

Daniel and the Intertestamental Period

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Lesson 1: Introduction in Exile

Reading: Daniel 1

Overview

The book of Daniel follows four Jewish exiles in Babylon, focusing mostly on Daniel. The first six chapters are accounts of these four living faithfully to God among pressure to conform to the world. The latter six chapters contain visions shown to Daniel. The visions reveal God's power over world history and point forward to the time of Christ.

Exile

Read Daniel 1.1-2

The armies of Babylon had destroyed the Lord's chosen people in Judah. This did not happen because God was not powerful enough to save them- God allowed it to happen to bring judgment on His people who had turned their backs on Him.

2 Chronicles 36.15-16 gives detail about how terrible the judgment was. Jerusalem was burned, many lost their lives, and the survivors were carried away to a foreign land. This forceful removal from their homeland is called *exile*.

Daniel 1.2 says that the Lord gave His people into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

Discussion Question: Is a situation only sent from God if it is pleasant for us? When might God allow us to suffer hardship?

Faith and Vegetables

Read Daniel 1.3-16

Nebuchadnezzar took the brightest and best of the Jewish survivors to serve him in Babylon. This is where we meet Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The king of Babylon enrolled them and others in a program made to reinvent them. They were taught the Babylonian language, given Babylonian names, and trained to serve Nebuchadnezzar.

Serving in the king's palace meant you got to eat the king's food. This was some of the highest quality and decadent food on the planet. Daniel and the other exiles were given this privilege.

But the king's food posed a problem for Daniel and his friends. God instructed in the Law about which foods his covenant people were and were not allowed to eat. (**Lev. 11.1-23** has the details)

Thought Question: What kinds of meat were the Jews not allowed to eat?

It may be that the king's food contained meat from unclean animals or was sacrificed to idols. Whatever the case, Daniel and his friends knew they could not eat the king's food and please God.

They ask their supervisor for vegetables and water only, which was perfectly fine by God's law. To make sure no one got in trouble for under-feeding them, Daniel proposed a trial period. At the end of ten days, these four exiles were found fuller and healthier than the others who ate the king's food.

Thought Question: Was it dangerous to refuse the king's food?

Is it worth displeasing people if we know we are obeying God?

Conclusion

Read **Daniel 1.17-21**.

Daniel and his three friends faced great difficulty. They were taken from their families and homes to live in a foreign land. They were expected to live like the world and talk like the world. But God was watching over them, even in Babylon. As they chose to be faithful to Him, He blessed them. God gave them favor, skill, and wisdom- **Daniel 1.9, 17**.

Discussion Question: According to Dan. 1.2, who has power over the nations of the world?

According to Dan. 1.9 and 1.17, who has power over personal relationships?

What does Daniel 1 teach us about God?

Lesson 2: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 1

In **Daniel 1**, God judged His people for their refusal to repent. Daniel and his three friends had to find a way to be faithful to God in a world that did not honor Him. Even in a hard situation, God blessed His servants and was with them.

Daniel and the other Jewish nobles were exiled from their homeland in Judah to live in Babylon. The people they lived with did not know, serve, or love God.

Read **1 Peter 1.11-12**.

Discussion Question: How are Christians exiles in the world? Where is our home?

The king of Babylon wanted Daniel and his three friends to change who they were. He gave them Babylonian names, made them speak his language, and learn his culture.

Discussion Question: Do worldly friends and peers want us to act like they do at school, work , or on a team?

What are some ways that you feel pressure to be like the world?

When Daniel resolves to stick to God's law about food, he does not demand he get his way or call a strike or cause a riot. He asked for permission to do what he knew was right and offered to prove that it was good. Read **Romans 12.17-18**

Discussion Question: Is there a way to be peaceful when we choose to obey God instead of living like the world?

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah found themselves in a difficult situation, but God was with them. The Lord gave them favor with their supervisor and blessed them with skill and wisdom in their work.

Discussion Question: Is God with us as we live our lives in the world?

Based on this chapter, what sorts of blessings should we ask God for in prayer?

Write a prayer asking God for peace to live faithful to Him in a godless world.

Lesson 3: Nebuchadnezzar's Nightmare

Reading: Daniel 2

A Dangerous Dream

Read **Daniel 2.1-16**

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had a dream that disturbed him. He called in his wise men and court magicians and commanded them to tell him what his dream meant. Nebuchadnezzar did not trust them; he did not want to just be told things he wanted to hear, so he demanded his wise men to first tell him his dream. If they really had magic insight into such things, it should be a piece of cake. None of the wise men that the king summoned could know the dream without being told, much less what the dream meant. Nebuchadnezzar was ready to have them all killed when Daniel stepped in.

Thought Question: What is the difference between what humans know and what God knows? See Daniel 2.10-11.

Read **Daniel 2.17-23**

Daniel got together with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah and they prayed. They needed God's mercy to help in this situation or they would all be destroyed. God answers prayers for mercy. After being shown the dream and its meaning by God, Daniel prayed again and thanked the Lord for hearing his plea for mercy.

Thought Question: Who else in the Bible had the ability to interpret dreams? Where did Daniel get his wisdom? See Daniel 2.21, 27-28.

Read **Daniel 2.24-35**

Daniel is brought before Nebuchadnezzar and tells the dream. In the dream, the king had seen a great statue of a man. The statue was made of different precious materials, and from top to bottom the materials got less precious. The head was gold, the chest was silver, the middle was bronze, the legs were iron, and the feet were part-iron, part-clay. Then in the dream, an uncarved stone struck the statue and shattered it to pieces. That stone grew into a mountain that filled the whole earth.

Thought Question: Have you ever had a dream that was so bizarre you could not stop thinking about it when you woke up? Is the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream clear?

God's Plan

Read **Daniel 2.36-45**

Daniel then interprets what the dream means. The statue represents different empires that would reign in the future. Here the empires are only identified as “another kingdom, a third, and a fourth.” The kingdoms are first Babylon, second Medo-Persia, third Greece, and fourth Rome. The focus is less on world history and more on what God will accomplish in the future: in the days of that fourth kingdom God Himself would set up a kingdom that would break the nations and would stand forever. It was in the days of Rome that Jesus the Son of God came proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was at hand – **Mark 1.14-15**

Thought Question: Is God at work in the history of humanity?

What was God's goal according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

Why show the pagan king of Babylon His ultimate plan for redemption in history?

Read **Daniel 2.46-49**

Nebuchadnezzar knows that what Daniel has said is true because Daniel knew the king's dream without being told. He admits that Daniel's God is “God of gods..and revealer of mysteries” and promotes Daniel as ruler of the province at the king's court.

Thought Question: Can even non-believers come to recognize the power and wisdom of God? How?

Lesson 4: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 2

God communicated His plan to build His eternal kingdom in a dream shown to Nebuchadnezzar.

Discussion Question: Does God communicate to us in dreams?

How does God communicate to us today? See Heb. 1.1-3 and 2 Tim. 3.16-17

When Daniel and his friends were condemned with the other wise men, they immediately prayed to God for mercy and understanding. When God answered their prayer, Daniel prayed again to thank God before going to the king.

Discussion Question: What does it look like to turn to God for help when we need Him?

Can we pray anywhere when we are in need?

Does God answer all our prayers?

How can we be better about thanking God for answering our prayers?

In the king's dream, God revealed that He both knows what the future of world history holds, but He also has plan to intervene and set up His own eternal kingdom.

Discussion Question: Is God still involved in world today? See Rom. 13.1-2

Has God set up His kingdom? If so, how did He do it?

God said that His kingdom would shatter the kingdoms of the world and bring them to an end, while it remained forever. There are still world governments today.

