

DANIEL: SERVING THE KING



“... His **kingdom** is an eternal **kingdom**;
his dominion endures
from generation to generation.”

Daniel 4:34 (NIV)

A Brief Introduction

Smart and obstinate, humble but irritating, courteous yet aloof - and always right! Perhaps that's what others thought of Daniel, the young man who would never fully comply. Daniel was obstinate to the point of awkwardness and beyond. He had his friends and his enemies, and he outlived at least three kings!

While Daniel is prominent in this book that bears his name, it is God who is at the centre. It is impossible *not* to notice God's control over human kings, his sovereign power in seemingly unlikely situations, and his faithfulness to his people. We see rulers rise and fall, and we see **God's plan to establish a kingdom that lasts forever.**

The book of Daniel is a bridge between Jews in the Old Testament and Christians in the New Testament. Jesus uses Daniel's vision of one 'like a son of man' as a thinly veiled way to refer to himself, God's king. The way Jesus speaks of God's kingdom also smacks of Daniel. And much of Revelation has similarities with Daniel's visions.

As we read, we should be comforted by God's sovereignty and his faithfulness. We ought to be inspired by Daniel's tenacity and trust. And we can't help but gain a more complete picture of Jesus - our King. Daniel is the perfect book for the Aussie-Christian battler. An encouragement to stick at it because God has got everything under control.

The shape of the book

The book of Daniel is written in two halves. **Chapters 1-6** re-tell significant events that occurred in Daniel's life-time. Then **chapters 7-12** describe visions Daniel saw. Chapter 7, in the middle of the book is also central in the themes of the book. Chapter 7 that most clearly points us to Jesus - God's king, who will rule forever.

A couple of quick tips on reading Daniel

Like most of the Old Testament, it is important to read big chunks. Read a chapter or more at a time and try to keep the rest of the 'story' in mind.

Chapter one sets the scene and gives pointers for how we should read this book. The first two verses draw our attention away from the human plight of Daniel and the people of Israel and focuses our attention on the battle between kings, and the battle between man-made religion and the creator God. **This is a book about kings that come and go. It is a book about God and His King who will rule forever.**

Daniel's visions, in the second half of the book have become known as 'apocalyptic' in genre. This style can be a little off-putting. As you read do two things. Firstly, try to understand the 'big-picture' without worrying much about the details. Secondly, where there is no interpretation given, be slow to form your own conclusions.

Enjoy reading Daniel!

Our plan for Church and Growth Groups

The plan is to cover as much as possible of the book of Daniel in church and in Growth groups, without necessarily covering it all in either. We may over-lap a little as well. Here's the plan:

At Church	In Growth Group
	OT overview
Daniel 1	Daniel 1
Daniel 2	Daniel 2
Daniel 4-5	Daniel 3
Daniel 6	Daniel 4-5
Daniel 7	Daniel 7-8
Daniel 9	Daniel 9
Daniel 10-12	Daniel 10-12

There is also a 'Daniel Reading Guide' with 20 readings and questions which you may like to use to help get into reading Daniel: kpc.org.au/resources/daniel-reading-guide

You can download these Bible studies you are reading right now here: kpc.org.au/resources/service-type/bible-studies

These Bible studies have been written by kpc with a mix of input from Daniel Saunders and Steve Blencowe.

SERVING THE KING: STUDY ONE

Old Testament Overview

Our aim this week is to ease into things for by having a bit of fun and praying together. We'll start by playing a game!

Here's how it works

1. A member of the group cuts-out the rectangles/cards on the next page and shuffles them. They take the top card and place it on the table or floor, where all can see it.
2. They pass the remaining cards to the person on their left who takes the top card and places it either before or after the first card – in chronological order.
3. Continue to be pass the remaining cards around the group with each person having a go at putting the top card in chronological order among the others on the floor or table.

There are four rules:

1. **Everyone can help** (it's intended to be fun, not a test!).
2. But **don't open a Bible** - yet.
3. When all the cards have been placed the group may **adjust the cards** to their mutual satisfaction.
4. **Open Bibles** to check how you went. A handy tip is - Genesis through to Esther (in English bibles) are pretty-much in chronological order.

Talk about which events and people may be most significant in God's unfolding plan of salvation.

Talk about significant events that have been left out (inadvertently of course).

Make sure you work out where Daniel fits into this 'time-line'.

