



THIS IS WHAT THE LORD SAYS WEEK ONE

Bible Reading

Daniel 1:1-7

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 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 court officials, 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. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

Jeremiah 29:4-7

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, 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.'

Daniel 1:2

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.

Observation questions

1. In Daniel 1:1–7, what actions did Babylon take to bring the young men from Judah into the king's service, including their education, food, and names?
2. What details in Daniel 1 show that Daniel and his friends were taken from a place of worshiping God into a culture shaped by different gods and values?]
3. According to Daniel 1:2, who ultimately delivered Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, and what does that statement emphasize about God's role in the exile?
4. In Jeremiah 29:4–7, what specific activities were God's people told to pursue while living in Babylon?

Interpretation questions

1. Babylon gave Daniel and his friends new names connected to Babylonian beliefs. Why would changing their names be an attempt to reshape their identity and loyalty?
2. Daniel 1:2 says that the Lord delivered Judah into Babylon's hands, even though Babylon acted violently and wickedly. How can God's sovereignty give confidence without treating human choices and evil as unimportant?
3. Jeremiah tells the exiles to settle down and seek the city's prosperity. Why is that different from simply accepting Babylon's values or agreeing with its idols?
4. Why do assimilation and separation both fall short of God's purpose for his people? What might it look like for believers to relate, restore, and redeem instead?