



DANIEL  
STAYING STRONG IN A HOSTILE WORLD

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The Good Book Guide to Daniel  
The Good Book Company

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## INTRODUCTION: WHY STUDY DANIEL?

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*How can we remain faithful to our God in a world that rejects him?*

*Is it even worth standing firm and obeying him, when his kingdom often seems so very far away?*

*How can we live courageously and confidently in nations that do not seek to live under God's rule?*

*And is it possible to be a blessing to our nations, and show the power and goodness of our God, even in a time such as ours?*

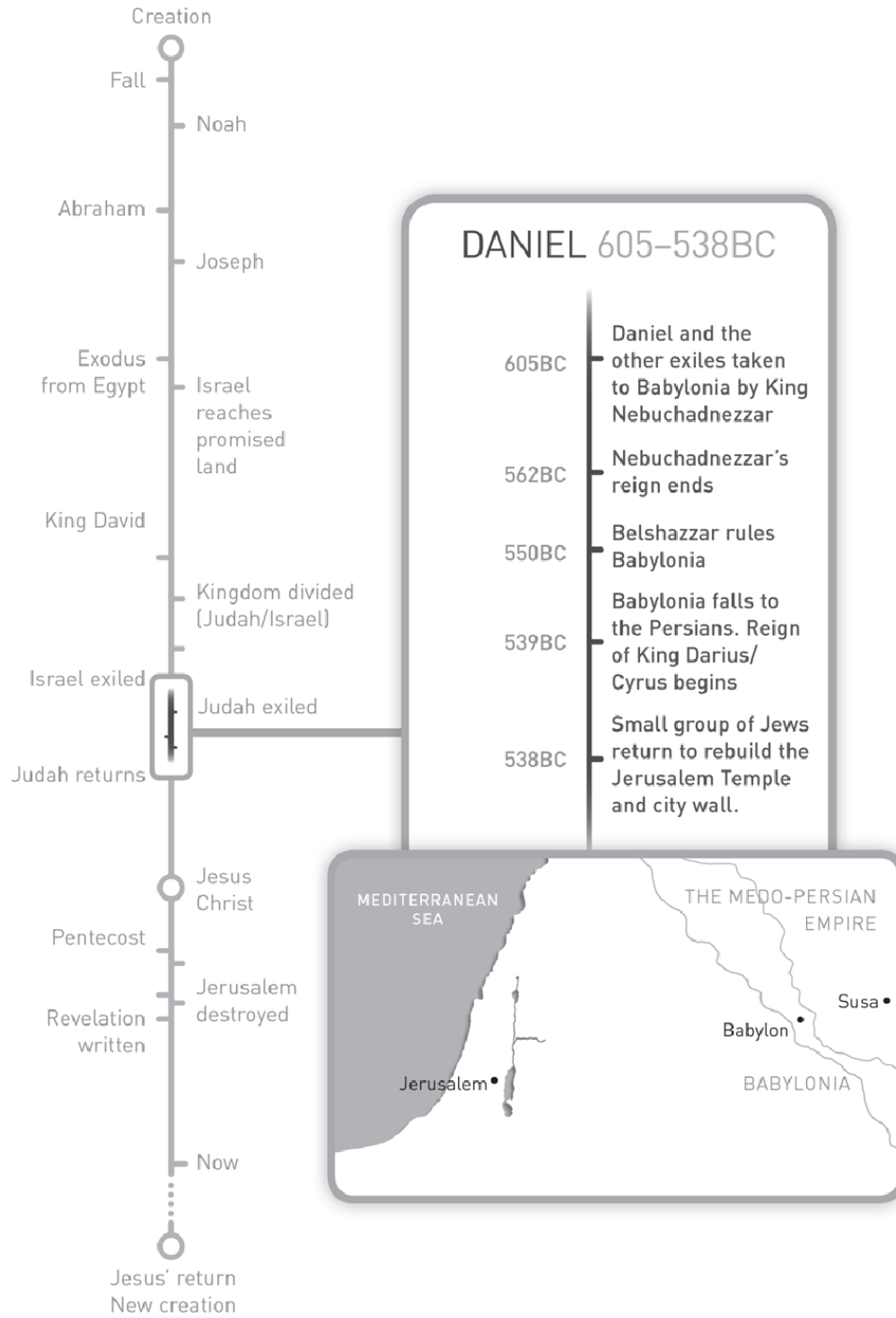
Those are pressing questions for those of us who live in contexts where to be a Christian is no longer the norm (if it ever was), and is increasingly to be misunderstood, maligned and even mistreated. And since this is the context in which Daniel found himself, the book that bears his name is one that will reassure, challenge and thrill us as we read it today.