After the 'game' please make sure you have time to share and pray.

<p>Creation (OK, well you've got to start somewhere)</p>	<p>God's promises to Abraham - land -people -blessing</p>	<p>Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt</p>
<p>The 10 Commandments given to Israel</p>	<p>Noah and the flood</p>	<p>David becomes King</p>
<p>Samson and Delilah have relationship issues</p>	<p>Abraham passes his wife off as his sister</p>	<p>God's temple is built in Jerusalem</p>
<p>David kills Goliath</p>	<p>Joseph rules under Pharaoh in Egypt</p>	<p>Elijah gets taken away from Elisha</p>
<p>Israel divides into two Kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south</p>	<p>Rahab hides the spies</p>	<p>Cyrus says the Jews can go home and rebuild their city and their temple</p>
<p>DANIEL requests a vegetarian diet.</p>	<p>The king of Assyria deported the northern tribes of Israel.</p>	<p>Hannah prays for a child</p>
<p>Saul goes to a medium in Endor</p>	<p>The tower of Babel is destroyed</p>	<p>God feeds his people in the desert – with mana and quail</p>
<p>God promised David that his descendent would rule forever</p>	<p>The king of Babylon attacked Jerusalem</p>	<p>Nehemiah gives a hand in re-building the wall around Jerusalem</p>
<p>Seth is born</p>	<p>Jonah went to Nineveh (in Assyria)</p>	<p>a hand wrote on a wall <i>“mene, mene, tekem, parsin”</i></p>

SERVING THE KING: STUDY TWO

Trusting God in a Foreign Land – Daniel chapter 1

The Old Testament book of Daniel is not strictly speaking a book of history, but it is set in a historical context. We need to be a little familiar with the context. So let start there.

Read 2 Kings 23:36-24:6 and 2 Chronicles 36:5-8

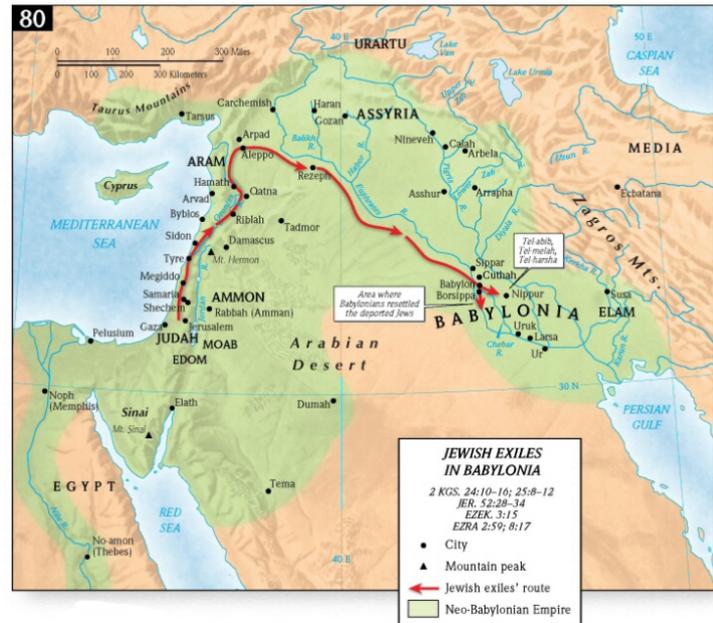
1. What happened to Israel?
2. Why did this happen?

Read Daniel 1:1-7

3. What was brought from Jerusalem to Babylon?
4. What was the program for the people who were brought?
5. Why do you think this was done?

Think about it:

6. How might the Jews have felt about the invasion of Jerusalem? How do Kings, Chronicles and Daniel interpret this event?



Read Daniel 1:8-16

7. What is Daniel's request? Why did he ask for this?
8. What is the official's response? Who ends up providing them with food?
9. What is the result of their diet?

Read Daniel 1:17-21

10. How are these four men received in the Babylonian court?
11. Who is the cause of their success?

Daniel lives out this entire period as an exile in Babylon (the first year of King Cyrus is the year when the first Jews are allowed to return to Jerusalem c.f. 2 Chron. 36:22-23). As we will keep seeing in the first half of the book, Daniel and his three friends are examples of how followers of God are to live in exile or when pagans rule their nation (as was the case in the centuries leading up to the time of Jesus). They faithfully obey God even in the face of danger and are often rewarded for their faithfulness. Their reward may give them influence in a foreign land but once again places them in perilous situations.