Discussion Question: How has God's kingdom established by Jesus broken the kingdoms of the world? Where is God's kingdom today? See Luke 17.20-21

Daniel was promoted and honored by the king, and all the wise men's lives were spared. But Daniel did not forget his three friends; he made special request to the king to honor them, and the four of them remained together in Babylon. Daniel did not want to be apart from his godly friends.

Discussion Question: When we get ahead in life, is it easy to forget who our real friends are?

How can we remain close to godly friends while we are surrounded by the world?

Lesson 5: Through the Fire and Flames

Reading: Daniel 3

The Golden Statue

Read **Daniel 3.1-7**

King Nebuchadnezzar built a massive golden statue, ninety feet tall and nine feet wide. He commanded all his officials to gather for its dedication. When the music played, everyone was commanded to bow down and worship the statue. Nebuchadnezzar wanted everyone in authority to be devoted and answerable to him. Anyone who refused would be thrown into a blazing furnace. The threat was clear: worship the statue or die.

Thought Question: Why would a king force people to worship an image? What does this say about his pride?

The Troublemakers

Read **Daniel 3.8-12**

Some wise men came to the king and accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of refusing to bow to the golden statue. It was too much for these wisemen to be outdone by Jewish exiles, and in envy they saw this as a perfect opportunity to get rid of them.

Thought Question: Have you ever been accused or reported for doing what is right? Why report people for doing what is right? See **1 Peter 4.1-5**

No Choice Needed

Read **Daniel 3.13-18**

Nebuchadnezzar was furious that some did not worship his image, but he gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego one more chance to worship when the music played. The three exiles refuse another opportunity to bow down to the image. They trust their God is able to deliver them. But even if He does not save their lives, He is still the only one worthy of worship. This is true loyalty.

Thought Question: Is it easier to obey God when there is no risk of danger? Is it really serving God if we do it because it benefits us?

The Furnace

Read **Daniel 3.19-27**

Nebuchadnezzar was so angry that he ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. He had his strongest soldiers tie up the three men and throw them into the fire. The furnace was so hot that the soldiers who threw them in were killed by the flames. But when the king looked into the furnace, he saw four men walking around unharmed. The fourth figure looked like "a son of the gods" to him. Nebuchadnezzar called the three men out of the fire, and everyone saw that the fire had not touched them at all. Their hair was not singed, their clothes were not scorched, and they did not even smell like smoke.

Thought Question: Is God able to save His people from even the most powerful man on earth? See **Dan. 3.15**

Who was the fourth person in the fire?

Praise for God

Read **Daniel 3.28-30**

This chapter began with Nebuchadnezzar demanding everyone worship the great image he had made, on threat of death. The chapter concludes with Nebuchadnezzar blessing God and warning against any who speak against Him, on threat of death. When God's people are faithful to Him, even unbelievers can come to realize His power. The three friends are again promoted, a sign of God's blessing and watchful care.

Thought Question: Nebuchadnezzar believed in many Babylonian gods. How was the true God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego different?

What have you learned about God in Daniel chapter 3?

Lesson 6: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 3

King Nebuchadnezzar commanded everyone to worship his golden statue. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused because they would only worship the one true God.

Discussion Question: What are some things in our world today that people are pressured to "bow down to" or treat as more important than God?

How can we know when we are being told to compromise our loyalty to God?

The three friends knew they might die in the furnace, but they chose to obey God anyway. They said in **Daniel 3.18**, "But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods."

Discussion Question: What are some things we might lose or suffer if we choose to obey God instead of fitting in with the world?

Read 1 Peter 4.12-16

Discussion Question: Should we be surprised when we face pressure or persecution for being Christians?

According to this passage, how should we respond when we suffer for doing what is right?

Will we always be saved from consequences for our loyalty to God?

Nebuchadnezzar saw that God had protected the three men in the furnace. This caused him to praise God and acknowledge His power, even though the king was not a believer in the God of Israel.

Discussion Question: Can our faithfulness to God have an impact on unbelievers around us?

Have you ever seen someone come to respect God because of how a Christian acted under pressure?

Write a prayer asking God for courage to remain faithful to Him even when it is difficult or when we are pressured to compromise.

Lesson 7: The King Loses His Marbles

Reading: Daniel 4

Another Dream

Read **Daniel 4.1-9**

This chapter is written as a letter from King Nebuchadnezzar to all the peoples of his kingdom. He begins by praising God for His mighty works and eternal kingdom. The king had another troubling dream, and once again none of his wise men or magicians could interpret it. Finally, Daniel came before the king. Nebuchadnezzar trusted Daniel because he knew "the spirit of the holy gods" was in him.

Thought Question: Why does Nebuchadnezzar keep having dreams from God? What is God trying to teach this pagan king?

The Great Tree

Read **Daniel 4.10-18**

In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great tree that grew so tall it could be seen from the ends of the earth. The tree provided food and shelter for all birds and beasts. Then a heavenly messenger commanded that the tree be cut down, leaving only the stump bound with iron and bronze. The messenger declared that "he," the tree, would be given the mind of an animal and live like a beast for seven periods of time. This was a decree from the Most High to show that God "rules over the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will." See **Daniel 4.17**

Thought Question: According to the dream, who is the ruler of the kingdoms of earth?

Daniel's Distress

Read **Daniel 4.19-27**

When Daniel heard the dream, he was alarmed and distressed. He wished the dream applied to the king's enemies instead of to the king himself. Daniel explained that the great tree represented Nebuchadnezzar, whose power and greatness had grown to reach the heavens. The chopping down of the tree meant that the king would be driven from his throne and would live like an animal in the fields, eating grass like cattle, until he acknowledged that the Most High rules over all kingdoms. The stump left in the ground meant that Nebuchadnezzar would get his kingdom back after he learned this lesson. Daniel urged the king to renounce his sins and turn from his wickedness, hoping that God might extend his prosperity.

Thought Question: Why was Daniel distressed about the meaning of the dream even though Nebuchadnezzar was a pagan king who had conquered his people?

Should we only wish good things on our friends? See **Matthew 5.43-45**

Pride and Punishment

Read **Daniel 4.28-33**

A year later later, Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of his palace in Babylon, admiring the great city. He was proud of all that *he* had accomplished. Immediately, while the words were still in his mouth, a voice from heaven declared that his kingdom had been taken from him. Nebuchadnezzar was driven from his palace and lost his mind. He lived in the fields eating grass, his hair and nails grew long- he was nothing more than an animal.

Thought Question: What was the sin that brought God's judgment on Nebuchadnezzar?

Does God punish sin immediately? Why or why not? See **Rom. 2.2-4**

Restoration

Read **Daniel 4.34-37**

Nebuchadnezzar's sanity returned when he lifted his eyes to heaven and acknowledged God. He blessed and praised the Most High, recognizing that God's kingdom is eternal and His will is the final say in heaven and earth. The king's reason returned, his honor was restored, and he was brought back to his throne with even greater majesty than before. Nebuchadnezzar concluded his letter by praising God and declaring that God is able to humble those who walk in pride.

Thought Question: Why would Nebuchadnezzar praise God after God had humbled him so terribly?

What makes pride and arrogance wrong?

According to Daniel chapter 4, what have you learned about God?

Lesson 8: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 4

Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful king in the world. He had built a magnificent city and ruled over a vast empire. But his heart was filled with pride.

Discussion Question: What are some things that people today take pride in or boast about?

Is it wrong to feel good about our accomplishments? Where is the difference between healthy satisfaction and sinful pride?

Read **Proverbs 16.18** and **James 4.6**

Discussion Question: What does the Bible say happens to proud people?

When Daniel explained the dream's meaning, he urged Nebuchadnezzar to "break off your sins by practicing righteousness" in **Daniel 4.27**. God gave the king twelve months to repent before the judgment came.