In chapters 1–6, we will see Daniel and his three friends seeking to remain faithful to God while making a home in Babylon—in the world. In chapters 7–12, we will find Daniel, through a series of visions, discovering how God will bring his people home from Babylon—and learning that the end of exile would not be the moment of fulfillment of God's promises of a King and a kingdom for his people.

For Daniel, that moment remained in the future, and that king a figure in the distant shadows. For us today, we can look back to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and forward to his return, as the glorious moments when all this was, and will be, fulfilled. In many ways, we can see more clearly even than this faithful prophet of God—and yet, as these seven studies will show, how Daniel lived and what Daniel saw has so much to teach us. This book will show us what we can expect from this life, and how we can and must remain faithful and courageous in our world.

## BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of Daniel fit into the whole story of God's word?



## LESSON 1: BABYLON: SURVIVING AND THRIVING | Daniel 1–2

### *talk about*

1. When do you find it easiest to excuse doing something you know is wrong?

### *investigate*

**Read** Daniel 1:1–7

DICTIONARY
<b>Judah</b> (v 1): God’s people had divided into two kingdoms: Israel and Judah.
<b>Babylon</b> (v 1): a superpower; Israel’s enemy.
<b>Articles</b> (v 2): precious objects used to worship god in the temple in Jerusalem.

2. When King Nebuchadnezzar takes the city of Jerusalem, what does he take into “exile” in Babylon (v 2–4)?

- **Read** Genesis 12:1–3; 2 Samuel 7:12. Why is what has happened in Jerusalem so serious?

In Daniel 1:6–7, we meet the leading characters of the first half of the book: Daniel and his three friends, four youths who were part of the deportation. They were stripped of their Jewish names and given Babylonian ones. How will they fare in Babylon? What will become of them, so far from Jerusalem? Will there be a future for God’s people, as God’s people?

**Read** Daniel 1:8–21

DICTIONARY
<b>Defile</b> (v 8): make unclean or unacceptable in God’s sight.

3. What does Daniel (and his friends) resolve not to do (v 8)?

- Why does this cause a problem, and what solution does Daniel propose (v 9–14)?

Why do the four refuse the food? Three possibilities are:

- The kind of food: it may have contradicted the dietary requirements in Leviticus 11.
- The use of the food: it may have been food taken from sacrifices to pagan gods.
- Whose food it was: sharing a meal meant unity in fellowship; here, with a pagan king.

Whichever it was, it is clear that their consciences simply would not allow them to accept this food and wine.

### ***explore more***

What makes someone into the kind of worshiper of God who will have this kind of resolve?

**Read 2 Kings 22–23**

*What did King Josiah do?*

This all happened while Daniel and his friends were young, and (as nobles' children) very possibly being reared in the royal palace.

What does this suggest about the influence of childhood on our adulthood? How does this encourage and challenge church families? Parents?

4. How does this episode conclude (v 15–20)?
5. Re-read verses 2, 9 and 17. In each verse, God “gives” someone something. For each, pick out what he gave, and to whom.

### ***apply***

6. How does knowing that “God gives,” on both a national level and in personal ways, change the way we view life?

- How does it encourage us to follow our consciences, even when this could be costly?

***getting personal***

Has there been a time (perhaps it is now) when your conscience has urged you to follow a potentially difficult path? Did you listen to your conscience, or bow to pressure? Next time you're in a similar situation, what truths do you need to remember that will give you the strength to follow your conscience?

***investigate***

**Read Daniel 2:1–13**

7. Why can the king's advisers not explain his dream to him (v 10–11)?

- Why is this serious news for Daniel and his friends (v 12–13)?

**Read Daniel 2:14–23**

**DICTIONARY**

**Mercy** (v 18): here, being spared punishment (by having the dream revealed to them by God).  
**Deposes** (v 21): removes from power.

8. When God reveals the content and meaning of the king's dream to Daniel, how does Daniel respond (v 20–23)?

- What truths about God are we reminded of in these verses?

**Read Daniel 2:24–49**

DICTIONARY
<p><b>Chaff</b> (v 35): the inedible husks of corn, which would be blown away by the wind when the grain was “threshed.”</p> <p><b>Incense</b> (v 46): sweet-smelling substance.</p>

9. What was the content of the dream (v 31–35)?

10. What is the interpretation of the dream (v 36–45)?

11. Why would the words “after you” (v 39) have been a great relief to Nebuchadnezzar?

12. What were the rise and fall of various powerful empires all heading toward (v 44–45)?

• **Read** Luke 20:17–19. How does Jesus link the image of Daniel 2:44–45 to himself?

### *apply*

Nebuchadnezzar needed to hear that the major event in history would be the coming of the stone—and we now know that the stone is Christ. He is the one who replaces all humanity’s self-rule; who, in fact, smashes it.