Read 1 Peter 2:11-12

12. How should Christians think of ourselves in relation to the world?

13. What kind of lives should we live?

14. Why should we live this way?

Think about it:

15. How are you tempted to “eat from the king’s table” in a way that threatens your faithfulness to God or your Christian witness?

16. How have you seen God use “saying no” to the “king’s table” to bring himself glory?

Pray

Ask God to help us be faithful to Him and to remember that we are exiles and strangers in this world.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In Mark's Gospel we read (1:14-15) “...Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (NIV)

Jesus proclaimed the coming of God's Kingdom. It's not a new kingdom! We can see the kingdom of God taking shape through the pages of the Old Testament. For example, in the Garden of Eden we have a snapshot of the kingdom – God ruling over his people, in the place he had made for them. The only problem was that Eve and then Adam chose *not* to live under God's rule. Their actions began a cycle of rebellion followed by judgement, mercy, restoration, and rebellion again. Welcome to the problem of 'sin' – an issue with which each of us are intimately familiar.

In the Old Testament God gives glimpses of a final and complete restoration of his kingdom – a kingdom even better than Eden because sin and rebellion will be dealt with. A kingdom where God will rule his people, forever. The basis for this restoration will be God's faithfulness to his people, and to his promises.

One of the key promises is God's promise to Abraham. Let's remind ourselves of what God promised Abraham.

Read Genesis 12:1-3. Notice what God promises Abram. And think about how we see this promise to Abraham shape events, even to today.

The way in which God punished rebellion, the way in which mankind continued to rebel against God time after time, and the way in which God remained faithful to his promises - all serve to help us understand and appreciate what it means to live in God's Kingdom, with Jesus as our King.

Reading Daniel gives us a feel for what it means to live in this world while we wait for the full benefits of God's kingdom to be revealed. It also adds to the bigger picture of what God's kingdom, and God's king will be like.

SERVING THE KING: STUDY THREE

Kingdoms come and kingdoms go - Daniel chapter 2

The first six chapters of Daniel are a bit like 'classic catches' - a compilation of highlights. They are a collection of stand-out events in the period of Israel's exile. They would have been talked about for ages afterward. And they are significant in understanding the rest of the book.



Last week we considered the historical context of the OT book. The northern tribes of Israel have been destroyed by the Assyrians and now the southern kingdom (Judah) has been annexed by Babylon, the temple pillaged, and the nobility removed to Babylon.

In this context you'd be forgiven for wondering what's happening to God's promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) and to David (2 Samuel 7). Is God still going to bless the world through Abraham's descendants? How can David's son be on the throne when there's barely a nation to rule?

In Daniel 1:17 we're told God gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams – now, in chapter two, we jump ahead in time and see Daniel interpret a dream.

Read Daniel 2:1-23

1. What does Nebuchadnezzar want?
2. How does Daniel respond?
3. What does Daniel's prayer (2:20-23) tell us about God?

The content of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is a mystery to everyone except Daniel. But from the way Daniel praises God it seems the content is good news – at least to Daniel.

Read Daniel 2:24-35

4. Who does Daniel credit for his ability to interpret dreams?
5. Have a go at sketching what the statue looked like (including the rock too).

Read Daniel 2:36-45

6. What do the various parts of the statue represent?
7. What does the rock represent?

The question we want to know the answer to is *what are these kingdoms?* Some commenators think the gold is the Babylonian empire, silver the Medo-Persian, bronze the Greek, and finally the iron and clay represent the Roman empire. This reconstruction may be correct, BUT Daniel has not chosen to tell us who the kingdoms are, therefore their identity must not be important for us to know. **The more important point is that no matter what 'great' kingdom people create, it is temporary and tiny when compared to God's kingdom which is eternal and infinite.**

8. Read Mark 1:15 and Luke 1:29-33. When does Jesus say God's kingdom comes?
9. Read Revalation 11:15-18. What hope is given because of Jesus' kingdom?

In many ways Nebuchadnezzar's dream is a summary of what we find in the whole book of Daniel. God is sovereign. God sets up kings and he removes kings. God gives them dominion and power, and he takes it away again. But God will establish a kingdom that will never end – a kingdom that exposes human made kingdoms for what they are. A kingdom where God's King will rule with justice, mercy and strength.

