

Theme: To stand strong in our land of exile we must remember our true identity as God's people, trust in His Sovereignty, and walk with wisdom and humility as we are in the world but not of it.

I. Intro - The Story of Kunta Kinte

- A. Linda and I recently read Roots
- B. A hard but amazing story of Kunta Kinte & descendants
- C. A key issue is his name - Kunta Kinte or Toby
- D. More than just a name - it is about an identity
- E. How does one maintain identity in the land of exile?

II. The Issue of Identity

- A. Babylon wants to change their core identity
 - 1. A pagan education for 3 years to make them Babylonian
He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ ... They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. Daniel 1:4–5
 - a. Language - learn Aramaic, Akkadian, Sumerian
 - b. Literature - study their religious texts, rules for interpreting dreams, reading omens, etc.
 - c. The goal is to make them Babylonian in their worldview and identity
 - 2. They are to be given royal food to earn their loyalty
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. Daniel 1:5

- a. The king is taking care of his future servants
 - b. However, it makes them dependent on him, seduces their loyalty to him, and makes them accustomed to a luxurious way of life - all owing to Nebuchadnezzar
3. They are to be given new names for a new identity
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. Daniel 1:6–7
- a. Names were more than labels - they expressed identity
 - b. The Hebrew names were full of covenant meaning
 - 1. Daniel - God is my Judge
 - 2. Hananiah - Yahweh is gracious
 - 3. Mishael - Who is like God?
 - 4. Azariah - Yahweh has helped
 - c. They are now given pagan Babylonian names
 - 1. Names seem to be purposefully corrupted
 - 2. But they seem to have been names built on Babylonian gods
 - 3. This was to give them a new identity, which would be reinforced every time their name was called
 - 4. In public, they were forced to use these names - but it appears in private they always kept their true Hebrew names and identity! They never forgot who they were and their identity as God's people!
- B. All of this is an attempt to get Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to forget who they are and allow their identity to become Babylonian rather than a follower of Yahweh. How will they respond?

III. Daniel Resists Losing His Identity

A. Daniel resolves to not eat the royal delicacies

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. Daniel 1:8

1. This has puzzled scholars - for good reason!
2. Daniel and his friends accept their new names and go to the pagan school!
3. They decide not to eat the delicacies - why?
 - a. Levitical law - but wine is allowed!
 - b. Idol sacrifices - but vegetables were part of that!
 - c. It is probably to make sure they are not seduced by the delicacies at this point and to show that God is their source
 - d. It also gives a clear test to show God is with them
 - e. Whatever reason, they decided this was a key issue to not losing their identity in their land of exile and it would defile them

B. Daniel acts with godly wisdom and humility

1. Daniel asks (not demands) the chief official

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. Dan 1:8

- a. He is resolved - but is not belligerent or arrogant
- b. He humbly requests permission from the authority
- c. As exiles, we must always display godly humility and wisdom when interacting with the authorities in our land of exile.

2. The official denies the request

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.” Daniel 1:9–10

- a. The official says he can not allow this
- b. But Daniel knows the official is not trying to persecute Daniel, but actually is favorably disposed towards him
- c. No record that Daniel protests, does a hunger strike, marches around the capital, starts a riot - none of these would be godly or show wisdom and humility

3. Daniel’s humble and wise proposal to the guard

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.” Daniel 1:11–13

- a. Daniel goes to the guard who works over him
- b. He is very respectful - and he proposes a test
- c. This is wise, humble, and shows faith in God

4. The guard agrees and grants Daniel his request

So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. Daniel 1:14

5. At every turn, Daniel is showing the godly character, wisdom, and humility that is critical for those who must live faithfully in exile.

IV. The Sovereignty of God for His Exile People

A. God intervenes and they pass the test of the food

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. Daniel 1:15–16

1. They pass the test!
2. This is not about saying vegetables are healthier - such a noticeable difference in 10 days requires Divine intervention
3. God intervenes so that they pass the test and are able to maintain their identity via their diet.

