

The Christian Cocoon!

- Upbringing, social life, closest friends, much of our leisure time...
 - but there will inevitably be times where we are abruptly reminded that we live in a pagan, godless world
 - at school or University, where Christian thinking and things we've been taught at church or by our parents are questioned or dismissed
 - at work, where there is pressure perhaps to compromise on ethical or quality standards for the sake of profit
 - or perhaps its a pressure of a long-working hours culture that wars against family and church life, that suggests your identity is grounded in your job...
 - or perhaps its the people we know - colleagues at work, friends from our neighbourhood, or wherever, people whose values are very different, whose ways of spending time and money don't seem to sit comfortably with the prevailing culture in the church, whose ways of talking and relating to others are hard to take...
- Are we just out of step, fuddy-duddies, caught in a cultural time-warp?
 - (we should answer that one carefully, because there are some things where the answer is simply "yes"!)
 - but more significantly, if we are committed to following Christ, to living for him, we will inevitably have to make difficult decisions - will we obey God regardless of the consequences, or will we become part of the surrounding culture?
 - we might like to think of ourselves as distinct, but it is hard to resist such pressures - only need to think about something like shopping on a Sunday...
- Daniel gives us a practical and personal example in our struggle
 - he was a man who rose to great power and prestige in the world, but never compromised essential biblical principles
 - a life of spiritual integrity in the crush of a secular world

Some background

- Largely quoting from Lifebuilder BS summary
 - make some comments about some of the difficulties from Ronald Wallace's commentary
 - as well as arguments about detail, important to realise that there is a central theme that runs throughout the book - not just in the first few narrative chapters (1-6), but right through the apocalyptic chapters (6-12)
 - throughout the book it becomes clear that this is not written for people suffering in the midst of deadly persecution, but for those whose are living in a settled condition yet within an alien culture

Whose are you?

- Turn to the actual story!
 - possibly familiar from Sunday School or past sermons
 - at least one person, hearing that I was preaching from Daniel, said "Oh good, I like Daniel!"
- Work through the story, picking out a few key things along the way

The Lord is in control

- vs. 1-2

- Sets context - the Lord delivered (v.2)
 - and Nebuchadnezzar didn't destroy (v.2), there was hope left of restoration...

Key question

- Context of situation, and our characters, set by vs.3-7
- Daniel resolved (v.8)
 - choice, not a pressure, not an emotion, but a choice

- a choice to do something uncomfortable because it was right
- answering the underlying question - **whose are you?**
- appears to be after reflection - he had a choice whether to make an issue of it, no one else was going to, and it wasn't a clearly clear cut one...
- That resolve took **courage** and **consistency** to carry through
 - chose to be God's, to listen to God's prompting - as we'll see later, Daniel was a man of prayer, someone who spent time with God each day...
- *Incidentally, the whole veggie thing is incidental - this is not a biblical injunction to vegetarianism!!*

God Acts

- v.15 and 17 point to God acting in response to Daniel and his compatriot's faith
 - not merely a good dietary choice!
 - this is a God test, not a diet test

This is not the end...

- Daniel doesn't "win", or finish, get to relax now...
 - this opens the door for further faithful service
 - in the world, but not of it
 - **God's man, in man's world**

Whose are you?

- So whose am I? Whose are you?
 - God's?
 - or are you your own man or woman? Making your own choices?
 - the Lord is still in control - are you willing to resolve to follow him?