



W E K  
O N E

EXILED TO  
BABYLON

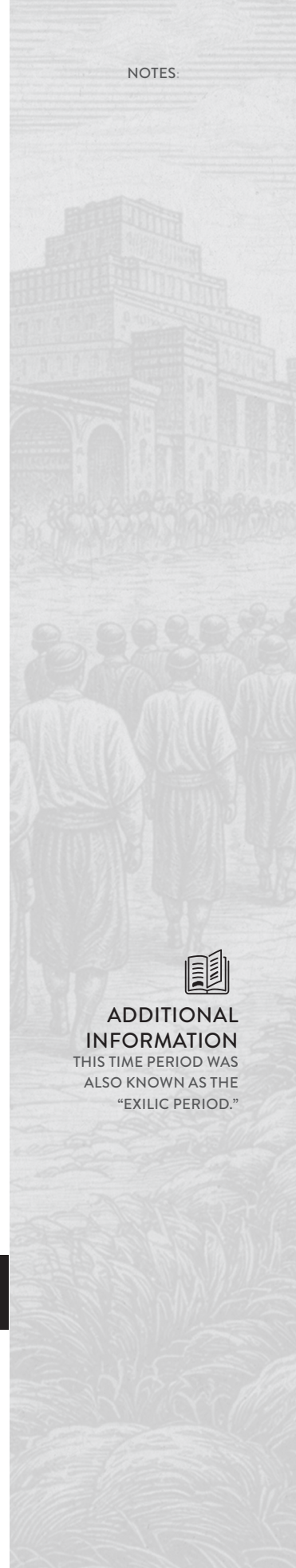
# DAY ONE

## JERUSALEM IS CONQUERED

The book of Daniel has inspired bedtime stories and Sunday school lessons for generations. If you know much about the Bible, you probably know something of Daniel and the lion's den, Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, or a hand suddenly appearing and writing on Belshazzar's palace wall foretelling the king's impending demise. Daniel's colorful visions are the source of an entire school of biblical study: eschatology, the study of end-time events. Daniel's interpretation of the great image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream established a detailed timeline of the rise and fall of ancient kingdoms, offering us a glimpse into future kingdoms of the earth. This fascinating book, along with the state of God's people during the time it was written, provides the backdrop for our Bible study.

READ DANIEL 1:1-2

The opening verses of Daniel describe the commencement of what



**ADDITIONAL  
INFORMATION**  
THIS TIME PERIOD WAS  
ALSO KNOWN AS THE  
"EXILIC PERIOD."

is known as the Babylonian captivity or the Babylonian exile. This period was given that name because the Babylonians conquered Judah, and the Hebrews either remained in Judah or were exiled to Babylon as captives subject to Babylonian rule and oppression.

The people of the southern kingdom of Judah, like those of their brothers in the northern kingdom of Israel, had forsaken worship of Jehovah God and turned to the worship of the false gods of their heathen neighbors. In addition to the sin of idolatry, they forsook God's commandments pertaining to the sabbath, justice, and the treatment of the poor. Repeated warnings of impending judgment for their sin by the prophets Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Micah went unheeded. Many of the prophetic warnings were specific – that the Babylonians would destroy Jerusalem and the temple and take the people of Judah captive. God's people did not listen and continued their lives of idolatry, immorality, and injustice toward the poor.

God's wrath travels slowly, leaving time for repentance. Divine judgment may be slow, but it is sure. His Word will not return to Him void. The people of Judah had forsaken their God and must now be forsaken by Him. The day of reckoning arrived, and God's chosen instrument of judgment was the armies of Babylon. The kingdom of Judah was ultimately conquered by the Babylonian Empire, its capital of Jerusalem destroyed, its temple looted, and thousands of its citizens exiled as captives to the city of Babylon.



### KEY CONCEPT

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH WAS ULTIMATELY CONQUERED BY THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE, ITS CAPITAL OF JERUSALEM DESTROYED, ITS TEMPLE LOOTED, AND THOUSANDS OF ITS CITIZENS EXILED AS CAPTIVES TO THE CITY OF BABYLON.

WHO WAS THE KING OF BABYLON, AND WHICH KING OF JUDAH WAS DEFEATED BY HIM?



