



Message Guide

FOR AUGUST 10, 2025

STORYTELLER- 1: STORY IN A GODLESS LAND (DANIEL 1:1-21)



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We are kicking off a brand-new series of messages called, “Storyteller”, based on the third part of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. We have been using Matthew 1, the genealogy of Jesus, as a template for this entire year of preaching. Why? Because this gives us an excellent overview of Scripture leading up to the time of Jesus, and because every name has a story—that was part one in our series.

- **Part One:** Abraham to David (Matthew 1:1-6a), *Every Name has a Story*
- **Part Two:** David to the Babylonian Exile (Matthew 1:6b-11), *Every Story is Filled with choices*
- **Part Three:** The Babylonian Exile to Jesus (Matthew 1:12-16), *Our Stories Can Connect with God’s Story*

1. When have you seen how someone’s story connected to God’s story?

The third part of Jesus’ family tree: **Read Matthew 1:12-16.**

Rather than go through all these names in this series of messages, we’re going to zero in on this historical period of when the Jews were deported to Babylon and see the significance of what was happening—and the application for our lives—through the lens of three biblical books in the Old Testament: Daniel, Esther, and Nehemiah. Then later in the year as we approach Christmas, we’ll get to Matthew 1:16 with the birth of Christ.

Context: The Jews were in two divided countries: the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Around 722/721 BC, Assyria, the great powerhouse from the East conquered Israel and deported many of the Jews into slavery back to Assyria. Then the Babylonian Empire rose up and overtook Assyria, and around 587/586 BC, they defeated the Southern Kingdom of Israel and deported many of the Jews back to Babylon. This is the “deportation to Babylon” that is referenced in Matthew 1:12.

The Bible is not some made-up stories, and there’s this overarching unity of the Bible where what was happening historically intersected the stories and events found in the Old Testament, which then are referenced in the New testament.



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For example: History- The kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon

- Old Testament- Daniel, Esther, Nehemiah
- New Testament- “The deportation to Babylon” (Mt. 1:12)

Let’s take a look at one the stories we read about in the book of Daniel. *This is a story of faithfulness in a faithless land.*

Read Daniel 1: 1-7.

These verses describe what was common when a powerful nation in the ancient world conquered another nation. They would deport the royal family, the nobles, and the youth to enculturate the next generation of leaders in the language and literature of the conquering nation. They wanted to assimilate them, so they would become “Babylonian,” and then they would send them back to their homeland to rule on their behalf, not as Jews anymore, but as Babylonians. And they found that a three-year program of indoctrination and enculturation was sufficient. They would change their appearance, dress style, the food they ate, the language they spoke—all to transform them into Babylonians.

If we stop to think about it, this isn’t a bad way to transform people into a new and different way of thinking and living. In fact, this is the best tactic used by our enemy, Satan, and his legions of demons. Jesus calls him “the ruler of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The Apostle Paul says, “[We] once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.” (Ephesians 2:2, ESV)

Do you see the parallel?

2. As a follower of Jesus, in what ways do you see yourself as an exile in a strange and foreign land? Do you see this as a good thing or a bad thing?

The truth is, we were never meant to be completely comfortable or at home in this world. “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 3:20, ESV)

In our story in Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar used the same ploy that Satan uses to enculturate and indoctrinate us to become citizens of his kingdom and not God’s kingdom. This is far more serious and goes radically deeper than where some Christian sects land on things like dress style and makeup.



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No, Jesus is far more concerned with us not being indoctrinated in the ways, manners, attitudes, and actions of Satan's domain.

Well, that's not us though, right? How about the call to purity? "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3, ESV). Did you know that the word in the original text, porneia literally means, sex outside of marriage?

How about a lifestyle of humility and grace? "Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you." (1 Thessalonians 4:10-11, NIV)

How about the way we use our words? "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." (Colossians 4:5-6, NIV)

3. Has there been times in your life that you fell short to be sexually pure, or failed to treat people with humility and grace, or you were not careful with the words you spoke around others?

How can we resist the ways of this world under "the prince of the air," and show a different and better way? Not one that trivializes holiness into some superficial descriptors of how long your hair is, or whether women always need to wear dresses and have their heads covered, or you should never get a tattoo. These aren't matters of the soul, and they take our focus off the truly eternal matters of how we treat others, how we speak, how we live differently with joy and peace, how we face hardship and suffering, how we possess hope, how we are faithful to our wives or husbands and our children.

Daniel 1 gives us some answers: **Read Daniel 1:8-21.**

What an amazing, beautiful picture of remaining godly in a godless culture!

- There is Resolve. "Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself."
- There is Discernment in what is essential vs. non-essential. Daniel and his friends refused to eat or drink that which went against the Mosaic Law, but they submitted to learning the language, customs, and literature of the Babylonians.



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- There is Winsomeness. This is Not a popular word, but it fits the text. Daniel was winsome, not aggressive, not combative. He was respectful and gracious, and in the end, notice what it led to with the chief steward, “So he listened to them in this matter....” (Daniel 1:14, ESV). Our megaphone, podcast, and social media saturation of shouting does NOT lead to people listening to us but tuning us out.

Let’s make sure that if people are rejecting Christianity, it’s because of the message, not because of the bombastic way we are presenting Christ to others.

Challenge: Let’s be like Daniel and his friends. Let’s be godly and Christlike, in a godless culture.

What choice will you make? Will you follow the way of Jesus and be ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, or will we put blinders on and get sucked into the kingdom of this world?

4. What next step is God is stirring in you to take in living godly and Christlike in a godless culture?

Our mission as a church is *helping people take next steps with Jesus*. And we do this with resolve, discernment, and winsomeness. Why? Because we are called to love, care, and live the way of Jesus!