13. How is this both exciting for us, and a warning to us?



- Remember that the meaning of the dream was intended for the pagan king, not the godly servant. What does this mean for us today?

### ***getting personal***

Daniel is not only pointing us to Jesus; he is also an example to us. Daniel told the king that God was speaking to him, through the dream. We are to tell the world that God is speaking to it, through Jesus. Wherever God has placed you, remember this: he has a word to be made known.

What difference will it make this month if you see yourself as having been placed where you are by God to make his word known and intelligible?

### ***pray***

Turn the words of Daniel 2:20–23 into your prayer of praise, thanking God for revealing his wisdom to the world in the person of Jesus Christ. Ask God to use you to make his word known. Pray for the resolve to follow your conscience even when that's difficult. Pray through any particular situations you have shared together.

David Helm, [\*Daniel: Staying Strong in a Hostile World\*](#), Good Book Guides Series (The Good Book Company, 2015).

## LESSON 2: FAITHFUL IN THE FIRE | Daniel 3

### *The Story So Far*

Exiled in Babylon, Daniel and his friends remained committed to worshiping God, who gave Daniel wisdom as he announced God's coming kingdom.

### ***talkabout***

1. What statements do people or organizations make through building impressive structures or buildings?

### ***investigate***

At the end of Daniel 2, the king honored Daniel and, remarkably, recognized that the God of Israel was truly God (v 47). But this does not mean he has himself understood who the God of the Bible really is, or what he does.

**Read** Daniel 3:1–7

#### DICTIONARY

**Cubit** (v 1): about 18 inches or 45 cm.

**Satrap** (v 2): an official in charge of an area of land.

**Zither, lyre** (v 5): stringed musical instruments.

2. What does Nebuchadnezzar make, and for what purpose?
3. In which verses do we see reference made to King Nebuchadnezzar and the words “set up”? What point is being made by this repetition?

**Read** Daniel 3:8–18

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have been enjoying favor with the king (2:49)

4. How does that now change (3:8–15)?

5. What choice do the three face?

6. What do they choose (v 16–18)?

- How are they answering the question the king asks them in verse 15?

***apply***

It is all too easy to stand in judgment of Nebuchadnezzar, and identify with Daniel's three courageous friends. But if we are honest, we should all primarily identify with the king.

7. How can we (on a smaller scale) act as the king does in verses 1–7?

So how should we learn from the three friends and their faithfulness? By learning to read this story in light of the gospel.

8. Read Matthew 4 v 8–10. What are the similarities between Daniel 3 and this passage, and between the choice made by the three Jews and by Jesus?

***getting personal***

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego point us to the greater faithfulness to God that Jesus modeled for us, not only during his temptation in the wilderness, but on every occasion—and against a stronger ruler by far! Jesus gave his life, every waking moment, to worshiping God and serving him alone. And that took him to a place of death that he did not shirk—to our place of death, where our death died because he took it for us.

How does Christ's perfect, permanent faithfulness encourage you to repent where needed, and motivate you to remain faithful today?

***investigate***

**Read Daniel 3:19–30**

***explore more***

In the Bible, fire is associated with two things:

**Read** Genesis 19:24; Revelation 19:20

*What is the first association?*

**Read** Malachi 3:1–4; 1 Corinthians 3:11–15

*What is the other?*

Fire destroys; but it also tests, and reveals the true nature of something. Fire will burn us up, or it will be the occasion of our salvation.

*We will look at Daniel 3:19–30 in more detail next; but when it comes to the king's fiery furnace, what kind of fire:*

- *did he intend it to be?*
- *did God use it to be?*

9. How is the furnace described (v 19–22)? Why is this emphasized, do you think?

- So why do the three Jews end up in the state they are in by verses 26–27?

10. How does the king respond (v 28–30)?

- What has changed in his view of:
- himself (compare v 4–5)?
- the God of Israel (compare end v 15)?

### *apply*

11. **Read** 1 Peter 4:12–14. What will happen as we live as God’s people in this world?

- How should we view that?

12. God brought these three believers through the fire. **Read** 1 Peter 1:3–9. In what sense do we know God will bring us through the “fire” of trials?

13. What difference will believing this make:

- when we face the choice between compromise and faithfulness?
- when we are in a trial because we are living faithfully?

### *getting personal*

What is most difficult in your life at the moment? Are you tempted to see it as judgment?

What would change if you viewed it as refinement—as proving the genuineness of your faith?

### *pray*

Thank Jesus for his perfect faithfulness in facing the judgment his people deserve.

Pray that you would show the same faithfulness as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when you are under pressure to compromise with the world.

Ask God to use the trials in your life to refine you and prove the genuineness of your faith. Pray for those in your church family who are experiencing particularly painful trials.