### SHARE

"GOD'S WRATH TRAVELS SLOWLY, LEAVING TIME FOR REPENTANCE."

#IWILLNOTBOW

READ MICAH 3:12. MICAH PROPHESED THAT JERUSALEM WOULD BECOME WHAT?

READ MICAH 4:10. MICAH PROPHESED THAT GOD'S PEOPLE WOULD BE DELIVERED TO WHAT CITY?

God's judgment for sin doesn't last forever. In fact, the purpose of God's judgment in this story was to bring His people to a place of repentance. Jeremiah prophesied of the specific length of time that God's people would be oppressed by the Babylonians.

READ JEREMIAH 29:10-14. HOW LONG WOULD THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY LAST?

AFTER THE CAPTIVITY, WHAT WOULD GOD DO FOR HIS PEOPLE?

Even though God's people had sinned, God's love for them and covenant with them was unwavering. Within this prophecy of Jeremiah is a well-known verse that gives each of us hope through an understanding of the way God thinks of each of us:

*"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11).*

The opening verses of Daniel offer only a brief synopsis of the Babylonian conquest of Judah. Other passages of scripture, as well as ancient historical records, give us a more detailed account of the fall of Judah and the exile of its people. Nebuchadnezzar made three distinct incursions into Judah, marking stages of conquest against three different Judean kings. During each wave of conquest, different groups of Hebrews were captured and taken back to Babylon. These conquests culminated in the complete destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

The first Babylonian incursion into Judah occurred during the reign of Jehoiakim around 606 B.C. Jehoiakim did evil in the sight of God and refused to heed the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah. Jehoiakim famously tore up and burned the scroll sent to him by the prophet containing God's warning (Jeremiah 36). During the first Babylonian incursion, Judah was reduced to a Babylonian tributary. Jehoiakim was allowed to continue ruling the vassal state with a pledge of Jehoiakim's loyalty to Babylon. As was the custom to ensure loyalty,



## HISTORICAL NOTE

THE TIME OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM WAS THE PERIOD IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY FROM ABOUT 922 BC TO 586 BC, WHEN THE WHOLE OF ISRAEL SPLIT INTO TWO KINGDOMS: THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL AND THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH. THE DIVISION OCCURRED AFTER THE DEATH OF KING SOLOMON, WHEN HIS SON REHOBOAM'S HARSH RULE ALIENATED THE NORTHERN TRIBES, LEADING THEM TO BREAK AWAY. THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL LASTED UNTIL IT WAS CONQUERED BY THE ASSYRIANS IN 721 BC, WHILE THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH CONTINUED UNTIL THE BABYLONIANS DESTROYED JERUSALEM IN 586 BC.



## IMPORTANT POINT

NEBUCHADNEZZAR MADE THREE DISTINCT INCURSIONS INTO JUDAH.

Nebuchadnezzar took many of the sons of the Judean nobility as hostages. Daniel was among the first group of exiles.

The second Babylonian incursion took place after Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Jehoiakim was deposed, and many of the vessels of Solomon's Temple were taken back to Babylon. Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son, was made king. But Jehoiachin, like his father, refused to heed the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah about God's impending judgment due to Judah's sin. Jehoiachin only ruled for a short time before he, too, was deposed when the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem in 597 BC. Jehoiachin was taken in chains back to Babylon with a second group of exiles, including the prophet Ezekiel. Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, whose name Nebuchadnezzar changed to Zedekiah, was installed as king.

King Zedekiah also broke his oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. He ignored Jeremiah's warnings and secretly allied with the king of Egypt to throw off Babylon's yoke. In the ninth year of his reign, Zedekiah declared an open revolt. Again, Nebuchadnezzar led a vast army to crush the rebellion. Nebuchadnezzar slew Zedekiah's sons, then put Zedekiah's eyes out, so the last thing he would ever see was the slaying of his sons. He was then hauled to Babylon in chains. This marked the third and final Babylonian incursion, which resulted in the destruction of Solomon's Temple and the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Zedekiah was brought in chains to Babylon along with a significant number of additional Jewish exiles.

READ DANIEL 1:3-8. WHAT ARE THE HEBREW NAMES OF THE FOUR YOUNG MEN WHO WERE EXILED TO BABYLON?

WHAT BABYLONIAN NAMES WERE GIVEN TO THEM?



