

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Los Angeles, is shown in a monochromatic blue-green color. The image is partially obscured by a large, semi-transparent diamond shape in the center. At the top of the image, there is a reflection of the city buildings and trees, creating a symmetrical effect.

DANIEL

GOD SIZED CONFIDENCE IN TURBULENT TIMES

GUIDE BOOK 2

D A N I E L

GOD SIZED CONFIDENCE IN TURBULENT TIMES

The book of Daniel contains some very well-known Bible Stories: Daniel and the Lion's Den, The Three Men and the Fiery Furnace, The Handwriting on the Wall. This is the stuff of any good children's Bible! But, at the same time, there are also visions and dreams with imagery which to us seems crazy-weird: a bear with three ribs in its mouth, a beast with four heads, a little horn arising out of other horns. This doesn't usually make the children's Bibles! It's an interesting mixture!

How do we navigate a book like this? Here's a few things to keep in mind:

Firstly, think through the relevance of Daniel to yourself in 2022. There's plenty – actually, it's incredibly relevant to our times! Daniel writes when the people of God are in Babylon in exile – a long way away from their homeland, Israel. They are foreigners and the times they live in are turbulent. As a follower of Jesus, don't you more and more feel like a foreigner in your world? And, don't you more and more feel the turbulence of the times you live in? Daniel may seem a familiar story to you in places, or quite unusual in others, but let's see past that and press into the treasure trove of what it has to say to us today.

Secondly, get the big picture on the visions and dreams. Although Daniel gives us several historical stories, there are also numerous visions and dreams with symbols, imagery and figurative numbers, especially in chapters 7-12. When reading this style of writing, known as 'apocalyptic literature', it is important to zoom out and get a helicopter view rather than getting distracted by speculation

or too much detail. And, when you get that view, you'll find there's lots to be encouraged by – even in our turbulent times.

Thirdly, keep a close eye on what we're learning about the Kingdom of God and it's King. It's here you'll find the main theme of the book, and it's here you'll find your greatest encouragement, as you live in a world that does not pay allegiance to that King.

USING THIS BOOKLET

Each study has 4 sections:

STARTER – this question will help you to get thinking about a theme in the study

EXPLORE – these questions are about looking at the passage, noticing what's there and interpreting it

APPLY – here you're being invited to think through the passage for yourself today. Take your time on these questions! Make sure you've left enough time to really think through how God's Word is meant to shape and help you

PRAY – finish each study by praying for one another. And, pray particularly for growth or help in things that you looked at together that night

AN OUTLINE

Growth Groups will follow the passage for the Sunday Bible talk. Here's an outline of where we'll be going in this series.

Daniel 1 Living in Turbulent Times

Daniel 2 Kingdom Clash

Daniel 3 Walking through the Fire

Daniel 4 The Problem with Getting to the Top

Daniel 5 The Writing on the Wall

Daniel 6 Rescued from the Den

Daniel 7 The Beasts and the Son of Man

Daniel 8 The Ram and the Goat

Chapters 9-12 won't be followed by a Growth Group study, as these talks will be through the holidays.

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

DANIEL 5

STARTER

Can you think of a time, from your own experience or otherwise, when something happened quite suddenly?

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DANIEL AND BELSHAZZAR

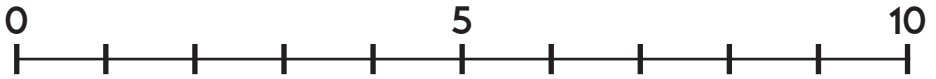
Daniel is now an old man. It is 70 years since he was stolen, as a teenager, from his homeland, Jerusalem. His old friend Nebuchadnezzar died 23 years ago. Belshazzar, who now rules, is a contemporary of Daniel, and would often have seen him at the palace. However it seems that Daniel no longer occupies the same position of prominence he once did. At the beginning of Dan 5, the combined forces of the Medes and the Persians are at the gates of Babylon.

EXPLORE

Read Daniel 5:1-12

"Babylon the great" (Rev 18:2), that "head of gold" in the dream of Daniel 2, was an impressive empire, famous for its human achievement. But, in the Bible, Babylon, built at the site of the famous tower of Babel, is seen also as the archetype of defiance toward God. It is possible to be both great and rebellious.

1. Look at verses 1-4. On a scale of 0 - 10 (10 being the highest level of concern), rate how concerned Belshazzar seems to be about his Kingdom falling at this moment. Explain your rating.



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2. How would you describe Belshazzar's attitude to the God of Israel? How can you tell?

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3. Who does Belshazzar go to when he is in trouble? How helpful have these guys been so far in the story (2:2, 10-11, 27; 4:7)?

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APPLY

4. In what ways does our culture today show a contempt for Christ or the Bible?

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5. What are some of the props (whether spiritual, religious, psychological, or something else) or saviours that people in our culture turn to, which ultimately fail us?

