

'Starting again

Returning to life after lockdown

"Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? But now be strong ..." (Haggai 2.3f)

As the lockdown restrictions are gradually eased and we return bit by bit to the rhythms of congregational life, the return of the exiles from Babylon provides an instructive, parallel narrative.

The return from Babylon was both gradual and difficult: it's narrated in the two books Ezra and Nehemiah (which were originally one book), and the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah had an integral part to play in the challenges facing the people back then.

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18. Kingdom

".. where is the one who been born king of the Jews .."

Daniel 2.36-49

The statement that the Magi 'saw His star when it rose' needs to be explored if we are to understand properly why and how these men were prompted to embark on their journey to Jesus.

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1. **Read Daniel 2.1-49.** Nebuchadnezzar's dream left the wise men of Babylon for dead (v.12) until Daniel stepped in and saved the day with his God-given ability to interpret the dream.

What lessons does the chapter as a whole teach?

What light does this chapter shed on the reason why the Magi undertook the long and hazardous journey to Jerusalem?

2. Read Daniel 2.36-43. God had revealed both the content and the interpretation of the dream to Daniel in response to the fervent praying in which he and his friends had engaged.

What lesson(s) did God mean Nebuchadnezzar to learn through the dream he had?

What light does the dream, as interpreted by Daniel, shed on events taking place in the world down through history?

3. Read Daniel 2.44-45. The climactic focus of the dream, as it is interpreted by Daniel, is on '*a kingdom that will never be destroyed*' (v.44): this is the future to which the king is pointed.

How do these verses point forwards to Jesus, and what do they teach about Him?

In what ways does what God has shown *us* 'will take place in the future' affect your living?

4. Read Daniel 2.46-49. Daniel's God-given ability to know the content of the dream and provide such a clear interpretation of the dream understandably impressed the king greatly.

In what ways did the king demonstrate his respect for Daniel?

How does the enduring legacy of Daniel's testimony encourage you and how does it challenge you?