### HISTORICAL NOTE

THE BABYLONIANS WERE CHALDEANS AND BOTH TERMS ARE OFTEN USED INTERCHANGEABLY IN ANCIENT TEXTS. IT'S INTERESTING THAT GOD CALLED ABRAM TO COME OUT OF HIS CHALDEAN PEOPLE.



### ADDITIONAL READING

2 CHRONICLES 36:5-21  
2 KINGS 24  
2 KINGS 25

The story of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who lived as exiles in Babylon, is the inspiration for our Bible study, "I Will Not Bow." These young men were among the best and brightest of the people of Judah. The scripture tells us they were of royal lineage. They were:

*"Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace..." (Daniel 1:4).*

These young men were forcibly exiled from their homeland. They were ripped away from everything familiar to them and taken on a 1,000-mile journey eastward to the capital of the Babylonian empire, the city of Babylon. They were forced to live as captives in a completely foreign land. Nebuchadnezzar's goal was to strip them of their Hebrew identity and assimilate them into Babylonian culture.

WHAT WOULD NEBUCHADNEZZAR HOPE TO GAIN BY ASSIMILATING THE EXILES INTO BABYLONIAN CULTURE?

WHY DO YOU SUPPOSE NEBUCHADNEZZAR EXILED THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST OF JUDAH?

Tomorrow, we will explore how Babylon differed drastically from Judea and discuss the courage the Hebrew exiles showed in resisting assimilation.



**HISTORICAL NOTE**  
THE "LAND OF SHINAR" IN THE BIBLE IS REFERRING TO BABYLONIA.



**TODAY'S PRAYER**

"LORD, AS I JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE, KEEP MY HEART AND MIND FOCUSED ON MAINTAINING A KIND OF LIFE THAT PLEASES YOU. I DON'T WANT TO BE FOUND NEGLECTFUL OF MY RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU."

IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

# DAY TWO

## SQUEEZED INTO BABYLON'S MOLD



### KEY CONCEPT

THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE, BABYLON SYMBOLIZES OPPOSITION TO GOD AND HIS KINGDOM. IT IS SYNONYMOUS WITH IDOLATRY AND WICKEDNESS.

The city of Babylon was the capital of ancient Babylonia, a region in southeastern Mesopotamia situated between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (this is the area of modern southern Iraq from around Baghdad to the Persian Gulf). The city of Babylon was one of the most famous cities of antiquity. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon are considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Babylon reached its height of splendor and power during the sixth and seventh centuries BC. Under Nebuchadnezzar's reign, it became the largest city in the world.

In scripture, Babylon emerges as a symbol of opposition to God and His kingdom, synonymous with idolatry and wickedness. Babylon's very origin was rooted in confusion and rebellion.

READ GENESIS 11:1-9. WHAT IS THIS PASSAGE DESCRIBING?

Babylon's roots date back to Genesis 11, specifically to the construction of the Tower of Babel. There, the people rebelled against God and refused to trust in His Word that He would not destroy the earth again with water. Jewish tradition holds that Nimrod – a powerful yet wicked leader – was the instigator of the construction of the Tower of Babel, as well as the founder of the city of Babylon.

It's not surprising that Babylon became both literally and figuratively a city of evil and rebellion. Babylon in the Akkadian language (the language of its people) meant “gate of the gods,” a clear association with idolatry. When Moses writes the book of Genesis, he disregards the Akkadian etymology “the gate of god,” and highlights the Hebrew wordplay between Babel (“the city”) and Balal (“to mix or confuse”). Therefore, instead of viewing Babylon as a divine city like those in Mesopotamia, the Israelites saw it as the epitome of human pride and confusion in the relationship between God and humans.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Osborne, W. R. (2016). *Babylon*. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

The Babylonians worshipped pagan gods, chief among them Marduk, also known as Merodach, and Bel, as noted in Jeremiah 50:2. They mingled sexual immorality into the worship of their false gods. Cult and temple prostitutes were common.<sup>2</sup>

Imagine the exiles' reaction as they were led into Babylon. Confronted with blatant wickedness and pervasive idolatry, they must have been deeply shocked. Coming from a culture centered on the worship of Jehovah, their sheltered Jewish eyes had never seen such ungodliness. They must have wondered, "How will we survive in such a place?"