Discussion Question: Does God give us opportunities to turn away from sin before He judges us?

Read **Prov. 3.11-12**. Why does God discipline us? How can we tell if God is disciplining us?

Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power... for the glory of my majesty?" He gave himself all the credit for his accomplishments.

Discussion Question: When good things happen in your life, do you give credit to God or to yourself?

How can we be humble and grateful instead of proud?

Read **1 Corinthians 4.7**

Discussion Question: According to this verse, what do we have that we did not receive from God?

How should this affect the way we view our talents, possessions, and successes?

After his time without his mind, Nebuchadnezzar "lifted his eyes to heaven" and his sanity returned. He praised God and acknowledged that the Most High rules over all.

Discussion Question: What does it mean to "lift our eyes to heaven" when we are struggling or suffering?

Have you ever experienced God's mercy after discipline or difficulty?

Write a prayer thanking God for the abilities and blessings He has given you, and asking Him to keep you from pride.

Lesson 9: The Writing on the Wall

Reading: Daniel 5

Belshazzar's Feast

Read **Daniel 5.1-4**

Many years have passed, and Nebuchadnezzar had died. His descendant Belshazzar was now king of Babylon, but not for long. The empire was crumbling, and the Persia army was at the gates. Instead of vying for peace or honorably standing up to the enemy, Belshazzar threw a massive drinking party. In his drunkenness, the king commanded the wine to be served in the gold and silver vessels taken from the Jerusalem temple, see **Daniel 1.1-2**. These sacred items were made for worship of the one true God, but Belshazzar and his guests used them as common drinking cups while praising their false gods made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. This was a terrible act of disrespect toward the God of Israel.

Thought Question: What was so wrong about using the temple vessels for drinking at a party?

An Unattached Hand

Read **Daniel 5.5-16**

Suddenly, the fingers of a human hand appeared and began writing on the plaster wall of the palace. King Belshazzar was completely terrified. He cried out for his wise men and promised great rewards to anyone who could read the writing and tell him what it meant. For the third time in the book, all the wise men of Babylon cannot give an answer; only Daniel can.

Thought Question: Why couldn't the Babylonian wise men read or interpret the writing?

Why could Daniel?

The Message on the Wall

Read **Daniel 5.17-24**

Daniel was not interested in the king's reward, but he would interpret the writing. Before he did, Daniel rebukes Belshazzar for being ignorant and being a fool. Nebuchadnezzar, the king's great-great-great-grandfather, had also been proud once. The Lord humbled him and Nebuchadnezzar praised God for His power. Belshazzar now was proud, but had not learned the lesson even though he knew about what had happened.

Thought Question: Was Belshazzar's sin worse than Nebuchadnezzar's because he knew better?

The Interpretation

Read **Daniel 5.25-31**

Daniel read the writing on the wall: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN." MENE meant that God had numbered the days of Belshazzar's kingdom and brought it to an end. TEKEL meant the king had been weighed on the scales and found wanting. PARSIN meant the kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and Persians. That very night, Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom. God's judgment had come swiftly and exactly as Daniel said. The great Babylonian empire fell in a single night.

Thought Question: How quickly did God's judgment fall on Belshazzar after the writing appeared?

Discussion Question: What does this chapter teach us about how God views those who disrespect Him?

What does Daniel 5 teach us about God's patience and God's judgment?

Lesson 10: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 5

Belshazzar knew what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar, but he did not learn from it. He continued in pride and deliberately disrespected God by defiling the sacred temple vessels.

Discussion Question: Do we ever see someone else get in trouble for something and think, "I would never do that," but then do something similar anyway?

What can we learn from seeing how God has dealt with other people's sin?

Read 1 Corinthians 10.11-12

Discussion Question: According to this passage, why is the history in the Bible recorded for us?

What warning does Paul give us in verse 12?

Daniel boldly confronted the king about his sin, even though it could have cost him his life. He did not soften the message or try to make the king feel better about his rebellion against God.

Discussion Question: Is it loving to tell someone the truth even when the truth is hard to hear?

How can we speak the truth about sin with both boldness and love?

Belshazzar used items dedicated to God for a common, sinful purpose. He treated what was holy as if it were ordinary.

Discussion Question: How do people today treat God, the Bible, or church as if they were ordinary or unimportant?

Do we ever use God's name carelessly or talk about Him flippantly?

Read Hebrews 10.26-31

Discussion Question: What does this passage say about people who deliberately keep sinning after knowing the truth?

How should this warning affect the way we approach God and His commands?

The writing on the wall told Belshazzar that he had been "weighed in the balances and found wanting." This means God had judged him and he did not measure up.

Discussion Question: Does God see and judge our hearts and actions?

If God were to weigh your life on His scales today, what would He find?

Write a prayer asking God to search your heart, reveal any sin, and help you live in humble reverence before Him.

Lesson 11: Daniel in the Lions' Den

Reading: Daniel 6

No Fault Law

Read **Daniel 6.1-5**

Darius the Mede now ruled over the former Babylonian empire. He organized his kingdom by appointing 120 officials to govern, with three administrators over them. Daniel was one of these top three administrators, and he distinguished himself so much that the king planned to put him in charge of the entire kingdom. The other officials became jealous and looked for a way to accuse Daniel of wrongdoing, but Daniel had nothing to hide. The only thing his enemies could count on Daniel for was his devotion to God.

Thought Question: What does it say about Daniel that his enemies could find no fault in his work?

Does it matter to God how we do our jobs?

The Trap

Read **Daniel 6.6-9**

The officials came up with a scheme. They went to King Darius and proposed that he issue a decree: for thirty days, anyone who prayed to any god or man except the king would be thrown into the lions' den. They appealed to the king's vanity and made it seem like all the officials agreed to this plan. The decree would be written according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which could not be changed once it was signed. King Darius, not seeing the trap, signed the decree into law. The officials had successfully made it illegal to pray to God.

Thought Question: Why did the officials ask for the law to last only thirty days? Why not make it permanent?

Windows Are Open

Read **Daniel 6.10-15**

When Daniel learned that the decree had been signed, he went home, opened his windows toward Jerusalem, and prayed three times a day, just as he had always done. He did not hide his prayers or change his routine out of fear. His enemies found him and immediately went to the king and accused Daniel. King Darius was deeply distressed when he realized he had been tricked. He spent the whole day trying to find a way to rescue Daniel, but the officials reminded him that the law could not be changed.

Thought Question: Why didn't Daniel just pray in secret for thirty days? Would it have been wrong to hide his prayers to avoid punishment?

Hungry Lions, Hungry King

Read **Daniel 6.16-24**

With great reluctance, King Darius ordered that Daniel be thrown into the lions' den. A stone was placed over the mouth of the den and sealed so no one could interfere. The king returned to his palace but could not sleep that night. He refused entertainment and fasted, too worried about Daniel to eat. But the lions did not eat that night either. God had sent His angel to shut the mouths of the lions because Daniel was found innocent before God. Then the king ordered that the men who had accused Daniel, along with their families, be thrown into the den.

Thought Question: Daniel was guilty of breaking king Darius' law, but who is the ultimate judge who found Daniel innocent?

Conclusion

Read **Daniel 6.25-28**

King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations in his kingdom, commanding them to revere the God of Daniel. He declared that Daniel's God is the living God who endures forever, whose kingdom will never be destroyed.

Discussion Question: What did God accomplish through Daniel's faithfulness?

What does Daniel 6 teach us about the cost and reward of faithfulness to God?

Lesson 12: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 6

Daniel had a consistent prayer life. He prayed three times a day, every day, opening his windows toward Jerusalem as a sign of longing for God's presence.

Discussion Question: Do you have a regular time and place where you pray?