David Helm, [\*Daniel: Staying Strong in a Hostile World\*](#), Good Book Guides Series (The Good Book Company, 2015).

## LESSON 3: HUMBLLED AND RESTORED | Daniel 4

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### *The Story So Far*

Exiled in Babylon, Daniel and his friends remained committed to worshiping God, who gave Daniel wisdom as he announced God's coming kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar commanded worship of the image he had built; Daniel's friends refused and were thrown into the furnace—but God rescued them.

### *talkabout*

1. What do people take pride in?

- Can it ever be a good thing to lose what makes us proud? Why/how?

### *investigate*

Read Daniel 4:1–3

DICTIONARY
<b>Dominion</b> (v 3): territory, kingdom.

2. Who is speaking here? Given what we have seen of him in chapters 1–3, what is striking about his words here?

3. How is the king's message:

- something public?
- something personal? (Note: a better translation of the end of verse 1 is: "Peace be multiplied to you!")
- centered on God and his kingdom?

These themes are the main melody of the entire book of Daniel—these distinctive notes will recur time and time again (and have already appeared) in the book. But what could cause these great truths to come from the lips of the most powerful king in the known world—and a pagan?! We are about to see ...

**Read Daniel 4:4–27**

DICTIONARY
<b>Diviners</b> (v 7): used supernatural powers to see into the future or the unknown. <b>Holy one</b> (v 13): set apart and pure. <b>Sovereign</b> (v 17): in total control. <b>Adversaries</b> (v 19): enemies.

4. What is the content of the dream (v 9–17)?

- How does it make the king feel (v 5)?

5. Sum up Daniel's God-given interpretation of the dream in verses 24–27.

- How do Daniel's words to the king show us:
  - his love for the king (v 19)?
  - his honesty?
- God's purpose in all this (v 25–26)?

### ***apply***

6. Daniel is a believer in God, telling truth to an unbeliever. What does his example teach us about our own witness?

***getting personal***

We need to know what it is to be able to say, as Paul does in Romans 10 v 1: “Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”

Is your heart tender toward those who don’t know God? What might a tendency to keep quiet about Christ suggest about you?

***investigate***

**Read** Daniel 4:28–37

**DICTIONARY**

**Seven times** (v 32): a figure of speech meaning a set amount of time that God has already decided.

**Exalt** (v 37): speak highly of.

“All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar” (v 28).

7. What was the king thinking as his humiliation arrived (v 29–30)?

Verse 29 suggests that Nebuchadnezzar heeded Daniel’s advice (v 27) for a year. But the true inner man re-emerged in v 30; pride always finds its voice.

8. Whose words were more powerful, and accurate: the king’s, or heaven’s?

9. What are we being taught about human achievements, and pride in such things?

10. What did Nebuchadnezzar do, and what then happened (v 34, 36)?

11. What had this powerful king now learned to do (v 34–35, 37)?

- Why was it a good thing for the king to lose everything that he had achieved, and to be utterly humiliated?



### ***apply***

12. How is Nebuchadnezzar's experience here a very dramatic picture of what happens in every conversion?

- Share some examples of God breaking someone's pride in order to bring them to worship and praise him—either from your own life, or from those of others you know.

### ***getting personal***

Has God brought you to a place in your life that has you crawling on your knees even now? If so, why not see Nebuchadnezzar as your example? Why not pray: "Dear God, my pride has nearly ruined me. Your power has nearly overwhelmed me, and I have been brought low. Please change me. Put new clothes upon me. Give to me the robes of Christ's righteousness, that I may rise from this desperate and deranged state, and give you the praise that is due to you from me."

### ***explore more***

**Read** Luke 22:31–34, 54–62

How do we see God breaking another man's pride in his own abilities, so that he might come to truly love and follow the Lord Jesus?

How does this both humble and comfort us?

### ***pray***

Look back at your answer to Question 12. Give God praise and glory for his work in your own life and the lives of those people you talked about. Use the words of Daniel 4:3, 34–35 and 37 to echo King Nebuchadnezzar's exuberant praise.

Confess times when you take pride in your own position and achievements. Ask God to make you humble before him.

Pray that you would share Daniel's tender heart toward those who do not know God. Perhaps pray specifically for some individuals you find it especially difficult to be tender-hearted toward.

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## LESSON 4: WHO RULES? KINGS VS GOD | Daniel 5-6

### *The Story So Far*

Exiled in Babylon, Daniel and his friends remained committed to worshiping God, who gave Daniel wisdom as he announced God's coming kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar commanded worship of the image he had built; Daniel's friends refused and were thrown into the furnace—but God rescued them.

God brought proud King Nebuchadnezzar low, in order to bring him into his eternal kingdom. God's word is a public proclamation offering peace.