Keep in mind, they were alone as exiles in Babylon. They had no spiritual reinforcement from parents. They missed the encouragement of a rabbi. They lacked the camaraderie of friends. They had no support from their local synagogue. Separated from all that was familiar and cut off from Godly influence, they faced a strange and poisonous culture.

Nebuchadnezzar's first objective regarding his Hebrew captives was to assimilate them into Babylonian culture. But for the next eighty years, Daniel stayed true to his faith and his God. He never bowed to the Babylonian culture forced upon him. He never embraced the Babylonian worldview that Nebuchadnezzar tried to feed him. He never became poisoned by the debauchery around him. He did not bend. He did not bow.

READ DANIEL 1:8. WHAT DID DANIEL PURPOSE IN HIS HEART?

In essence, Daniel was saying to Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon:

- "I will not embrace your culture."
- "I will not consume what you consume."
- "I will not become intoxicated on what you offer."
- "I may not have a choice whether to be *in* Babylon, but I do have a choice as to whether I will be *like* Babylon."

Daniel did not lose his identity as a child of the Almighty God. For the rest of his life, though he was in Babylon, Babylon never got in him.

<sup>2</sup> Zavada, Jack. "Biblical History of Ancient Babylon."



**SHARE**

"I MAY NOT HAVE A CHOICE  
WHETHER TO BE *IN*  
BABYLON, BUT I DO HAVE A  
CHOICE AS TO WHETHER I  
WILL BE *LIKE* BABYLON."

**#IWILLNOTBOW**

Daniel was not the only young Hebrew who refused to bow to the Babylonian culture. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, more commonly known by their Babylonian names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, also refused to be assimilated.

Daniel chapter three documents their inspiring story. King Nebuchadnezzar erected a golden image nearly 100 feet tall. At the dedication of the statue, he gathered all the people in that province. (Daniel is not mentioned in this particular story, likely because he was not present, but in another province of Babylon at the time.) Nebuchadnezzar gave the command that everyone must bow down and worship the graven image that he had erected.

*“Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace” (Daniel 3:4-6).*

What do you think happened when the music played? Everyone bowed!

*“Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up” (Daniel 3:7).*

Everyone bowed to the graven image except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They said, “We will not bow!” They refused to compromise their faith and commitment to the commandments of Jehovah God. They were unwavering in their dedication to God’s holy Word, which clearly stated:

*“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...” (Exodus 20:2-5).*

Everyone else bowed. Everyone else conformed to the idolatrous culture of Babylon. But these courageous Hebrews said, “We will not



### KEY CONCEPT

THE EXILES WERE THE ONLY ONES WHO DID NOT BOW TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE. THEY DEFINITELY STOOD OUT FROM THE REST OF THE CROWD. ANYONE STANDING FOR GOD IN AN UNGODLY CULTURE WILL STAND OUT.

bow!" Christians today are often reluctant to stand out. But these three exiles definitely stood out. They were the *only ones* not bowing!

The king was furious. He was in a rage! He commanded that they be brought before him. "How dare you defy me? How dare you not fall in line with our heathen culture?" Our culture often displays a similar disdain for those who stand for righteousness and truth.

The scripture gives us the exiles' response – a response that is the theme of this Bible study:

*"Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Daniel 3:13–18)*

What an inspiring story of courage and commitment. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emphatically said to Nebuchadnezzar, "We will not bow!" Daniel, through his refusal to be assimilated into Babylon's culture, made it clear, "I will not bow!"

DO YOU THINK THE HEBREW EXILES HAD MADE THEIR DECISION NOT TO BOW BEFORE THEY WERE STANDING BEFORE THE KING? WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?



How were these four young men able to resist the culture of their captors? Let's imagine this scenario in a present-day example. Imagine a young person today being immersed in a wicked and ungodly culture without:

- Their church family
- Their pastor or the youth pastor's oversight
- A Sunday morning worship service
- Wednesday Bible class or youth class
- Their weekly ladies' or men's group Bible study
- Summer church camp meeting
- Special revival services, conferences, or youth conventions



### SHARE

"NEVER LET THE UNGODLY  
CULTURE AROUND YOU  
GET IN YOU!"