B. God's Sovereignty throughout this story - "natan"

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... ⁹ Now God had **caused** the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel... 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. Daniel 1:2, 9, 17

1. Delivered, caused, gave - the Hebrew verb 'natan'
2. God is working Sovereignly throughout this story
 - a. God is the one who delivered Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand and implemented the exile
 - b. God is the one that caused the official to have favor (hesed!) for Daniel
 - c. God is the one Who gave the four young men success in all their studies!

3. Humans are certainly very active and taking responsibility, but God is ultimately in charge and is always acting behind the scenes.
4. Daniel and his companions can only act faithfully because God has first acted, and their character and resolve are sustained by God's Sovereign faithfulness throughout their lives!

C. The result: the four flourish in their exile

1. Nebuchadnezzar recognizes God's favor on them
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. Daniel 1:18–20
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar sees they are superior in every way - none were equal to them! (Also note Hebrew names!)
 - b. Ten times better - idiom to say totally superior
 - c. They had applied themselves and God Sovereignly blessed them so they knew the Babylonian beliefs and practices better than all others - even though they knew they were not real wisdom and truth!
2. Daniel's long service
And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus. Daniel 1:21
 - a. Daniel's career lasted throughout the exile! He not only survived - he thrived and outlasted the exile!
 - b. Babylon fell - but Daniel was still blessed and still serving God and others

- c. This is one of the key themes of the entire book: kingdoms rise and fall, but God's Kingdom lasts forever - and so do His faithful servants!
- d. This is the Sovereign blessing of God in the midst of exile! Those who know and trust the Sovereign God can survive and thrive even in exile - and they will outlast the kingdoms of their exile.

V. Applying the Word

A. Maintaining our identity in the land of our exile

1. Like these 4 teens, we must maintain our identity in the land of our exile
2. This has often been a struggle for Christians
 - a. Some simply remove themselves from the world, maintaining their identity but losing the ability to reach their land of exile
 - b. Some capitulate and lose their identity, becoming indistinguishable from the surrounding culture, and thus also lose their ability to reach their land of exile.
3. We are called to dual citizenship, being in the world but not of it, for the city but not of it
 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. John 17:14-15
 - a. We are not of the world - our identity is in Christ
 - b. We are not out of the world - even though it hates us
 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. Jer 29:7
 - c. We are to pray and work for the shalom - the peace and prosperity - of our city of exile

- d. But we must do this while maintaining our distinct identity, keeping our commitment to the heavenly city primary.

4. Where do I find my identity?

- a. Nationality - my true citizenship is in heaven!
- b. Ethnicity - in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, black, white, Latino, Asian, or anything else - we are all one in Christ!
- c. Political affiliation - our citizenship is the Kingdom of God, and all other kingdoms and parties will fail and fall!
- d. Sexuality - God has made me male or female, and I submit all my desires to Him, knowing that my sexual propensities and desires are NOT my identity
- e. Social class, education level - in Christ there is no slave or free, for we are all free by being his slaves!
- f. Work or ministry - these are what we are called to do, but not who I am!
- g. To find my identity in ANYTHING other than Christ is to utterly fail to understand what it means to be a Christian.

5. Forming and maintaining my identity in Christ

- a. I am given my true identity in Jesus Christ
- b. But I must not let this identity be replaced by false identities
- c. Gathering - in person if at all possible - each week is a critical piece of maintaining my identity in Christ!
- d. Parents - shape it in your children, being careful of influences, constantly talking and teaching them
- e. Let the Spirit point out your specific vulnerability

1. Daniel accepted the school, but not the food!
2. Each person and family is going to have to seek God and take responsibility to make sure the identity of each member is found in Christ and nothing else!

B. Water baptism - our identity in Christ

1. Today we will have three water baptisms
2. In water baptism, we are identified with Christ publicly and are clothed with Christ
3. If you have never been water baptized - see me!!
4. If you have, improve upon it today, re-invigorating your identity in Christ!
5. The Apostles Creed
6. Water baptism of Samiah, MJ, and Selena Holmes

Standing Strong In Exile

Daniel 1

June 27, 2021

Water Baptism

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Teaching keywords: Two kingdoms; exile and return; Sovereignty of God; humility and pride; wisdom and knowledge

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

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. ⁵The 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 Beltshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

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