Read Daniel 2:46-49

10. How does King Nebuchadnezzar respond?
11. What is the outcome for Daniel and his friends?

Sady, it seems Nebuchadnezzar is merely dazzled by Daniel's ability and not truly converted to worship Daniel's God, because in the next chapter he creates a *golden statue* to express his pride in his power.

Think about it...

12. How does the vision of God's kingdom give you hope
 - a. For the future?
 - b. In evangelism?

Pray

Praise God that Jesus is King of Kings and that his Kingdom has begun. Pray God would use us to grow His Kingdom.

SERVING THE KING: STUDY FOUR

The cost of being different: Daniel chapter 3

At the beginning of chapter three we take another step forward in time – to the next 'classic catch' in the book of Daniel. This time it's Daniel's friends who take the field – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

It is no coincidence that this episode is recorded directly after the vision of a statue in chapter 2. The two events are linked by two statues.



Re-read Daniel 2:31-43, then read Daniel 3:1-7

1. What similarities are there between the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the image in chapter three?
2. How might Nebuchadnezzar's have thought that the 'statue' and the ritual he set up could serve to strengthen his rule over his people?

It seems Nebuchadnezzar may have taken the vision of chapter 2 to heart, in all the wrong ways. It's as if he is trying to prevent the collapse of his kingdom by ensuring his kingdom is united – unlike the feet of the statue in his dream.

Read Daniel 3:8-12 – and note the complex irony

If the King has set-up an image to help unite his kingdom in his service – then he has failed. The image gives rise to disobedience, dispute, and disunity (v8ff).

To make matters worse – it is the wise men who were spared through Daniel's actions (in chapter 2) who now want Daniel's friends thrown into a furnace.

Read Daniel 3:13-18 as you contemplate the cost of having convictions!

3. Do Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have any assurance that God will look after them? Do they expect to be saved from the furnace?
4. Can you think of examples of people who have done what they know to be right – even when it is potentially 'painful'?

Read Daniel 3:19-30

5. How does the writer verify for us that the furnace really was hot enough to kill?

6. Try to get yourself into Nebuchadnezzar's head for a moment (there should be room, because it was big). What's going through his mind as he watches the furnace?

7. What does this incident show us about the character of God? (e.g. v29)

We saw in 2:46-49 that Nebuchadnezzar did not really recognise God as God. And we've seen in this chapter that he managed to misuse the dream God gave him. As we read into Chapter four, we discover that Nebuchadnezzar *still* has not got it, even after this furnace incident. He still defiantly resists bending his knee to God.

It is not until God humbles Nebuchadnezzar with a period of insanity, that he is prepared to praise and glorify God above everything and everyone else (Daniel 4:34ff).

9. Can you spot any signs in vs 28-30 that Nebuchadnezzar is still resisting God?

As we finish up, let's think again about young Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They have set a high standard for anyone to live up to! Come forward to the New Testament and take a glimpse at what Jesus and Peter say about the cost of living for Jesus – God's eternal king.

Read and briefly discuss Luke 14:25-27 and 1 Peter 3:13-18

In the book of Daniel, we are constantly reminded that God is sovereign and powerful. He sets up kings, and he removes them. But the kingdom which God will establish lasts forever. In this passage we've had a glimpse of God's mercy and care (in sparing his people). We've also seen the cost of serving God in a world that ignores Him.

Pray

Pray that we would have the courage to live up to our convictions, as followers of Jesus, rather than 'going with the flow'.

SERVING THE KING: STUDY FIVE

God Humbles and God Exalts: Daniel chapters 4-5

Share about a time when you were humbled.

In Daniel 4 and 5 we read the accounts of two great, but proud, kings. Each are warned, by God, of the consequences of their pride. But they continue in their pride and are brought down by the mighty hand of God.

Read Daniel 4:1-18

This chapter has a unique feel: it is told from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective, rather than an anonymous narrator.

1. Why does Nebuchadnezzar write?
2. Who does Nebuchadnezzar ask to interpret his dream?
3. What are the key elements of his dream?

Read Daniel 4:19-27

4. What is the meaning of the dream?
5. What advice does Daniel give to Nebuchadnezzar?

Read Daniel 4:28-37

6. Did Nebuchadnezzar listen to Daniel's advice? How would you describe his attitude in v30?
7. How does Nebuchadnezzar respond to God when his sanity is restored?