#IWILLNOTBOW

HOW DO YOU THINK A YOUNG PERSON OF TODAY WOULD FARE  
IN A SIMILAR SITUATION, AND WHY?

The exiles were likely teenagers when first taken to Babylon, which means their parents instilled the Word and ways of God in them from a very young age. As parents, it is so important to establish Godly habits and behaviors in our children early in life. Many patterns are established in children by the age of three. It's never too early to teach our children to stand for God.

WHAT ARE SOME REASONS PARENTS ARE RELUCTANT TO INSTILL  
THE WAYS OF GOD IN THEIR CHILDREN AT A YOUNG AGE?

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in Babylon without the things we depend on for spiritual strength, yet they never became like the world around them. They never let the culture around them get in them. They remained a light, a beacon, and a witness of the one and only true God. How did they do it? What was their secret? That's what this Bible study will answer over the next six weeks. Why does it matter? What does their story speak to us? Tomorrow's lesson will answer those questions.



### TODAY'S PRAYER

"HELP ME, LORD, TO  
PURPOSE IN MY OWN  
HEART THAT I WILL NOT  
DEFILE MYSELF WITH THE  
THINGS OF THIS WORLD.  
HELP ME CONTINUALLY  
SEEK TO CHOOSE MY  
IDENTITY AS YOUR CHILD,  
AS A CHILD OF THE  
ALMIGHTY GOD."

IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

# DAY THREE

## A PRESENT DAY BABYLON

There are twelve references to Babylon in the New Testament. Other than verses alluding to the Babylonian exile, these scriptural references to Babylon refer to two things.



### KEY CONCEPT

LIKE NEBUCHADNEZZAR DID IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, AND ROME DID IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE ANTICHRIST AND ITS SYSTEM OF THE LAST DAYS WILL TRY TO SQUEEZE GOD'S PEOPLE INTO ITS UNGODLY MOLD.

READ 1 PETER 5:13. WHAT DO YOU THINK BABYLON REFERS TO IN THIS VERSE?

Peter sends greetings from the church in Babylon, but he is referring to Rome. Why would he call Rome 'Babylon'? Every Jew knew too well the history of the evil, oppressive Babylonian empire that besieged Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and ruled over the Jews with an iron fist. Now Rome oppressed them. It was natural for Christians to view Rome as a contemporary version of the Old Testament Babylon from which God delivered his people.<sup>3</sup>

However, New Testament references to Babylon do not refer only to the physical city of Rome, but something more symbolic.

READ REVELATION 17:1-6 AND 18:1-5. WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE BABYLON REPRESENTS IN THESE VERSES?

In the New Testament, particularly the book of Revelation, Babylon not only represents the physical city of Rome, but the system of the antichrist – an entire culture that is opposed to God and His kingdom. In Revelation 18:4, John admonishes the people of God to come out of this ungodly system and not to partake of the sins of this symbolic Babylon.

Like the Babylon of the Old Testament and the Roman empire in the New Testament, the world system of the last days will be a culture in total opposition to God and His people. This end-

<sup>3</sup> Osborne, W. R. (2016). Babylon. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

time system will be one of gross wickedness and idolatry. As Nebuchadnezzar did in the Old Testament, and Rome did in the New Testament, the antichrist and its system in the last days will try to squeeze God's people into its ungodly mold.

We are in the last days. John's prophecies in the book of Revelation describe our time. We are in a present-day Babylon.

Our post-modern world is growing in its anti-Christian sentiment. Many New Testament prophecies speak of the moral decline that will take place in the last days.

Notice what Jesus said about the end times:

*"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37).*

READ GENESIS 6:5. ACCORDING TO THIS VERSE, WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN THE DAYS OF NOAH?

The description of the days of Noah could easily pass for a description of our day. Not only will the ungodly culture of our day mimic the ungodliness of the world just before God destroyed it with a flood, but the condition of our day will be worse than the days of Noah. How do we know this?

READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:13. WHAT DID PAUL TELL TIMOTHY ABOUT THE CONDITION OF MANKIND IN THE LAST DAYS?

We're all witnessing the moral decline of our nation. Though founded on Godly, biblical principles, America is spiraling downward into moral decay. I've often wondered, can the evil, debauchery, and Godlessness get any worse, yet it continually does. As Paul said, evil men are waxing worse and worse.