Why is it important to develop habits and routines for spending time with God?

What might get in the way of developing a consistent prayer life?

Read **1 Thessalonians 5.16-18** and **Colossians 4.2**

Discussion Question: What does it mean to pray without ceasing?

Is prayer something we do only when we're in trouble, or should it be a regular part of our lives?

When the decree was signed, Daniel could have prayed in secret for thirty days to stay safe. But he continued to pray openly because his relationship with God was more important than his safety.

Discussion Question: Are there times when we are tempted to hide our faith to avoid embarrassment or trouble?

What are some ways we might be pressured to keep our faith private?

Is it worth risking our comfort or reputation to remain faithful to God?

Read **Matthew 10.32-33**

Discussion Question: According to Jesus, what happens when we acknowledge Him before others? What happens if we deny Him or hide our faith?

Daniel worked with integrity and excellence in his job, even though he served pagan kings. His enemies could find no fault in his work.

Discussion Question: Should Christians work hard and be trustworthy in our jobs, even if we work for non-Christians? How can doing excellent work be proof to others of our faith?

Read **Colossians 3.23-24**

Discussion Question: According to this passage, who are we really working for when we do our jobs?

How does this change the way we should approach our work or schoolwork?

Write a prayer asking God to help you remain faithful to Him even when it is difficult or costly.

Lesson 13: Four Beasts from the Sea

Reading: Daniel 7

Night Visions

Read **Daniel 7.1-8**

In the first year of Belshazzar's reign, Daniel had a dream and visions while lying on his bed. In the vision, Daniel saw the four winds stirring up the great sea, and four great beasts came up out of the water. The first was like a lion with eagle's wings, which were then plucked off. The second was like a bear raised up on one side with three ribs in its mouth. The third was like a leopard with four wings and four heads. The fourth beast was terrifying and powerful, different from all the others, with iron teeth and ten horns. As Daniel watched, a little horn came up among the ten, uprooting three of them. This little horn had eyes like human eyes and a mouth speaking great things.

Thought Question: Are these actual animals, or do they represent something else? How is this vision to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2.

The Ancient of Days

Read **Daniel 7.9-14**

Daniel's vision shifted to a heavenly throne room. Thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took His seat on a flaming throne, with thousands of servants attending Him. The Ancient of Days holds court for judgment of the four beasts. Daniel watched as the fourth beast was slain and destroyed because of the arrogant words spoken by the little horn. Then Daniel saw "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven, approaching the Ancient of Days. This son of man was given dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom that would never be destroyed. All peoples and nations would serve Him.

Thought Question: Who is the "Ancient of Days"? Who is the "one like a son of man"? See **Mark 14.61-62**

The Interpretation

Read **Daniel 7.15-28**

Daniel was troubled by the vision and asked one of the heavenly attendants what it meant. The attendant explained that the four beasts represent four kingdoms that will arise from the earth.

But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess it forever. Daniel was especially curious about the fourth beast and the little horn that spoke arrogantly against the Most High and persecuted the saints. The attendant explained that the fourth beast represents a fourth kingdom different from all others. The ten horns are ten kings, and the little horn is another king who will arise after them, speaking against God and oppressing His people for "a time, times, and half a time." But the court will sit in judgment, the arrogant king will be judged.

Thought Question: What do we learn about the character of the little horn? What will he do to God's people?

How does this vision give hope to God's people who are suffering persecution?

Four kingdoms are represented by beastly monsters. What is God showing about earthly kingdoms compared to His eternal kingdom, led by a human figure?

What does Daniel 7 teach us about God's ultimate plan for history?

Lesson 14: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 7

Daniel's vision shows earthly kingdoms as fierce, violent beasts rising from the chaotic sea. But God's kingdom is given to "one like a son of man" who comes from heaven.

Discussion Question: How do earthly kingdoms and powers often act like beasts—driven by violence, greed, and pride?

What makes God's kingdom different from the kingdoms of this world?

Read **John 18.36-37**

Discussion Question: According to Jesus, where does His kingdom come from?

What is the purpose of His kingdom?

The vision shows that the little horn will "make war with the saints and prevail over them" for a time. God's people will face persecution and suffering.

Discussion Question: Does the Bible promise that Christians will always be safe and comfortable in this world? Why does God allow us to be persecuted?

How should we respond when we face opposition or persecution for our faith?

Read **Revelation 13.5-10**

Discussion Question: What does this passage teach about the persecution of believers and the need for patient endurance?

Where should we put our hope when evil seems to be winning?

The vision ends with the court sitting in judgment, the destruction of the beasts, and the kingdom being given to the saints. God's people receive an everlasting kingdom, see **Dan. 7.27**.

Discussion Question: How does knowing the end of the story help us endure present suffering?

What does it mean that we will receive God's kingdom forever?

The "one like a son of man" receives dominion and glory and an everlasting kingdom. Jesus repeatedly called Himself the "Son of Man" during His earthly ministry.

Discussion Question: How did Jesus establish God's kingdom when He came to earth?

Is Jesus reigning as king right now, or is His kingdom only in the future?

Read **Ephesians 1.20-23**

Discussion Question: According to this passage, where is Jesus now and what authority does He have?

How should this affect the way we live today?

Write a prayer thanking God that Jesus has been given all authority and that His kingdom will last forever.

Lesson 15: Intertestamental History Part 1

We have come to the part of the book of Daniel that records his visions. God revealed to Daniel what He would bring about in world history. This included two parts: the changing of worldly kingdoms and the establishment of His eternal kingdom. We have already seen God's knowledge of the future empires in chapters 2, 5, and 7. The rest of the book goes into close detail about the final years just before Jesus came announcing the kingdom of heaven. This is a part of history that many of us may not know much at all about, so we will spend this lesson and the next getting familiar.

“Intertestamental history” means the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Malachi is the last book of the OT and he preached around 460 BC when the Jews returned to Jerusalem from exile. The NT begins with the ministry of Jesus around AD 30. There is a nearly 500 year gap between the testaments, and what happened in those 500 years are what shaped the world that Jesus came to.

Broad Strokes

Generally, there are four main empires that ruled over Judea during the exile.

- **Babylon** – 605-539 BC (initially led by Nebuchadnezzar)
- **Medo-Persia** – 539-336 BC (initially led by Cyrus who allowed the Jews to return)
- **Greece** – 336-60 BC (Alexander conquered the entire Mediterranean in ten years)
- **Rome** – 60 BC – 33 AD (Rome subjugated Judea and was in power during the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus)