Think about it

8. From verses 2, 8, 18 and 37, what do you think of Nebuchadnezzar's theology? Do you think he's truly worshipping Daniel's God?

Daniel 4 is set during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who was king in Babylon 605-552BC. Chapter 5 Jumps forward to the final night of Babylon's power in 539BC. As we read chapter five we'll see lots in common between Nebuchadnezzar and his later successor, King Belshazzar.

Read Daniel 5:1-17

9. What does Belshazzar do that shows his pride, and his disdain for the God of Israel?
10. How are the wise men contrasted with Daniel?

Read Daniel 5:18-30

11. What should Belshazzar have learnt from his predecessor (footnote in v22), Nebuchadnezzar?
12. What was written on the wall? What did it mean?
13. What happens to Daniel? What happens to Belshazzar?

In Daniel chapters 4 and 5 we've seen two examples of proud and arrogant pagan kings being humbled whilst God, and those faithful to Him, are exalted. We've also seen how, possibly, the experience of humiliation caused someone to turn to the One True God.

Although we don't have the power of an ancient king, pride and arrogance still find their way into our heart – so there are lessons for us here too.

Read Philippians 2:1-11

14. How is Jesus unlike Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar?
15. How is Jesus' experience like their experiences?
16. How does Jesus show us what humility is and why followers of Jesus must imitate His humility?

Pray

Confess to God your arrogance and pride. Ask God to give us the attitude of Jesus.



Lion reliefs from the Processional Way of Babylon. They date from around the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

SERVING THE KING: STUDY SIX

The God of Kings: Daniel 7-8

What things happen in the world today that make you wonder if God is in control?

In Daniel chapter 2 God enabled Daniel to both uncover the King's dream and interpret it. A dream of a four-part statue which was demolished by a stone. Now Daniel sees a vision which, like the king's dream in chapter 2, shows four kingdoms which are engulfed by God's kingdom.

The visions of Daniel 7 and 8 are early in Belshazzar's rule, so they fit chronologically between chapters 4 and 5.

Read Daniel 7:1-14

1. In the table below, write down the description of each beast (that's going to be easier then drawing them!).

Beast 1	Beast 2	Beast 3	Beast 4	The Horns

2. Describe the Ancient of Days, His throne, and His court.

3. What does the Ancient of Days do, to the beasts?

4. What is given to the "one like a son of man"?

Read Daniel 7:15-28

- 5. What is the *big picture* of what this vision means (vv16-17)?
- 6. How does Daniel feel after seeing the vision? Why do you think he feels this way?

Think about it

Commentators debate the historical (or future) identity of these four beasts and the ten horns. Although Daniel’s vision probably refers to historical events it is written in *apocalyptic* form and is doing more than describing historical events – it is showing a picture of what life in the world is like.

- 7. How do you think this vision, especially vv26-27, would have made the exiles feel? How does it make you feel?

Read Matthew 26:57-65

Son of Man is the preferred way Jesus refers to Himself (see Mt 8:30, 9:6, **10:23**, 11:19, etc). It is a title that derives from Daniel 7.

- 8. List the *attributes* of the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13-14. What do these attributes teach us about Jesus?

It’s not entirely clear which coming the *coming* of the Son of Man refers to. It may be Jesus’ second coming. This view is supported by the sense of *final judgement* in Daniel 7, as well as the scene in the vision occurring on earth. But it could refer to Jesus’ ascension, His *coming* to the Father. This view is supported by Jesus statement that ‘all authority... has been given to me’ (Matthew 28:18), and that the High Priest will see Jesus’ coming (Matthew 26:64-65).

---- only keep going if you have time ----

Read Daniel 8:1-14

- 9. As with Daniel 7, fill out the table with notes about each beast / horn:

Ram	Ram’s Horns	Goat	Goat’s First Horn	Goat’s Four Horns	Goat’s Final Horn

Read Daniel 8:15-27

10. In the second row of the table above, write down what each of the elements of the vision refer to.

Think about it

11. How is this vision like and unlike the vision of Daniel 7?

12. How do you think this vision would have made the exiles feel?

Pray

Praise God for His power and authority. Thank God that his power is used to care for and protect His people.

READING APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE.

