

# In a Strange Land (Daniel)

## The Pressure to Conform

### Foundation

#### Bible passage : Daniel 1

Powerpoint: ExileAndReturn-01

When: Daniel was born just over 600 years BC.

Background: When Daniel was about 12 years old his country, Judah, was attacked and defeated by the Babylonians. Judah had been part of Israel but the Israelites had disobeyed God again and again. Through various prophets God had warned people that if they did not turn from sin the Judah would be destroyed.

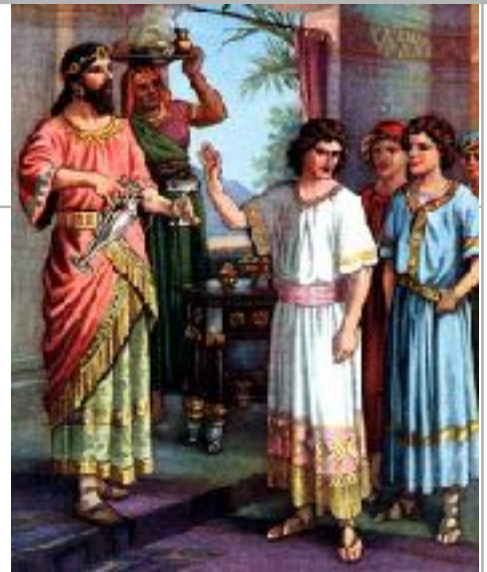
The fall took about 20 years and following the first defeat many people, including their king, Jehoiachin, were taken captive to Babylon. Among these were some young people like Daniel who would be taught and trained by the Babylonians to run their vast and growing empire.

In the book of Daniel we are introduced to four youngsters; Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. All their names mention either the Lord (-iah) or God (-el) but the Babylonians gave them new Babylonian names - Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

**“do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”**

Peer pressure: These four young teenagers had opportunity to become important and wealthy in the Babylonian empire. They were being put under pressure to do the same as everyone around them, to forget their background and the Lord and just do as the

*Daniel refusing the King's Food: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872–1953)*



Babylonians did. Like young people today they were under pressure to follow the crowd in order to fit in and get along.

Being different: In Daniel chapter 1 we see how the four young men cooperated with the Babylonians and how they were willing to serve them. But they drew a line; they would not just follow the crowd. There is no obvious reason from the Law of God as to where they drew the line. Rather they seem to have decided to deny themselves some of sumptuous food and drink on offer in order to ensure they did not just end up behaving like everyone else. Christians have seen these young men as examples of how they can and should serve God “in the world” but not be “of the world”.

God is King: These youngsters could have thought that God had forgotten them or that God was no longer in charge, but they continued to trust Him. In what happened, and what followed, we see that God was still King. He blessed what they did and so they prospered. He would go on to use Daniel in particular in this new situation.



**Daniel and friends were offered great opportunities but refused to conform to the world and were blessed by God.**