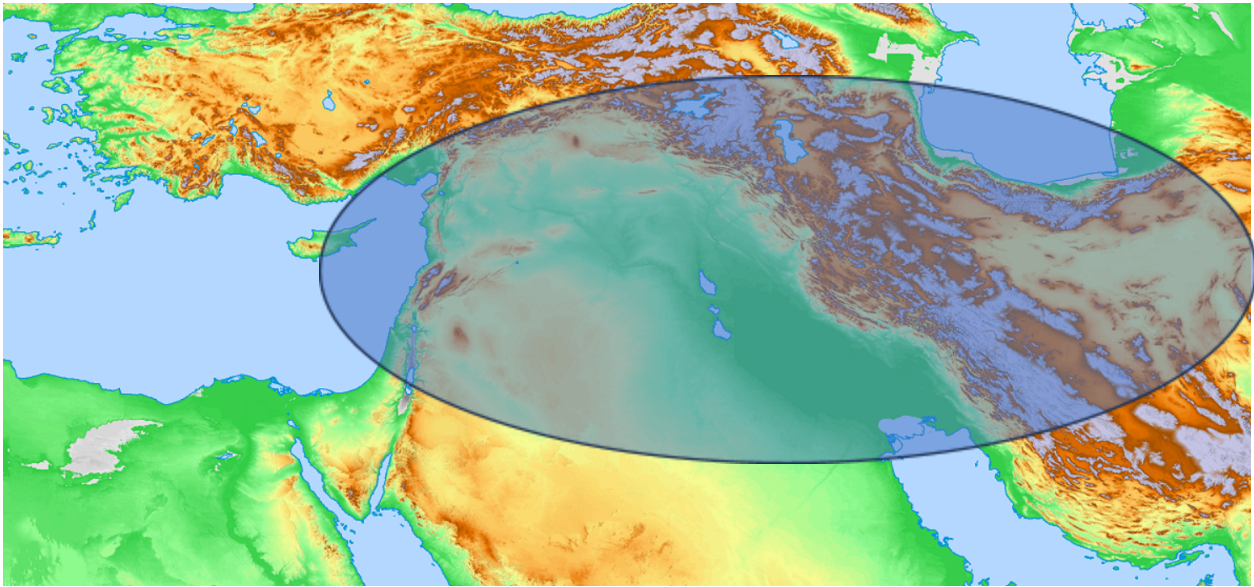
Daniel lived from the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem in 605 BC (see **Daniel 1.1-4**) and the latest date mentioned in the book is the third year of Cyrus king of Persia around 536 BC (see **Daniel 10.1**)

God revealed this generic order of world history before it happened in the visions of chapters 2 and 7. It's impressive because as the events were happening, it was not obvious what empire would come out on top. Anyone can read a history book and look back knowing what would happen, but when the present is unfolding no one can know for certain how things would play out. Except for God. He is eternal; no beginning, no end. He sees everything, knows everything, and can use His power to shape the world according to His will.

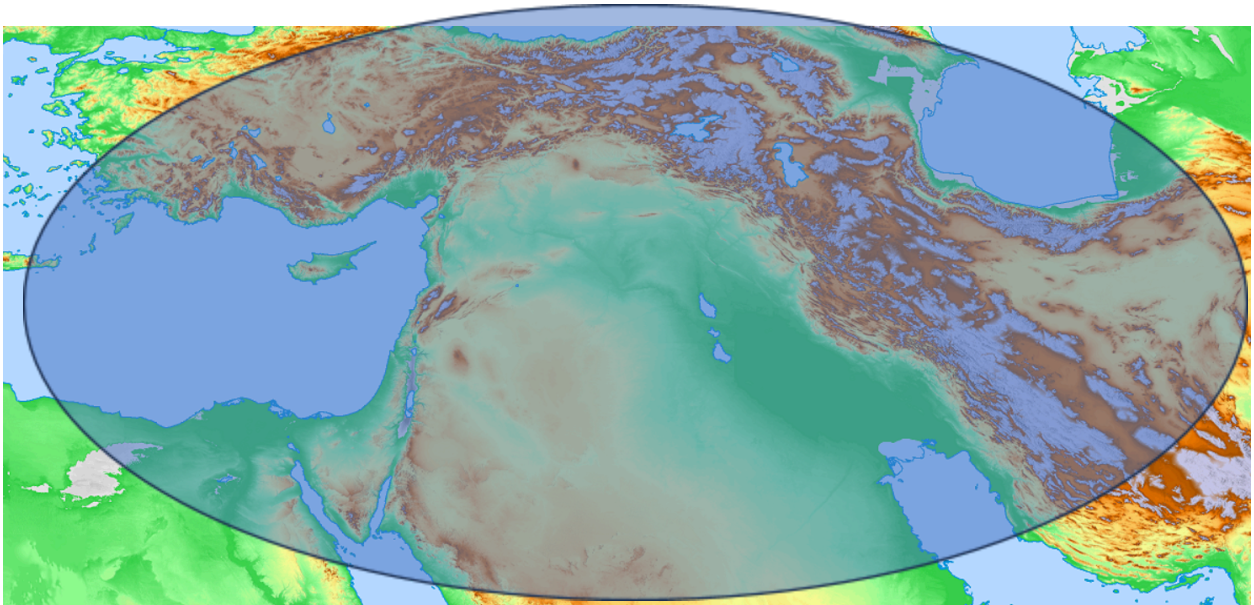
In the visions, the empires of the world are pictured as beasts. They are monsters that seem to get worse as they come along. This is the way it unfolded in history. Each empire grew larger than the last, and each one was successful because of violent conquering.

Babylon conquers Judea

Persia conquers Babylon



Greece conquers Persia



One of the major lessons of Daniel is that no earthly power lasts forever. God alone has built a kingdom that will last forever, the kingdom of His Son Jesus, see **Daniel 2.44-45** and **7.13-14**. The Grecian Empire was doomed to fail like the others. Alexander the Great had conquered the entire Mediterranean and more in just ten years and all before he turned thirty years old. He died young at age 32 in 323 BC, and he had no successor. The Grecian Empire was split up between four of his top generals. Ptolemy in Egypt, Seleucus in Syria, Cassander in Greece, and Lysimachus in Asia Minor. The first two are the most important for us, the next lesson will go into detail about their part to play in the God's plan for history.

The same message is repeated four times in **Daniel 4.17, 25, 32; 5.21**.

Thought Question: Who is in control of the nations of earth?

Will any earthly kingdom last forever?

Why not?

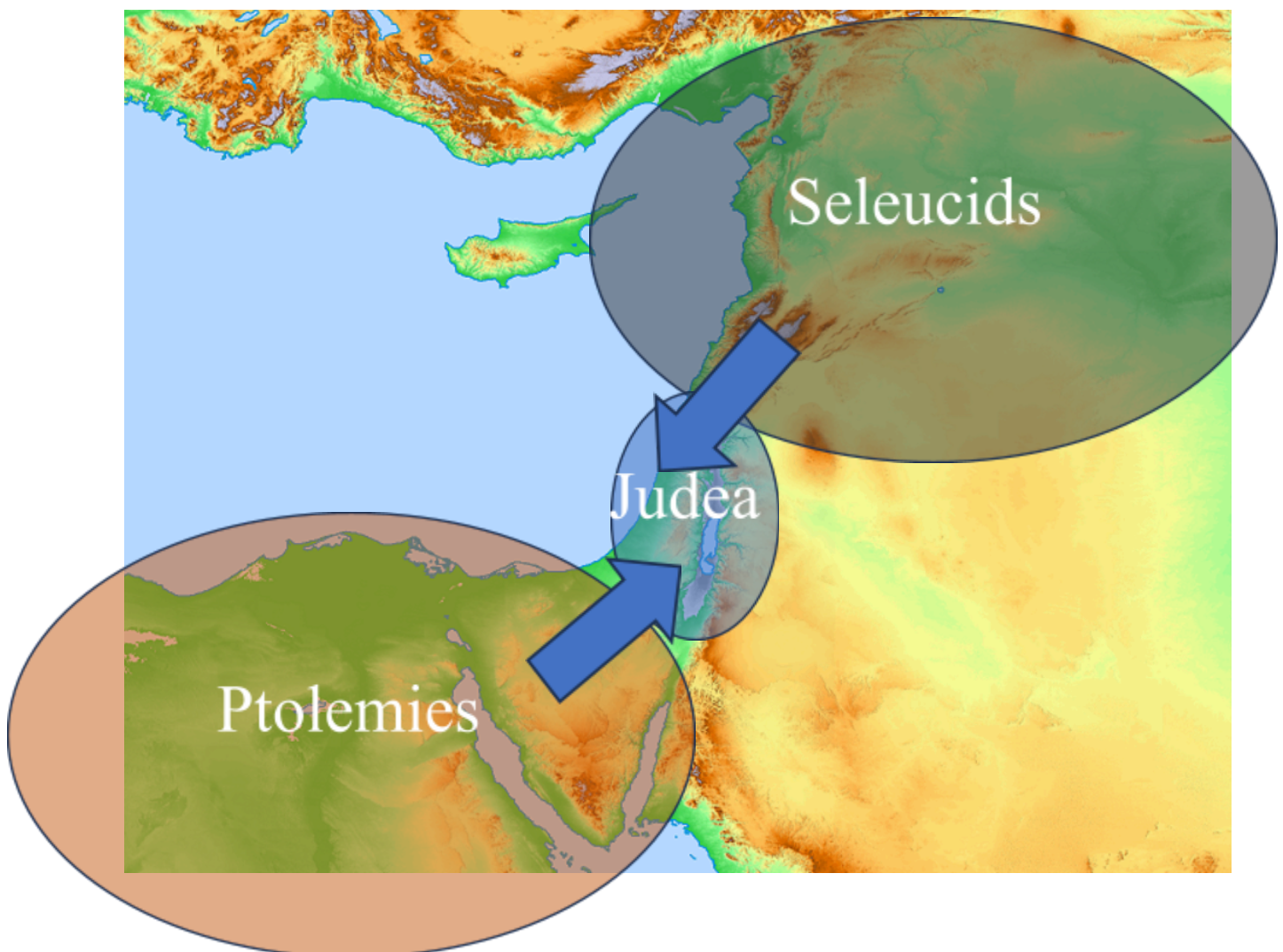
Thought Question: Why did God show the kings of the earthly kingdoms what would happen in the future?