### *talkabout*

1. How can you tell that someone trusts in God?

### *investigate*

Read Daniel 5:1–31

#### DICTIONARY

**Concubines** (v 3): a slave used as a live-in mistress.

**Medes and Persians** (v 28): other nations; Babylon's enemies.

2. Write down a summary of the events of the chapter, and what you think the meaning of it is for us, in three or four sentences.
3. What is the king trying to prove by his actions in verses 2–4, do you think?
4. What should Belshazzar have known to do, and why (v 22)?
  - How does God respond, both in what he promises and in what happens (v 28, 30)?

5. Daniel knew the Lord's verdict when he refused the king's offer (v 16–17). How would knowing how things would play out affect his perspective on what the king was offering?

***apply***

In the previous study, we saw a king humbled in order for him to acknowledge God and be raised up. Here, we see a king who refuses to acknowledge God and mocks him—and is deposed and killed.

6. How does this warn us about the pride in our own hearts?

- How does it teach us to view this world?

***investigate***

**Read** Daniel 6:1–28

DICTIONARY
<b>Reverence</b> (v 26): show great respect to.

7. Write down a summary of the events of the chapter, and what you think the meaning of it is for us, in three or four sentences.
8. What is striking about the only way Daniel's enemies can find a reason to accuse him (v 4–5)?

***getting personal***

The Persian officials were “unable” to “find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs” (v 4). His books were in order. His numbers all added up. No bribes had been taken and witnesses to the contrary could not be found.

The only accusation that stuck against Daniel was that he would not stop worshiping his God. Would that be true of you in your working life, too? Why / why not?

9. How do verses 10–15 contrast the resolute courage of Daniel and the weakness of the king?

10. In what sense is Daniel’s God, as well as Daniel himself, on trial (v 16)?

- So what does Daniel’s rescue reveal about:
- God (v 20–22, 26–27)?
- Daniel (v 22–23)?

***explore more***

Imagine you were one of the 122 who had successfully accused Daniel. Trace how well or badly things are going for you through the chapter. Then put yourself in Daniel’s position and do the same thing.

How does this teach us, as God’s people, to view life, opposition and times when those who oppose God’s people thrive?

11. What similarities do you see between Daniel in chapter 6, and Jesus in the Gospels?

### ***apply***

12. What flaws do we see in those around Daniel in these two episodes? How does Daniel show us what it means to believe in the sovereign, saving God of the Bible?

- Discuss what these flaws, and this faithfulness, would look like in your particular culture and settings today.

### ***getting personal***

Daniel 6:28 is a summary which brings the first half of the book to a close: “So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” For over 70 years, Daniel “prospered.” He learned how to remain faithful and fruitful, and how to be at home in Babylon.

Look back on the last four studies and reflect: How have you been helped to live both faithfully and fruitfully in the world?

### ***pray***

Thank the Lord that he is “the living God,” who rescues and saves (v 26–27). Thank God that Jesus faced a death that he didn’t deserve, and was raised from the tomb to assure us of the power of his saving death.

Look back at your answer to Question Twelve and ...

- Confess those times you have displayed these flaws.
- Ask God to help you live faithfully in the ways you discussed.

David Helm, [\*Daniel: Staying Strong in a Hostile World\*](#), Good Book Guides Series (The Good Book Company, 2015).

## LESSON 5: ONE LIKE A SON OF MAN | Daniel 7

### *The Story So Far*

Nebuchadnezzar commanded worship of the image he had built; Daniel's friends refused and were thrown into the furnace—but God rescued them.

God brought proud King Nebuchadnezzar low, in order to bring him into his eternal kingdom. God's word is a public proclamation offering peace.

Daniel refused to stop praying to God, and was thrown in the lions' den. But God delivered him, proving himself to be the God who is real, and who can rescue.

### *talkabout*

1. What do you think your life as a Christian will be like between now and the day you die, or when Jesus returns? Why do you think this?

### *investigate*

In Daniel 7 (and for the rest of the book) the genre shifts from narrative to apocalyptic. Apocalyptic literature is often viewed as too difficult to understand—many give up reading Daniel at the end of chapter 6.

But it is helpful to think about apocalyptic as painting a picture, or as providing a movie. Its purpose is to reveal (the word apokalypsis means revelation)—to pull back the curtain and show us an unseen, transcendent world. God wrote Daniel 7–12 wanting us to understand and be shaped by what it says—we should read it with expectation and confidence.

**Read Daniel 7:1–8**

### DICTIONARY

**Substance** (v 1): what happened.

Previously, dreams came to the king, and we have seen that this was because God intended them as a message for the world.

2. This time the dream comes to Daniel, and not to the king (v 1). Why is that significant?

Apocalyptic literature is full of symbols—things that are to be taken figuratively. And the symbol can stand both for a particular event, person or place, and for a more general principle that holds true for more than one event, person or place.

