



**LIVE FOR THE
KINGDOM**
STUDIES IN DANIEL

Daniel takes us into an Old Testament time when God's people are facing opposition and pressure to compromise. The book reassures us that alliance to God will ultimately lead to salvation because human kingdoms will perish. Irrespective of how important and powerful they may seem now, human empires will eventually fade. **But the kingdom of God is everlasting.** In this way Daniel points forward to Jesus Christ, the one who overcame the world and through whom God establishes His kingdom.

The historical setting of Daniel is the Babylonian Exile of Israel. The Exile occurred about 600yrs before Jesus, and it resulted from the mighty Babylonian Empire conquering Israel. Jerusalem was destroyed and the precious Temple of Yahweh reduced to ruins. The Babylonians took Israel's king captive, and they carried back to Babylon large numbers of Israelites as prisoners of war (hence the name "Exile").

The Exile represented a massive crisis of faith for Israel. God had promised that Abraham's descendants (who had in fact become Israel) would become a great nation, and that God would bless them and settle them into their own promised land. But now with the Exile all that had vanished. The book of Daniel reaffirms that **God is still in control despite the apparent chaos.**

As with any Old Testament book it's important to remember that Daniel is *not* primarily about us. **The Old Testament is primarily about God** - who he is, what he does and why he does it. This side of the cross, we can add that the Old Testament is also written to prepare us for, and point us towards, Jesus Christ. For this reason the final "Thinking it over" questions will repeatedly ask the same important questions - *What do we discover about God from this passage? How do you think this passage prepares us for the coming of Jesus?*



Study 1
Daniel 1

Getting Started

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) What do you think Jesus meant by those words?

Read Daniel 1:1-2

1) What historical events are described at the very beginning of Daniel?

2) The events of v1-2 are often referred to as "the Exile." Lamentations is another Old Testament book written about this same event. Skim through Lamentations 1. What effect did the Exile have on Israel?

Read Daniel 1:3-7

3) As well as carrying back treasure to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar also carried back people! What did this involve for people like Daniel?

4) How do you think Daniel may have felt about all the changes being forced upon him?

5) Do you see any parallels between Daniel's life circumstance and our life circumstance as Christians?

Read Daniel 1:8-20

6) Why do you think Daniel refuses to eat the king's food?

7) Does this incident have a climactic moment? Where do you think it is?

8) This chapter describes a time of trouble and trials for God's people. What evidence do you find in the chapter that God is still in control? In what way is this a comfort for us?

Thinking it over

- The Old Testament is primarily about God - who he is, what he does and why he does it. What do we discover about God from this passage?
- As New Testament Christians we also know that the OT is written to prepare us for the coming of Jesus Christ. How do you think this passage prepares us for the coming of Jesus?
- What are some areas of life in which you are tempted to compromise your obedience to God? In what way is this chapter a good encouragement to us?

Pray

Give thanks to God for his promise that nothing can separate us from his love (Rom 8:37-39)

Getting Started

Do you know anyone who you would describe as wise? What is it about them that makes them wise?

Read Daniel 2:1-13

1) What effect does Nebuchadnezzar's dream have on him?

2) Why does Nebuchadnezzar refuse to tell the wise men his dream?

Read Daniel 2:14-30

3) What effect does Nebuchadnezzar's dream have on Daniel?

4) List out all the things we discover about God in these verses.

Daniel 2:31-35

5) Describe Nebuchadnezzar's dream in your own words.

Read Daniel 2:36-45

6) Describe Daniel's interpretation in your own words.

7) Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that the Babylonian empire is represented by the gold head in the dream. Why do you think he doesn't identify the other kingdoms represented in the dream? (v39-43)

8) What do you think is the most important kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? Why?

Read Daniel 2:46-49

9) What does Nebuchadnezzar come to realise about God?

10) Look back over the chapter and notice how many times "wise men" or "wisdom" have been mentioned. What do you think this chapter is telling us about wisdom?

Thinking it over

- In what ways does this chapter prepare us for the coming of Jesus?

- If we really believe what Daniel says about God in v20-23, how will it show in the way we live?

Pray

Reread Daniel 2:20-23 and use it as a basis for prayer.

Getting Started

In what situations do you feel the “odd one out” for being a christian?

Read Daniel 3

1) Fill in the following chart regarding the storyline of the chapter.

	Daniel 3
Who is the king at the time of this chapter?	
What does the king command?	
Which followers of God are focussed on in these chapters	
How do these followers of God respond to the king's command?	
What punishment do the followers of God face?	
How are the followers of God rescued?	

	Daniel 3
How does the rescue highlight that it is God who is saving His people?	
What does the king eventually decide about the God of Israel?	

2) Does the passage make use of tension, irony, humour or other writing techniques? How do these techniques help show us the lesson of the passage?

