**Small Group notes – 18 April 2021**

**Welcome** – If you could relocate to anywhere in the world where would you choose & why?

**Word -** Singing in Babylon – Finding purpose in life’s second choices.

You’ve been relocated – Daniel 1:1-2

When we think about the life of Daniel two stories usually come to mind. The Lion’s Den and the Fiery Furnace with Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego. We can think of Daniel living a life of victory and faith filled adventure. However his story that incorporates great miracles and moments of faith is essentially a story of captivity and conflict.

Daniel would have been between the age of 13-18 yrs old when he arrived in Babylon. Rabbinic tradition states that Daniel was a descendant from king Hezekiah. Ironically, if Daniel was indeed from the line of Hezekiah, then his personal captivity and exile had been prophesied by the prophet Isaiah around 150 years earlier (Isaiah 39:7).

The mention of eunuchs in the passage brings us to an uncomfortable possibility not usually mentioned in Sunday school stories about Daniel. Commentators are divided, but it is very likely that for the majority of these young men who arrived in Babylon to serve in the king’s palace they would have ended up been castrated.

Daniel’s boss had certainly been castrated and it is more than likely that Daniel (a good looking young man) would have been a member of this emasculated team.

Daniel’s teenage years have not gone to plan. He is separated from his family and finds himself in a place he didn’t choose with quite likely a medical procedure that he didn’t want.

Painful indeed. But there was even something worse to consider.

Jeff Lucas reminds us that in the story of Daniel, Babylon is not just a location, but it represents a whole system of opposing beliefs and values: Babylon, the city of this world against the city of God.

*“Daniel’s story poses the question: who is the biggest loser? Israel, beaten hands down by the power of Babylon, or God, defeated by Babylon’s gods? In those days, when a nation was defeated, people considered that the nations God was defeated too”*. **Jeff Lucas**

*The taking of the secured articles from the temple in Jerusalem indicates that this is a spiritual as well as a political victory. There is a conflict between Babylon and Israel in which Israel is the loser. But behind this there is an implied conflict between the gods of Babylon and Israel’s God Yahweh. One of the primary questions the book of Daniel wrestles with is this. “Is it that Israel has lost power, or the god of Israel”. On the surface, we wonder if Daniel can survive the experience of exile, but far more deeply the book is asking us if Yahweh can survive it. Is Gods “turf” limited to the promised land or will he still be God when all appears lost?* **Gerard Kelly**

Daniel and his friends would had been taught from an early age that the idols of other nations were nothing, dead, powerless. But if that was true, how come the Babylonians had all this wealth and power. How come they defeated Israel and were the most feared nation in the world at that time.

In the coming weeks we are going to see how Daniel and his friends are going to react to their new second choice lives in their new second choice environments.

As we journey with Daniel and his friends we too can think about the world in which we live. We are also in exile; we are aliens in a foreign land. This place is not our permanent home we are passing through. We can also consider how we react to life’s situations and circumstances that come our way. Events that we wouldn’t have chosen for ourselves or loved ones. We can be honest and ask ourselves the real questions. Am I living in the real world with Jesus by my side or am I living in a fantasy land with a fantasy Jesus?

Read: Fantasies – Viv Thomas (Pg32-33 singing in Babylon)

**Questions**

* Has life turned out how you expected it to?
Have all your plans gone to plan! (encourage the group to share)
* Who are we following a biblical Jesus or a fantasy Jesus?
* As Christians living in the western hemisphere, do you agree that we too are now in exile? Why, or why not?
* Can you give any example where you learned something valuable in a ‘second choice” circumstance-what was it?