3. What does Daniel see in this dream (v 2–8)?

- Read verse 17. What do these beasts represent?

There are two ways to understand the specific kingdoms they point to:

First beast = Babylonian

First beast = Babylonian

Second = Medo-Persian

Second = Mede

Third = Greek

Third = Persian

Fourth = Roman

Fourth = Greek

4. Read Revelation 13:1–3. What do you notice about this symbolic description of Rome? What does this tell you about what the symbols in Daniel 7 stand for more generally?

**Read Daniel 7:9–14**

DICTIONARY
<b>Ancient of Days</b> (v 9): a name for God which reflects his ageless nature.

5. After the rise of the fourth beast, what happens next (v 9–10)?

- What does he do (v 11–12)?

6. Who does Daniel see next (v 13–14)? Where is he, and what is he given?

- Read Mark 14 v 53, 60–64. Who is the “one like a son of man” who Daniel saw?

- Read Philippians 2 v 8–11. When did he approach the Ancient of Days to receive universal power and authority?

### ***getting personal***

You know the Son of Man is your Savior, reigning in heaven right now. In what area of your life do you most need to remember this truth? How will that change your perspective, feelings and/or actions?

### ***explore more***

**Read** Psalm 2

How does this psalm pick up on the themes that Daniel has seen in his vision?

### ***apply***

7. Every worldly power (the “beasts”) looked extremely strong and irresistible to Daniel—and they still do today. What do verses 9–10 remind us of?

- How should this affect how we respond to news about oppressive political systems, and to the ungodly demands of our own rulers?

### ***investigate***

**Read** Daniel 7:15–28

#### DICTIONARY

**Holy people** (v 18): those who follow God.

**Subdue** (v 24): bring under control.

**Time, times and half a time** (v 25): see Study Seven. A length of time that God has already decided.

Daniel is “troubled” and asks for “the meaning of all this” (v 15–16).

8. How would verses 17–18 have encouraged him?



Next, he asks for further clarification on the “meaning of the fourth beast” (v 19), and is given an “explanation” (v 23).

9. How does that explanation leave him feeling (v 28)?

- Why would verses 23–25 have made him feel like that?

Daniel knew (from Jeremiah 29:10–14—see Daniel 9:2) that the exile in Babylon would last 70 years. Before receiving this vision, he may well have thought that once the 70 years of exile were over, things would be bright for the family of God.

10. How is this dream in Daniel 7 (and particularly this last explanation) reshaping his expectations?

### *apply*

11. How should Daniel’s dream reshape our expectations of:

- our future between today and the day Jesus returns?
- our future beyond the day Jesus returns?

12. What difference will having a Daniel 7 perspective of our present and our future make, day by day?

What will go wrong if we forget:

- what life is like for God’s people as they travel through life, toward home in God’s kingdom?

- what life is like for God’s people once they reach their home in God’s kingdom?

### ***getting personal***

How are you currently experiencing the difficulties of life as a member of God’s people on their way home? One day “the court will sit” (v 26). How might you help yourself to remember this truth in the midst of difficulties?

### ***pray***

Thank God that one day his kingdom will prevail, “the court will sit,” and Christ will judge those who oppose him. Ask him to give you a “Daniel 7 perspective” on your present and your future.

Pray for Christians in other parts of the world who are oppressed and persecuted by unjust governments. Pray that the knowledge of God’s certain victory would help them to persevere.

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## LESSON 6: DANIEL'S PRAYER | Daniel 8-9

### *The Story So Far*

God brought proud King Nebuchadnezzar low, in order to bring him into his eternal kingdom. God's word is a public proclamation offering peace.

Daniel refused to stop praying to God, and was thrown in the lions' den. But God delivered him, proving himself to be the God who is real, and who can rescue.

God's kingdom, ruled by the Son of Man, Jesus, will prevail and defeat ungodly earthly kingdoms; but life will be hard for his people until that day comes.

### *talkabout*

1. Why do we pray? What stops us from praying?

### *investigate*

Read Daniel 8:1–27

#### DICTIONARY

**Citadel of Susa** (v 2): fortress 200 miles away from Babylon.

**Beautiful Land** (v 9): Israel. Host (v 10): stars.

**Daily sacrifice** (v 11): act of worship to God in the Jerusalem Temple.

**Sanctuary** (v 11): the most holy part of the temple.

**Reconsecrated** (v 14): made fit for worship again.

**Prostrate** (v 17): lying flat on the ground, face down.

**Wrath** (v 19): deserved anger.

2. Describe the vision Daniel sees in verses 2–12 (you may like to draw it).

3. What will the “horn” do in the “Beautiful Land” (v 11–12, 23–25)?

- How will things end up (v 14, 25)?