3) Read Hebrews 11:32-12:3. Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Daniel all showed great faith. A faith which is perfected in Christ. How should this be an encouragement to us?

Thinking it over

- What does this passage teach us about God?

- How does this passage prepare us for the coming of Jesus?

- In what ways do you feel the opposition of the world in your own Christian life? What things help you to remain firm?

Pray

Pray for our Christian brothers and sisters around the world who are facing fierce and violent persecution for their faith. Pray that they would persevere to the end, and thank God for his promise that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).

Read Daniel 5

5) In what way is King Belshazzar's pride even worse than his father's?

6) How is King Belshazzar humbled by God?

7) What do you think the main lesson of these two chapters is?

8) How would these chapters have been a comfort to God's people (especially at the time of Daniel)?

9) 1 Peter 2:22-23 describes Christ suffering for us and leaving us an example to follow. In what ways does Jesus exemplify the lesson of these two chapters in Daniel?

Thinking it over

- What does this passage teach us about God?
- How does this passage prepare us for the coming of Jesus?
- Are there any areas of life in which you are especially prone to pride? What are ways in which we can encourage humility in each other?

Pray

Read James 4:13-17 and use it as a basis for prayer.

Daniel 6**Getting Started**

The BBC news has reported that Christians are now the most persecuted religious group in the world. Why do you think that is?

Read Daniel 6

1) Fill in the following chart regarding the storyline of the chapter.

	Daniel 6
Who is the king at the time of this chapter?	
What does the king command?	
Which followers of God are focussed on in these chapters	
How do these followers of God respond to the king's command?	
What punishment do the followers of God face?	
How are the followers of God rescued?	

	Daniel 6
How does the rescue highlight that it is God who is saving His people?	
What does the king eventually decide about the God of Israel?	

2) Look back at the similar chart in Study 3. What similarities and differences do you notice between the two chapters? What lessons do you think these might show us?

3) In Chapter 3 the king's command is for people to do something, whereas in Chapter 6 the king's command is for people to not do something. What are some of the varied ways that our present world opposes God's people.

Thinking it over

- What does this passage teach us about God?

- How does this passage prepare us for the coming of Jesus?

- Do you find this chapter a comfort or a challenge? Why?

Pray

Pray for once more for our Christian brothers and sisters around the world who are facing fierce and violent persecution for their faith. Perhaps you could choose one specific country which you know about.

Getting Started

What were the most important things you did last week?

Read Daniel 7:1

1) How is this chapter different to any of the previous chapters?

Read Daniel 7:2-14

2) Daniel's dream has three scenes. Describe the main thing which happens in each scene?

Scene 1 (v1-8)

Scene 2 (v9-12)

Scene 3 (v13-14)¹

Read Daniel 7:15-28

3) What do the 4 beasts represent?²

¹ The phrase "son of man" refers to a human being, ie someone who is a member of mankind. For this reason Daniel himself is referred to as a son of man in 8:17.

² Many people spend lots of time trying to figure out what specific kingdoms are represented by the four beasts. A common explanation is they represent the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires. According to this interpretation the boastful horn of the fourth beast corresponds to Antiochus Epiphanes, a particularly vicious persecutor of God's people. Whether this interpretation is true or not, the chapter doesn't explicitly say. Rather the main focus of the chapter is not on the beasts but on the "one like a son of man."

4) Who does the "one like a son of man" represent? (v18,26-7)

5) How is the lesson of Daniel's vision a comfort for God's people?

6) When we turn to the New Testament, Jesus does something very exciting with this chapter. According to Jesus, who is the Son of Man? (Mark 14:60-62)

7) In the light of your previous answer, what does Daniel's vision tell us about the majesty and importance of Jesus?

Thinking it over

- Considering what we have discovered in Daniel 7, what would God say were the most important things we did last week? How does this compare to your answer to the Getting Started question.

- In what way does this world tempt us to underestimate the importance of Jesus?

- In light of this chapter - what attitudes and/or lifestyle issues do I need to change?

Pray

Ask God to help you have a lifestyle which reflects that Jesus' "dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed"

Getting Started

"I'm thinking of giving up being a Christian. It's too hard because people just think you're strange!" What sorts of things might you say in response?

Read Daniel 8:1-14

1) How is the ram described in Daniel's dream?

2) How is the goat described in Daniel's dream?

3) What feelings and emotions does Daniel's dream evoke in you?

Read Daniel 8:15-27

4) What is the ram identified as?

5) What is the goat identified as?

historical note: Daniel's vision provides a good overview of the history of the Greek Empire. Under the leadership of Alexander the Great (v21) the Greek empire grew in size and power. After Alexander's early death however, the empire was divided amongst four of his generals (v22).