Lesson 16: Intertestamental History Part 2

The intertestamental history is what happened between the last book of the OT, Malachi, and the beginning of the NT with the arrival of Jesus. In the previous lesson we learned about the general order of the empires that conquered one another, with God's exiled people caught in the middle. In this lesson, we will learn about a time in the Grecian Empire that was especially difficult for God's people.

Alexander the Great's empire was split four ways when he died. The two most important pieces for us to know are the **Seleucids** who reigned in Syria, which is **north** of Judea and the **Ptolemies** who reigned in Egypt, **south** of Judea.

The tricky thing about obtaining power is that enough is never enough. When you have conquered some people, what should stop you from conquering others? The Seleucids in the north and the Ptolemies in the south fought one another trying to take the other's land. God's people who had returned to Judea were caught in the crossfire. God's people became the trampling ground for other people's wars.



Terror in Zion

The worst of these conflicts came in 171 BC with the Seleucid usurper king Antiochus IV. The kingdoms of the Seleucids and Ptolemies had fought one another and married one another for alliance for years by the time Antiochus IV comes on the scene.

Daniel describes him as “contemptible” (**Dan. 11.21**). Antiochus IV was not the rightful ruler of the Seleucids north of Judea, but he seized power for himself. When his brother who was the heir to the throne died, Antiochus IV seized the kingship and murdered his nephews who were competitors. He reigned from 175 BC until 164 BC.

Antiochus IV was greedy, plundering as much as he could, from wherever he could. To pay his debts to Rome, Antiochus IV stripped all the gold from the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. This dishonored God.

On top of ambition and greed, Antiochus IV was immensely prideful. He gave himself the name ‘Epiphanes’ which meant ‘exalted one.’ He minted coins during his reign that had his face on it and said “victorious god manifest king Antiochus.” This greatly dishonored God.



When his military campaigns failed, he took out his anger on the Jews, see **Dan. 11.30**. He made it illegal to participate in the covenant of circumcision, to read the Law of Moses, and to offer sacrifice in the temple. He set up an idol to his idol Zeus in the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. Very many Jews who would not give up their faith were killed. Antiochus IV goes down in history as one of the worst persecutors of God’s people. And yet, as with all enemies of God, he came to his end.

Thought Question: Did the Jews who returned from exile have a peaceful life in Judea? Why or why not?

When you learn that in these final years before Jesus is born, the faith and religion of God’s people was almost wiped out, does it makes more sense why the Pharisees were so zealous for keeping their way of life?

What happens to all of God’s enemies? Did Jesus defeat His enemies?

Lesson 17: The Ram and the Goat

Reading: Daniel 8

The Vision by the Canal

Read **Daniel 8.1-8**

In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, Daniel had another vision. He saw himself in the citadel of Susa, beside a canal. A ram stood before the canal, and it had two horns, with one horn longer than the other. The ram charged west, north, and south, and no beast could stand against it. The ram did as it pleased and became great.

Then Daniel saw a male goat coming from the west, moving so swiftly that its feet did not touch the ground. The goat had a conspicuous horn between its eyes. It charged at the ram, broke both its horns, and trampled it. The goat became very great, but at the height of its power, its great horn was broken, and four horns grew up in its place, pointing toward the four winds of heaven.

Thought Question: Based on what we have learned already, do you think this is a vision about literal animals or do they represent something else?

What happened to the goat after it reached the peak of its power?

Note the directions the ram and the goat moved:

The Little Horn

Read **Daniel 8.9-14**

Out of one of the four horns came a little horn that grew exceedingly great toward the south, the east, and toward the beautiful land (Israel). It grew great even to the host of heaven and cast down some of the stars to the ground and trampled them. It acted arrogantly against the Prince of the host, took away the regular burnt offering, and overthrew the place of His sanctuary. Because of rebellion, truth was cast to the ground. Daniel heard an angel ask, "How long until the vision is fulfilled?" The answer: 2,300 evenings and mornings.

Thought Question: What does the little horn do to God's people and God's worship?

Gabriel Explains

Read **Daniel 8.15-19**

As Daniel tried to understand the vision, Gabriel the angel was sent to explain it. Gabriel approached Daniel, who fell on his face in terror. Gabriel told him that the vision refers to the time of the end and the time of wrath.

Thought Question: Who is Gabriel? What is his role? See **Luke 1.19, 26**

The Interpretation

Read **Daniel 8.20-27**

Gabriel explained the vision clearly. The ram with two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. Persia came after Media and was stronger. The goat represents the king of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is its first king, Alexander the Great. The four horns that arose when the great horn was broken represent four kingdoms that split off after Alexander died. Eventually a king would come from that time who would viciously persecute God's people and halt the worship of God. His name was Antiochus IV Epiphanes. That arrogant king would be put down.

- **How long?** Daniel was told that the terror of Antiochus IV would last for 2,300 days, which measures out to six years and four months. In 171 BC, Antiochus IV had the high priest in Jerusalem, Onias III, murdered. In the years following, Antiochus IV forced the Jews to stop worshipping the Lord and set up an altar to Zeus in the temple. After his death, the temple was rededicated in 164 BC -making a total of around six years, just as Daniel was told.

Thought Question: Why did God show Daniel these future events in such detail?

What does this vision teach us about God's knowledge and control of history?

How should knowing that God knows the future affect the way we live today?

Lesson 18: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 8

The vision in Daniel 8 is a specific prophecy about kingdoms that would rise and fall: Media-Persia, Greece, and a later king who would persecute God's people. History confirms these prophecies came true exactly as described. Daniel saw this vision around 550 BC. The vision revealed what would happen in the next 380 years!

Discussion Question: What does it tell us about the Bible that it predicted historical events hundreds of years before they happened?

How does fulfilled prophecy strengthen our confidence in God's Word?

Read Isaiah 46.9-10

Discussion Question: According to this passage, what makes God different from all false gods?

Why should we trust God's promises about the future?

The little horn in the vision persecuted God's people, stopped their worship, and desecrated the sanctuary. Yet the vision promised that after a set time, the sanctuary would be restored.

Discussion Question: When we see God's people suffering or God's truth being attacked, should we lose hope?

What does this vision teach us about how temporary persecution is?