The **most important** piece of advice is to **look at the big picture** and don't be thrown by the details. It's like the scoreboard at the cricket. You can read the scores clearly from the other side of the field. But if you are very close, then the 'pixels' distract from the over-all picture – things begin to blur. when we read apocalyptic parts of the Bible, we should look at the big picture, and not get distracted by the 'pixels'.

The **second tip** is related to the first – make sure you **read big chunks**, rather than get stuck on a verse or two.

A **third** tip is to **resist the temptation to identify the characters** with people and places in 'real life' – unless an interpretation is given.

And a **final** tip is to **be prepared to take numbers symbolically**. For example, when times and seasons are mentioned, we are probably not meant to construct a timeline of events from them.

Putting all that together you could say we should aim to get a feel for general patterns and cycles in the way that God lets things happen in this world. If we identify the patterns correctly, we may even be able to see instances in history which match the pattern very closely (for example, many have argued that Antiochus Epiphanes - second century BC - is depicted in Daniel's visions). But the important thing is to identify the pattern and understand the way that it points us to Jesus – God's King for eternity.

SERVING THE KING: STUDY SEVEN

The God who Hears: Daniel chapter 9

If God is the sovereign, supreme ruler over His creation, why pray?

Daniel 9 is set in the first year of Darius (539BC) who we met in 5:31 when he conquered Belshazzar. In this chapter Daniel has been reading from the prophet Jeremiah – likely either Jeremiah 25:11 or 29:10 – reading about God’s plans to punish His people, but also His plans to restore them. And reading the Bible leads Daniel to pray.

Read Daniel 9:1-19

1. What prompts Daniel to pray?
2. Summarise the big ideas and structure of Daniel’s prayer:
v4, 7, 9, 15

vv5-11a

vv11b-14

vv15-19

Think about it

3. Daniel already knew what God said He would do, so why did Daniel still pray?
4. In his prayer, Daniel prays on behalf of his people, and he even goes as far as confessing their sins for them. Is this something that features in your prayers? Should it? (1 Timothy 2:1-4 may help your discussion).

Daniel’s prayer has an extraordinary result. Not only is his prayer answered immediately, but an angel is sent to give the answer. The answer Daniel received has been the centre of a great deal of discussion and attempts to unravel timeframes and historical events that it could refer to. Although these discussions are interesting, we will find it most helpful to understand the general impression of the answers to Daniel’s prayer.

Read Daniel 9:20-27

5. Gabriel talks about the numbers 70, 7, 62 and *weeks*. Read Daniel 9:2 and Leviticus 25:8. What significance do these numbers have in the Old Testament.
6. Verse 24 describes the answer to Daniel’s prayer, a picture of a glorious future. What are the features of this future?
7. Verses 25-27 talk about the time leading up to that future. What kind of events characterise that time?

Think about it

8. How do you think this vision would have made the exiles feel?

Although Daniel's prayer is *answered* immediately (v23), it will take a long time – 490 years – before the *answer* of v24 eventuates. This is probably why God sent Gabriel to Daniel, to strengthen and encourage him (and through him, the people of God) whilst they wait to see the answer to the prayer.

Like Daniel we live in an *in-between* time. We know what the end will bring (e.g., Revelation 21-22) but we're not there yet. We also live in a time that needs patient endurance.

Read Colossians 1:9-11

9. What is Paul's prayer for the Colossian Christians? What do Christians need, to have endurance and patience?

Think about it

10. What things make it difficult for you to have *great endurance and patience* whilst we wait for Jesus' return?

Pray

Praise God that He listens to and answers prayers. Ask God to help us be more devoted to prayer. Ask God to give us endurance and patience to keep trusting while we wait for Jesus to return.

SERVING THE KING: STUDY EIGHT

Back to the Future: Daniel chapters 10-12

Share some of the things you've been thinking about while looking at the OT book of Daniel over the past few weeks.

A. Setting the scene

These three chapters are a record of what Daniel saw while he was standing near the Tigris River (Daniel 10:4-5 and 12:5-6). What Daniel saw was not a dream, and yet he was the only person who saw it.¹

As you read these chapters, you'll notice that the vision is different from what we have seen so far in Daniel. There is no mention of beasts coming out of a sea, no bears, goats, or horns. But there *is* talk of kings and rulers – which is what we have come to expect.² You might say that this vision is more aural than visual.

Thankfully we are given a clear framework in which to understand this vision.