4. Read John 2:19–22; Hebrews 10:11–14. In what sense was Jesus the final fulfillment of Daniel 8:14?

***apply***

5. How does this vision once again underline the way God’s people need to look at their present and their future?

***investigate***

Read Daniel 9:1–19

DICTIONARY
<b>Jeremiah the prophet</b> (v 2): delivered a message from God that Judah would be taken into exile by the Babylonians. <b>Desolation</b> (v 2): time of destruction. <b>Covenant</b> (v 4): legal agreement. <b>Righteous</b> (v 7): in the right. <b>Transgressed</b> (v 11): broken. <b>Iniquities</b> (v 16): wrong behavior.

Throughout the book, Daniel has been characterized as a man of prayer (2 v 17–18, 19–23; 6 v 10). Here, we have the most detailed of his prayers in the book that bears his name.

6. What prompted Daniel’s prayer (v 2–3)?

- Read Jeremiah 29 v 10–14. Why is it strange that Daniel responds in “sackcloth and ashes”—clothes that signify an attitude of mourning (Daniel 9 v 3)?

7. How does Daniel 9 v 4–16 show why Daniel dressed like this?

8. But Daniel himself was “innocent in [God’s] sight” (6 v 22). What does his identification with all God’s people, and his confession as a member of that people, teach us about our prayers?

***getting personal***

For Daniel, confession runs along two lines. Not only is it saying something about the wrongs we have committed against God—our sin—but it is saying something about the merciful character of God—his righteousness.

Do your private prayer times include much confession? Do you see confession as merely one-dimensional (confessing to God the things you’ve done wrong)? How can you get into the habit of meditating on God’s righteousness as you confess your sins?

9. On what basis does Daniel dare to plead to God to keep his promises (v 17–19)?
10. We have seen the innocent Daniel praying on behalf of God’s people. Read Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1. How is he picturing what Jesus is doing for us right now?

***explore more***

**Read** Ezra 1:2–4, 6–7

These events took place shortly after Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9.

*How did God both keep his promise of Jeremiah 29, and answer Daniel’s prayer?*

**Read** Daniel 9:20–27

**DICTIONARY**

**Holy hill** (v 20): Jerusalem.

**Atone** (v 24): make up for.

**Anoint** (v 24): pour oil over something to show it’s been set apart for a special role.

**Abomination** (v 27): a thing which causes disgust.

11. Who appears, when, and why (v 20–23)?

Daniel had asked God to make an end to the 70 years of exile as he had promised through Jeremiah. Now Daniel discovers it will take another “seventy sevens” before a complete deliverance will come! Israel’s return to the land will not be a complete return from “exile.”

12. But, when the time finally comes, what will happen (v 24)?

- How is this pointing us toward Jesus—both his death and resurrection, and his return—as the final fulfillment?

***explore more***

**Re-read** Daniel 9:25–27

Can you trace out four stages that will take place?

These verses are not straightforward! Apocalyptic literature is often fulfilled in more than one person, or event, or time. So the “anointed one” could refer to the Persian ruler Cyrus, who allowed the Jews back to Jerusalem (see Isaiah 45:1); or Joshua, high priest at the time of the temple’s rebuilding (Haggai 1:1); or Zerubbabel, who led the first group who returned to construct the temple.

The anointed one who was cut off could be Onias III (the Jewish high priest murdered around 175 BC), or Jesus Christ.

And the second half of verse 26 likely has AD 70 and the final destruction of the temple in view. The important thing to note is that all this happens in history—God was telling Daniel he would be at work throughout the “seventy sevens” to bring about the salvation of his people.

***apply***

13. How have these chapters encouraged you about why God’s people pray? Look back at your answer to question 1. Which of the reasons why we find prayer hard can Daniel 8–9 help us with?

### ***getting personal***

Verse 23 says the speedy response to Daniel's prayer came for he was "greatly loved" (ESV). Centuries later, Jesus encouraged his followers in the same way: "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:11–13).

In which area of your prayer life do you most need to hear this encouragement and comfort? What difference would it make to your commitment to prayer if you remembered this?

### ***pray***

By now you should be eager to pray! Shape your prayers around the pattern we see in Daniel 9:

- A reflection on God's promises in his word, and his righteous, powerful and merciful character.
- Humble confession as you identify with the failings of your whole church.
- Petition based on God's mercy, and confidence in his gracious promises, rather than any sense of entitlement.

Be encouraged knowing that as you pray, Christ is also praying on your behalf. And remember that God delights to answer the prayers of his people: "For you are greatly loved" (Daniel 9:23, ESV).

