolutely everything.

God who intervened most decisively in the person of the Lord Jesus given by God in order that those who have been in exile in Babylon for all of their lives would have a home forever with God.

[40 : 15] Daniel is a tiny story in the unfolding story of God and his sovereign plan to redeem a people for his very own possession. who will worship him alone above the competition of this hostile society.

Let me pray. Father God, thank you so much for this story of Daniel. Thank you how it speaks so relevantly to where we are as people in this place in history.

Thank you that it speaks of your sovereignty and your goodness. Thank you that it speaks of your absolute control over absolutely everything. And so Lord, I pray we would trust you as Daniel did.

we would seek to show that trust to the watching world. And Father, through it, you might use us to influence many in the way that you used Daniel for such a long period to make a real difference in the society in which you placed him.

So Lord, we would say you are our trust, you are our hope, the source of our identity and the fountain of all of our joy. So Lord, would you keep your rightful place in each of our lives.

[41 : 32] For the glory of your Son, we pray these things. Amen.