Daniel was deeply troubled and physically affected by this vision. He was "appalled" by what he saw, even though he knew God was in control.

Discussion Question: Is it okay to be disturbed by evil and injustice in the world?

How can we be upset about evil and confident in God at the same time?

The vision ends with the promise that the persecutor "shall be broken—but by no human hand." God Himself will bring judgment on those who oppose Him.

Discussion Question: Why is it important that God is the one who brings justice, not us?

How should we respond to those who persecute Christians or oppose God?

Read **Romans 12.17-21**

Discussion Question: According to this passage, how should we treat our enemies?

Why is vengeance God's responsibility and not ours?

Write a prayer praising God for His power over history and for help to trust Him in trials.

Lesson 19: Daniel's Prayer

Reading: Daniel 9

Daniel Reads His Bible

Read **Daniel 9.1-2**

In the first year of Darius the Mede, Daniel was reading the Scriptures and came across the prophecy in **Jeremiah 25.11-12**.

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste

Jeremiah had written that Jerusalem would lie desolate for seventy years. Daniel realized that this period was nearly complete. Nebuchadnezzar had begun conquering in 605 BC and it was now the first year of Darius, around 538 BC – 67 years.

Thought Question: Did Daniel expect that God's word to Jeremiah would come true?

Confession and Plea

Read **Daniel 9.3-19**

Daniel set his face to seek the Lord through prayer and fasting. He starts his prayer by recalling God's faithfulness (9.4) and Judah's sinfulness. God had repeatedly pleaded with them to repent of their idolatry and sin, but they would not listen and they would not change. They deserved the punishment they had received by God in exile. (9.5-15)

But Daniel now asks God to see the desolation of His holy place and act, like He had promised in Jeremiah, for the sake of His people. "Hear, forgive, pay attention and act." (9.16-19)

Thought Question: Did Daniel try to excuse or minimize the sins of his people?

Thought Question: On what basis did Daniel ask God to forgive and restore? See Daniel 9.18-19

Gabriel's Response

Read **Daniel 9.20-23**

While Daniel was still praying and confessing sin, Gabriel appeared to him with an answer. He told Daniel that he was greatly loved and should understand the vision.

Thought Question: What does this tell us about how quickly God hears the prayers of His people?

The Seventy Weeks

Read **Daniel 9.24-27**

Gabriel delivered one of the most important and complex prophecies in the book of Daniel. He said that seventy weeks are decreed for Daniel's people and the holy city. During this time, God would accomplish several things (**9.24**): finish transgression, put an end to sin, atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal vision and prophet, and anoint a most holy place. God will restore His people.

Gabriel divided the seventy weeks into specific periods.

- First seven weeks, 1-7 (9.25) – The word goes out to rebuild Jerusalem and an anointed one comes
- Sixty-two more weeks, 8-69 (9.25) – Jerusalem will be rebuilt, but it will be difficult
- Final week, 70 (9.26-27) – The anointed one will be cut off, the city and temple will be destroyed, sacrifice will stop, and abominations will be done that bring disaster. The enemy who caused such evil will come to an end.

This prophecy does not seem to be describing what would occur in a literal seventy weeks, which is less than a year and a half. The numbers are symbolic.

- **Seven** is a relatively short time- it would not be long after Cyrus let the Jews return to Jerusalem that a high priest and a governor would be found. Both of these offices are anointed.
- **Sixty-two** is a relatively long time- it would be many years of building the temple and strife among the Jews, about 500 years.
- **One** is a short and climactic time- when the time came for Jerusalem to be desecrated and worship outlawed, it would happen suddenly. But the good news is that God will win in the end and restore His people.

Thought Question: This prophecy is difficult to interpret. It speak about the time of persecution under Antiochus IV, it may refer to the time of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem. Whatever the case, is God in control even when it seems like the whole world is falling apart?

Discussion Question: What motivated Daniel to pray in Daniel 9.3-19?

Should we pray when we understand God's word?

Lesson 20: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 9

Daniel discovered God's promise in Scripture about the seventy years of exile. This led him to pray earnestly for his people.

Discussion Question: How important is it to read and study God's Word regularly?

Have you ever discovered something in the Bible that prompted you to pray about a specific situation?

Read 2 Timothy 3.16-17 and Psalm 119.105

Discussion Question: According to these passages, what is the purpose of Scripture in our lives?

How can Bible reading and prayer work together?

Daniel's prayer included deep confession of sin. He didn't make excuses or blame others; he openly acknowledged the guilt of his people and recognized the part he played in the sin of the nation.

Discussion Question: When we pray, do we tend to confess our sins honestly or do we minimize them?

Why is it important to agree with God about the seriousness of our sin?

Read 1 John 1.8-10

Discussion Question: What does this passage promise to those who confess their sins?

What happens if we claim we have no sin?

Daniel prayed not based on his own righteousness or worthiness, but based on God's mercy and for the sake of God's name.

Discussion Question: Do we ever think God should answer our prayers because we've been good enough?

On what basis should we approach God in prayer?

Read Ephesians 3.11-12

Discussion Question: According to this passage, how can we approach God with boldness?

What gives us confidence to come before God?

Gabriel told Daniel that he was "greatly loved" and that God sent the answer the moment Daniel began to pray.

Discussion Question: How does it encourage you to know that God loves you and hears your prayers immediately?

The prophecy of the seventy weeks pointed forward to the time when God would "put an end to sin" and "atone for iniquity," see **Daniel 9.24**

Discussion Question: How did Jesus fulfill this prophecy?

What did Jesus accomplish through His death and resurrection?

Read **Hebrews 10.11-14**

Discussion Question: According to this passage, what did Christ's sacrifice accomplish that the Old Testament sacrifices could not?

Write a prayer confessing your sins honestly and thanking God for His mercy through Jesus.

Lesson 21: A Message About Turmoil

Reading: Daniel 10-11

Mourning and **Fasting**

Read **Daniel 10.1-3**

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, Daniel received another revelation. This word concerned a great conflict, and Daniel understood it from the vision. Daniel had been mourning for three weeks. He ate no delicacies, no meat or wine, and did not anoint himself with oil.

Thought Question: Why might Daniel have been mourning? What concerns might he have had for his people?

Have you ever fasted?

The Man by the River

Read **Daniel 10.4-21**

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, Daniel was standing by the great river and saw a man. The man looked like fire and precious stones and spoke with a voice that sounded like a crowd. Daniel was utterly terrified.

The man had good news for Daniel. Daniel was greatly loved by God, who had heard his humble prayer. This heavenly man had been sent with a message immediately when Daniel prayed, but had been withheld by another spiritual being called the “prince of Persia.” With the help of another spiritual being named Michael, this messenger arrived to make Daniel understand what would happen to his people in the future.

Discussion Question: If God hears our prayers immediately, why doesn't He answer them immediately?

Thought Question: How does Daniel react to seeing an angelic being? What does this teach us about God's glory if His servants give this impression to people?

Are all angels serving the Lord? Who is victorious in the end?

Where else in the Bible do we read about Michael the angel?

Detailed Prophecy: North and South

Read **Daniel 11.1-4**

This is the pattern of history we have seen several times by now. Persia was the ruling empire, but Greece would soon come and exercise great power. This was Alexander the Great. His reign

would not last and would not be given to his heir. The Grecian Empire was split up between Alexander's four top generals. See Lesson 15 for a refresh.

Conflicts Between Kingdoms

Read **Daniel 11.5-20**

The messenger described ongoing conflicts between the Ptolemies in the south in Egypt and the Seleucids in the north in Syria. These verses detail specific battles, alliances through marriage, betrayals, and military campaigns. Daughters would be given in marriage to make alliances that would fail. Fortresses would be attacked, treasures plundered, and peace treaties made and broken. The detail is remarkable: specific timeframes, military strategies, and political maneuvering are all foretold. God's people in Israel found themselves caught between these two powerful kingdoms.