Read 10:1 and 10:14

1. At what point in the Babylonian exile did Daniel see this vision?
2. What can you say about this vision which Daniel saw?

B. Then looking behind the scenes

Read Daniel 10:1-11:1

Daniel 10:1 tells us that this vision concerns a great war (or that it was *burdensome*). In other words – it's not particularly good news.

4. There has been a lot going on in Babylon and the surrounding districts. In what ways is Daniel now given a look at what God has been doing 'behind the scenes'?
5. What do you think makes Daniel so afraid?

Think about it

¹ He was with some other men at the time, but they ran away – in terror (Daniel 10:7-8). Meanwhile Daniel himself was quite shaken by what he saw (10:8, 16 etc).

² Recall how Daniel 1:1-3 sets the tone for what follows – a struggle between kings and their 'gods'.

6. Daniel was rocked by what he saw. But how could what he saw have also been an encouragement to him?

C. Looking into the future

The Babylonian exile is all but over. Cyrus has issued the edict of return (Daniel 10:1 compared with Ezra 1:1) and the walls of Jerusalem are in the process of being reconstructed. The period of God's judgement of his people is meant to be winding-up (Compare Deuteronomy 30:1-3). So, what will happen now? Is everything OK again? Will the people of Israel finally enjoy peace with God, in the promised land of Canaan?

Sadly, it's not all good news. This vision of what will happen to God's people in the future (Daniel 10:14) is burdensome (Daniel 10:1) – there is more pain ahead!

Chapter 11 begins with a surprisingly detailed description of the struggle that will ensue between Persia, Greece, and Rome. In fact, historians can align Daniel 11:1-35 with events in the region – even to the point of identifying Alexander the Great and Antiochus Epiphanes with the characters in Daniel's vision.

We should not be surprised by the OT predicting future events! We've already seen how Moses 'predicted' that God's people would be taken into exile (Deuteronomy 28). The events described here are a 'real-life' example of the pattern which Daniel has been shown (in Daniel chapters 2 and 7 for example) – God sets up kings. God takes them down again. And God is working to a bigger plan.

But from Daniel's point of view – the sad thing is that God's people will be caught up in turmoil.

Read Daniel 11:2-45 and note any references to God's people, Jerusalem, or the temple.

7. What can God's people expect in the future?

D. And seeing the end!

The immediate future for God's people may be bleak. But there is an end in sight.

Read Daniel 12:1-4

8. What can we say about 'the end'?

9. And how does this compare with what we have seen in the rest of Daniel?

Read Daniel 12:5-13

10. What indications are there that Daniel will not know when these things will be fulfilled?

11. What is Daniel told to do?

Think about it

12. Where do **we** fit into this vision of the future?

13. What might it mean for **us** to take the advice which Daniel was given in Daniel 12:13?

The book of Daniel increases our appreciation of God's sovereignty – as we see the way God sets kings up and takes them down, all the while working to his plan of establishing Jesus - the king who will rule forever. History goes round and round as it spirals towards the end God has in store – and God is there controlling every rotation in the spiral.

In this vision Daniel is given a glimpse ahead in time and shown how God's people fit into the spiral that is God's plan. While Daniel is **not** told when we will reach the end, he **is** given a glimpse of what the end will be like.³

Daniel was physically rocked by what he saw. No doubt the awesomeness of the vision, combined with the bleak outlook for the immediate future, upset him. But surely, he would have found *some* comfort in having seen behind the scenes, and in being reminded that God is working in ways that we are not able to appreciate. And surely, he would have been encouraged by the glimpse of the end.

In the meantime, Daniel must keep trusting God and serving king Cyrus. But more importantly he must faithfully serve God even when it means being different. Even when it means being persecuted. Just as we have seen on our way through this incredible book (Daniel 3 and 6 in particular).

As we look back into the past and forward into the future - we have a much clearer understanding of God's plan than even Daniel did. We have seen God's eternal king arrive on this earth – and we are waiting for him to return. In the meantime, we go on **servicing THE king.**

Pray

Thank God for all the things we have talked about on our way through the book of Daniel.

³ If Jeremiah could say that the exile would last 70 years – then it would be possible for God to tell Daniel how long there is until the end. But instead, Daniel is not given a straight answer. Even Jesus does not know the time of the end (Mark 13:32). What we can say is that we *are* living 'in the end times' – between the first and second comings of Jesus.