David Helm, [\*Daniel: Staying Strong in a Hostile World\*](#), Good Book Guides Series (The Good Book Company, 2015).

## LESSON 7: THE FINAL VISION | Daniel 10-12

### *The Story So Far*

Daniel refused to stop praying to God, and was thrown in the lions' den. But God delivered him, proving himself to be the God who is real, and who can rescue.

God's kingdom, ruled by the Son of Man, Jesus, will prevail and defeat ungodly earthly kingdoms; but life will be hard for his people until that day comes.

Daniel prayed in response to God's word and God's character, confessing on behalf of the Jews and asking him mercifully to return them from exile.

### *talkabout*

1. What events or possibilities in your future most affect your actions and feelings in the present?

### *investigate*

Read Daniel 10:1–11:1

#### DICTIONARY

**Topaz** (v 6): precious stone.

**Burnished** (v 6): polished.

**Multitude** (v 6): crowd of many people.

**Prince** (v 13): powerful spiritual being.

2. Why is Daniel the only person to see the vision (v 4–9)?

- How does he feel about seeing the “man dressed in linen” (v 8, 11, 16–17)?

3. What are we seeing about the costs of being a prophet? How different is this from what you tend to think being a prophet would have been like?



### ***getting personal***

Hearing the word of God and passing it on is sometimes dangerous and always difficult. Gospel proclamation is costly.

Who do you know who is engaged in gospel ministry whom you could encourage more, or pray for more?

### ***explore more***

**Re-read** Daniel 10:12–14; 10:20–11:1

*Why did the angel not join Daniel earlier?*

These verses pull back the veil on the unseen universe—there is not merely an angelic host who do the bidding of God, but there are fallen ones, who work to oppose his will. And it appears that God has fixed the borders of nations according to assignments given to angels (see Deuteronomy 32:8–9, where “sons of Israel” or “sons of God” (ESV) may refer to angels).

*How does this glimpse of the unseen universe humble us as 21st-century humans?*

**Read** Daniel 11:1–35

### DICTIONARY

**Insolence** (v 18): rudeness and disrespect.

**Contemptible** (v 21): completely worthless; disgusting.

**Desecrate** (v 31): make unfit for worship.

Again, Daniel is told about the rise and fall of kingdoms; again, in verses 21–35, the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes is most in view (though remember that symbols stand for general principles as well as specific people).

4. What effect will his reign have on God’s people (v 28, 30–32)?

- What mistakes will God’s people make, or be tempted to make (v 14, 30, 32)?
- What will “the wise” do (v 32–35)?

### ***apply***

We should not read apocalyptic literature for its “otherness” so much as for its “oughtness.” We need to finish reading it by asking ourselves: *Now what ought I to do?*

5. What would it look like for us as God’s people to make the mistakes of verses 14, 30 and 32?

- How ought we to apply v 32–35 to ourselves? (Read Mark 13:5–13, 32–37 for Jesus’ help in answering this!)

### ***investigate***

**Read** Daniel 12:1–13

6. What will happen when deliverance finally arrives (v 2–3)?

7. What must Daniel do, and until when (v 4)?

- Read 1 Peter 1:10–12. In what sense do we live in “the time of the end” (see the words of the angel to Daniel in 12:4)?

8. What question is asked in verse 6? What answer is given, and how does Daniel feel about that answer (v 7–8)?

In Revelation 12 v 14, the phrase “time, times and half a time” is used to refer to the season of persecution which the church endures from Satan, between the death and resurrection of Christ, and his final return. So it may well be that the angel is telling Daniel that final fulfillment—including the resurrection of God’s people from the dead—will come only when Christ returns.

9. How should Daniel (and we) respond to this glimpse of the future (v 12–13)?

Remember that Daniel received these visions while he lived in Babylon—while he was explaining the writing on the wall to King Belshazzar, and refusing to cease praying under the reign of King Darius.

10. How would the truths about God, the world and the future that were revealed in these visions have enabled him to live as he did in Babylon, do you think?

### ***apply***

11. How does verse 13 both encourage and challenge you as a believer today?

12. What difference has the book of Daniel made to:

- your view of God?
- your understanding of what it will mean for you to worship him?
- your obedience in difficult circumstances?

### ***getting Personal***

Look at your answer to Question Twelve. Are there any practical steps you need to take in response to what you've learned from the book of Daniel?

### ***pray***

Spend time thanking God for the promise of eternal life, and that one day his people “will be purified, made spotless and refined” (Daniel 12:10). Pray for those individuals involved in costly gospel ministry whom you thought of in response to the Getting Personal section on page 44. Ask God to help each member of your group to labor on faithfully, in Christ, toward your rest.

David Helm, [\*Daniel: Staying Strong in a Hostile World\*](#), Good Book Guides Series (The Good Book Company, 2015).