The theme in it all is this: earthly power is fleeting.

v. 4 – “his kingdom shall be broken”

v.6 – “she will not hold on to the strength of her arm”

v.12 – “he will not remain strong”

v.14 – “violent ones from among your own people will assert themselves...but they will fail”

v.17 – “the daughter of women will give [the kingdom] to him...but it will not stand”

v.19 – “he will stumble and fall and will not be found”

v.20 – “within a few days he will be broken, but not in anger or battle”

The overwhelming sense you get when reading **Daniel 11** is that nations will strive and struggle and trample and tremble, but none of it will last. Remember Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2: only God's kingdom will last forever.

Discussion Question: Why do you think people still seek power, wealth, and status when history shows that all earthly kingdoms fall?

Read **Matthew 6.19-21**

Discussion Question: What is the difference between earthly treasures and heavenly treasures?

Where is your heart focused right now?

The prophecy describes a "contemptible person" who would seize the northern throne, plunder with greed, make alliances, dishonor God, and rage against God's people. It refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple in Jerusalem and violently persecuted the Jewish people in 171-164 BC. Lesson 16 has more detail on Antiochus IV. Yet the suffering would last only "until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed."

Thought Question: Why does God allow His people to suffer persecution and testing?

Read **James 1.2-4** and **1 Peter 1.6-7**

Discussion Question: According to these passages, what is the purpose of trials in the life of a believer?

What is the end result that God is working toward?

Write a prayer asking God to sustain us in the turmoil of life and praising Him for His power over all earthly authority.

Lesson 23: The Time of the End

Reading: Daniel 12

Seal the Book

Read **Daniel 12.1-4**

The messenger told Daniel about a time of great trouble that would come upon his people, unlike any time before. But during this tribulation, Michael the archangel would arise to protect God's people. Everyone whose name is written in the book would be delivered. Resurrection is mentioned, and following resurrection some will go to eternal life and some to eternal contempt. But Daniel was told to shut up these words and seal the book until the time of the end, these were words for what would come in the future.

Thought Question: What does this passage teach about resurrection and the afterlife?

Who will be raised at the end of time, see **John 5.28-29**?

How Long?

Read **Daniel 12.5-13**

Daniel saw two others standing on opposite banks of the river. One asked the man clothed in linen who was above the waters, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" The man swore it would be for a time, times, and half a time; when the shattering of God's people is ended. Daniel heard this but did not understand, so he asked, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?"

The messenger told Daniel to "go his way" because the words were shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Whether Daniel understood everything that would happen or not, he needed to live his life and be faithful to God.

In the end, many would be purified, and many would continue in wickedness. The messenger gave specific time references: from the time the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up, there would be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits and arrives at 1,335 days. Again, the numbers are symbolic. 1,290 represents a time of persecution, and God's people would be blessed if they outlasted it. God's people need endurance.

Thought Question: What comfort would it give Daniel to know he would "stand in his allotted place at the end of days"?

Discussion Question: What does Daniel 12 teach us about resurrection and eternal life?

Lesson 24: Living What We Learn

Reading: Daniel 12

Daniel 12 promises that "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Discussion Question: Do you believe in life after death? What does the Bible teach about what happens when we die?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18

Discussion Question: According to this passage, what will happen when Jesus returns?

What hope does the promise of resurrection give to Christians?

The passage says that "those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

Discussion Question: What does it mean to be wise?

What does it mean to "turn many to righteousness"? How can we do this?

Read Proverbs 11.30 and Matthew 28.19-20

Discussion Question: According to these verses, what is our responsibility toward others?

Are you actively trying to lead others to faith in Christ? Why or why not?

Daniel was told that during a time of great trouble, everyone whose name is found written in the book would be delivered.

Discussion Question: What is this book? Is your name written in it?

Read Revelation 20.11-15 and Philippians 4.3

Discussion Question: According to these passages, who are those whose names are in the book of life?

How can you be certain your name is written there?

Lesson 25: Daniel in the New Testament

The book of Daniel is one of the four Major Prophets of the Old Testament. He lived 2,500 years ago in a place across the planet from North America, and spoke a language none of us speak. But as distant as it is in these ways, the book of Daniel is relevant and useful for us today as scripture in which God tells us who He is and what He has done.

Read **Romans 15.4-6**

Thought Question: Why should we read what has been written beforehand in the Old Testament?

The book of Daniel played an important role for how God's people were expecting God's plan for the world to unfold leading up to the time of Christ. The record of Daniel and his friends' loyalty to God in the face of violence and death inspired the Jews living under Rome to not give up their way of life as God's people. The visions Daniel saw reminded the Jews that all earthly powers are beastly, but God was in charge of all the universe, see **Daniel 2.20-23**

Thought Question: How did the book of Daniel affect the way God's people viewed the world at the time just before Christ came? How has reading Daniel affected how you see the current world?

A key part of Daniel's final visions is the theme of persecution coming for God's people. Chapters 10-11 line out how the kings of the world would trample Jerusalem and fiercely abuse God's people and God's worship. The angel Gabriel warns Daniel about an "abomination of desolation" in **Daniel 9.27**. It meant that an evil ruler would forcefully stop the worship of God in the temple and would bring in an idol into the sanctuary, which would lead to great violence.

This happened before Christ in 167 BC with Antiochus IV, who stopped the temple sacrifices and put an altar to the idol Zeus in the Lord's temple. Soon after, chaos and revolution erupted and many died.

Jesus warns about a similar event in His teaching from the Mount of Olives in **Matthew 24.15-28**. History repeats itself, and Jesus warned His disciples that a few years after He rose from the dead the temple would again be abused and defiled by idolatry. When Rome attacked Jewish rebels in Jerusalem, they restricted the sacrifices in the temple and brought their religious standards into the sanctuary. Not long after, in AD 70, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and many people died.

Thought Question: Why did Jesus warn His disciples about the destruction in store for Jerusalem? If the temple was destroyed after Jesus was raised, how could people still worship God? How do we approach God for our sacrifice for sin?

The most important contribution from the book of Daniel to the life of Christ is the vision in **Daniel 7.13-14**. In it, Daniel saw the Ancient of Days sitting on His throne and a “son of man” presented to Him. That Son of Man was given glory and a kingdom that would never end so that all nations would serve him. By the time Jesus was born, the Jews were fully expecting God to raise up a chosen person to start a kingdom that would destroy their enemies and last forever- all these hopes were in Daniel’s “Son of man.”

“Son of Man” is the way that Jesus refers to Himself most often in the gospels, and was the final word that condemned Him before the Sanhedrin council in **Mark. 14.60-64**. When asked directly about whether He was the Christ, Jesus said that He is the Son of Man whom God has seated in power in heaven.

Thought Question: Is Jesus the Son of Man that Daniel saw in his vision? How is Jesus ruling an eternal kingdom now?

Lesson 26: Recap

What collection of Old Testament writings is the book of Daniel a part of?

When and where did Daniel live? See **Daniel 1.1-7**

One half of the book are the records of the lives of Daniel and his three friends; the other half tells the visions Daniel saw. Which chapters of the book are which?

What is the major theme of the book that is repeated in **Daniel 4.17, 25, 32 and 5.21**?

Is God still in charge of the world today?

Where is the Lord's eternal kingdom that the Son of Man set up?

When God's people are given the choice between loyalty to Him and death, what is the right choice? Is God able to deliver His people from suffering? Does He have to?

What is your favorite part of the book of Daniel?

What is something new that you learned in this class?

How does the book of Daniel point forward to Christ?