SHARE

"DON'T LET THE WORLD SQUEEZE YOU INTO ITS MOLD." ~ROMANS 12:12  
PHILLIPS TRANSLATION

#IWILLNOTBOW

**KEY CONCEPT**

WE ARE LIVING IN A  
PRESENT-DAY BABYLON.

Things are happening today in America that I never would have imagined. Antichrist spirits are the driving force behind a culture with a growing disdain for traditional, biblical values that this nation was built upon. America has strayed far from its Judeo-Christian roots. Surely, we are in the last days.

We are much like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego. We are living in a society increasingly foreign and opposed to the things of God, His Word, and His Kingdom. A heathen, idolatrous culture surrounds us. And like Daniel and his brothers – we will not bow!

As followers of Jesus Christ, we love, as He does, every human being regardless of their ideology or lifestyle. No matter how deceived or hostile a person is toward God, he or she is still the wondrous creation of God. We would never mistreat or intimidate anyone because of their worldview or lifestyle. However, we will not compromise our unwavering belief in the Word of God, nor will we be silenced in speaking His truth.

Regardless of what you may hear repeatedly in our society, disagreement is not synonymous with hatred or bigotry. Our present culture insists that if you disagree with their lifestyle or agenda, you hate them. We don't hate anyone, and we will show the love of Christ to everyone. We will always strive to treat everyone as Christ would. However, we will not bow to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, nor conform to Babylon's culture.

**READ GALATIANS 4:26. WHAT DOES THIS VERSE OF SCRIPTURE MEAN?**

This world is not our home! We are just passing through. We may be in a present-day Babylon, but we are citizens of another country. Jerusalem that is above (heaven) is our home. We may be in a present-day Babylon, but Nebuchadnezzar is not our king. We have one King, and His Name is Jesus!

## READ ROMANS 12:1-2.

In verse 2, Paul said:

*“And be not conformed to this world...”*

Paul admonishes the church to resist the pressure to assimilate into the surrounding culture. To me, the Phillips translation of verse 2 says it best:

*“Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold”.*

Doesn’t that hit the nail on the head? That’s precisely what Babylon tried to do to Daniel and his companions – squeeze them into the mold of the Babylonian culture. And that is precisely what our present culture seeks to do – assimilate its subjects into its way of living and thinking.

Look at some other translations of Romans 12:2:

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world...” (NIV).*

*“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world” (NLT).*

*“And be not fashioned according to this world...” (ASV).*

*“And do not imitate this world” (ARA).*

Nebuchadnezzar’s strategy was to assimilate the Hebrew exiles into the Babylonian culture. He besieged Jerusalem with an army of soldiers and siege weapons. However, he would not need to raise a sword again if he succeeded in squeezing the people of Judah into Babylon’s mold.

It was a well-laid plot – a devious and effective strategy. Why did Nebuchadnezzar bring the captives to Babylon in the first place? Didn’t Babylon have enough citizens? Babylon didn’t need them in its kingdom. They were already the world’s superpower. He carried them off to erase their Jewish identity and culture, thereby crushing the future of the Hebrew people.



## SHARE

“DON’T COPY THE  
BEHAVIOR AND CUSTOMS  
OF THIS WORLD.”  
~ROMANS 12:12 NEW LIVING  
TRANSLATION

#IWILLNOTBOW

GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS WORLD TRIES TO STRIP US OF OUR CHRISTIAN IDENTITY.

So, what will you do? Will you present your body to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, unto Him? Will you allow Him to transform, mold, and shape you into the person He wants you to be? Will you surrender to His perfect plan, or will you give in to worldly pressure?

Throughout this study, we will explore how Daniel and his companions resisted the pressure to conform to Babylonian culture. We will adopt their strategies so that we may do the same in our present-day Babylon.



#### TODAY'S PRAYER

"DEAR LORD, DON'T LET ME BE SQUEEZED INTO THE MOLD OF THIS WORLD. HELP ME SEE THE ENEMY'S TRICKS FOR WHAT THEY ARE. PLACE WITHIN ME A DESIRE TO STUDY YOUR WORD SO I WILL NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF MY MIND (ROMANS 12:2) TO KNOW WHAT YOUR WILL IS."

IN JESUS' NAME. AMEN.