6) Considerable attention is especially given to one of the goat's horns (v9-12, 23-25). Why do you think this particular horn is given so much attention?

historical note: it is generally considered that the "stern faced king" is a reference to Antiochus Epiphanes. Epiphanes was a particularly vicious persecutor of God's people and amongst other things banned sabbath keeping and circumcision amongst the Israelites, violently punished those who disobeyed him, and set up sacrifices to to his god in the Jerusalem temple.

7) Why do you think God is providing Daniel with this insight into the future?

8) How does the lesson of this vision build on the lesson of the previous chapter?

Thinking it over

- What does this passage teach us about God?
- How does this passage prepare us for the coming of Jesus?
- What things help you to persevere when you're being criticised for being a follower of Jesus

Pray

As in study 3 and 5, pray again for Christians in the world who are struggling against fierce persecution.

Getting Started

"God's just a grumpy old man... always looking for things to get angry about!" How would you respond to a comment like that?

Read Daniel 9:1-3

1) What is it that Daniel discovers from the prophet Jeremiah?

2) Jeremiah lived at the same time as Daniel, however, whereas Daniel was taken as an exile to Babylon (see Study 1), Jeremiah remained living amongst the ruins of Jerusalem. One of the things which Jeremiah did was write a letter to the exiles in Babylon. It is probably this letter which Daniel is reading in verse 2. Read the following extract from his letter:

1 This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

10 This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

Jeremiah 29:1,10-14

a) what does God promise to do?

b) when does God promise to do it?

3) The first year of Darius (v1) places this chapter about 65-70 years after the start of the exile - when the Persian empire had conquered the Babylonians. Given your answers to the previous two questions, how might Daniel be feeling at this time? What is it that he does in response? (v3)

Read Daniel 9:4-19.

4) According to Daniel, why did the Exile happen?

5) What does Daniel ask God to do?

6) On what basis does he ask God to do this?

7) In what way is Daniel's prayer an appropriate one for us all to pray?

Read Daniel 9:20-23

8) In what ways do we see God's eagerness to forgive and answer prayer in these verses?

Read Daniel 9:24-27

These are quite difficult verses in which God gives Daniel an overview for His plan to provide "everlasting righteousness" for his people. Many people have used these verses to develop elaborate timelines for either the first appearance of Jesus or the return of Jesus. The verses however seem to be deliberately vague. Rather than giving a highly detailed plan to Daniel, God instead simply wants Daniel to know that a plan exists.

9) How does God's plan to "bring in everlasting righteousness" find its fulfilment? (look up Rom 3:21-26, 4:23-25, 2 Cor 1:20)

Thinking it over

- What does this passage teach us about God?
- How does this passage prepare us for the coming of Jesus?
- At what times do you doubt God's goodness and generosity to you? How does this chapter help at those times?

Pray

Give thanks to God for his eagerness to show love and mercy to his people.

Daniel 10-12

Getting Started

When do you find it hard to remain convinced that God is in control?

Read Daniel 10:1-11:1

In this study we will cover a very complex vision which Daniel received. The vision will go right through until the end of the book. They are difficult chapters. Many of the details within the vision bear a strong parallel to events during the Greek empire when Israel underwent a fierce persecution. However, for the purposes of this study we'll be content just getting some of the main ideas, and not worrying too much with the detail.

- 1) According to the man in Daniel's vision what is the main theme of these chapters? (10:1,14),

- 2) What attributes of Daniel's character are commended? (10:12) Can you think of any places in the book where we have seen these attributes?

Read Daniel 11:2-45

- 3) This is a very complicated and detailed chapter, so don't be too stressed about trying to work out every single detail. What human kingdoms does it involve? (11:2)

- 4) The chapter is full of quite precise predictions of the political intrigue and struggle for power within the Greek Empire following Alexander the Great. This certainly happened in history, although it's hard to know exactly what is being referred to in some of the verses. What feelings and emotions does this chapter produce in you?

- 5) What are we repeatedly told through the vision? (11:27,29, 35) In what way is this a comfort?

Read Daniel 12

6) Again its hard to determine exactly what these verses refer to. Some think it is another reference to the fierce persecution of God's people under Antiochus Epiphanes (see study 6). Others think that the vision has now jumped forward to a future persecution which will happen just before the return of Jesus. Irrespective of these options, what is going to happen to God's people? (12:2-3)

7) What is going to happen to those who are not God's people?

8) Look back over your previous two answers. In what ways should those truths influence

how we spend our time?

how we spend our money?

how we treat other Christians?

how we treat people who don't yet know Jesus?

Thinking it over

- Look back over the studies in this book. Daniel has helped us see the things of this world from God's perspective. Has there been any one particular truth which has especially impacted you? How has it helped you understand and value Jesus all the more?

- Have there been any attitudes or life goals or behaviour patterns which the book of Daniel has challenged you over? Try to be as specific and practical as you can be.

Pray

Give thanks to God that He remains in control even when terrible and confusing things are happening in the world.