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6. In what ways might the success of our society, or our own personal success, contribute to a sense of false security?

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EXPLORE

Read Daniel 5:13-30

7. Record the contrast you can see here between God and the gods.

God

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The gods

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8. Record the contrast you can see here between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.

Nebuchadnezzar (Include here how he responded to God in the end, and the outcome from ch 4)

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Belshazzar

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APPLY

9. "Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendour" (v18). How can seeing our success as a gift from God make a difference to our perspective? To what extent do you think in this way?

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10. Read Jesus' words in Luke 12:16-21 and consider its suitability to Daniel 5.

a. What do you find striking about Daniel 5 and what Jesus has said here? How should these truths be changing us?

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b. What might it look like for you to be rich toward God?

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PRAY

Pray that we would find our security not in ourselves but in the King who truly reigns and gives to us. Pray also that we might bring Jesus to others during this window that God has given to humble ourselves before Him.

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RESCUED FROM THE DEN

DANIEL 6

STARTER

Followers of Jesus value both truth and love. But it's not always easy. Think of your own personality. Do you find either of these easier to pursue in your life?

Babylon is now in the hands of the Medes and the Persians. And Daniel once more finds himself in the halls of power within this new kingdom. But, as with Babylon, so with Persia, Daniel's allegiance to the unseen King is about to take centre stage

EXPLORE

Read Daniel 6:1-28

1. What impresses you about Daniel in this chapter? (Consider character traits, relationships, spirituality, decisions)

2. What do the administrators and satraps think of Daniel? Why?

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3. Describe the magnitude and the effect of the rescue that happens in Daniel 6.

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 **APPLY**

4. Think specifically about your own 'workplace' – whether that's your school, TAFE, home, office, worksite etc. What does it look like for you to serve well in that sphere?

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5. Daniel is an interesting mix here – on the one hand he has a great relationship with Darius (as he seems to have had with Nebuchadnezzar in the end, see 4:19). On the other hand he was fiercely disliked by the administrators and satraps. (See both 1 Tim 3:7 and 2 Tim 3:12)

a. How do these two fit together? Should being out of favour with those who don't follow Jesus concern us or not?

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b. What areas for growth in your own life does this discussion prompt for you?

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6. The prayer life of Daniel and his friends is a feature of this book (2:17-18, 6:10, 9:3).

a. Why do you think prayer is so important as we live for Christ in a foreign kingdom?

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b. What prayer habits have you found helpful?

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7. In chapter 1 Daniel, as a youth (probably a teenager), said no to the royal food and wine. Here after 70 years in exile, Daniel as an old man (well into his 80s), again stands firm. Consider the stage of life you are in right now – what might it look like for you to be resolute for Jesus in this moment?

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8. A stone is rolled over the mouth of what is effectively Daniel's tomb and is sealed. Yet, in the morning Daniel is alive! What a great foretaste of the rescue that Jesus wins for His people (Matt 27:66, 28:6)! What difference does the coming resurrection make for you now as you face opposition in living for Jesus and sharing Him?

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 **PRAY**

Pray for one another that we might be both faithful to King Jesus, and gracious in our relationships with others. And, that we might continue for Him even through opposition, knowing the hope that we have through Christ.

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BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday June 12

DANIEL 7

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THE BEASTS AND THE SON OF MAN

DANIEL 7

STARTER

In what ways can we see human governments or institutions acting in a wicked way? How can this be seen in nations of every kind (eg. both Communist and Capitalist nations)?

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EXPLORE

Read Daniel 7:1-28

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Daniel 7-12 is an example of apocalyptic literature. This can make Daniel hard to interpret in places. The danger is getting lost in details or speculation, rather than taking in what is clear enough and allowing it to change us. While we may be able to match some parts to events/people in history, the most important thing is to get a sense of the big picture and to grasp how God acts in the world in an ongoing way.

1. What impresses you about Daniel in this chapter? (Consider character traits, relationships, spirituality, decisions)

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THE FOUR KINGDOMS

The beasts represent kingdoms (v17). Daniel 2 and 7 mention four kingdoms, and Daniel 8 again mentions two of these kingdoms. The 'best fit' is probably to see these kingdoms as 1. Babylon (Dan 2:48), 2. Medo-Persia (Dan 8:20), 3. Greece (Dan 8:21) and 4. Rome (see chart on the next page). However, more importantly the kingdoms should be seen as representative of all the kingdoms of this earth.

2. In verses 9-10 we are taken from earth to the throne room of 'The Ancient of Days' (God), who slays the beast (v11). Then we are introduced to the Son of Man. What indication is there in verses 13-14 of this person's divinity (see Ps 68:4, Is 19:1) and humanity?

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3. How does the kingdom of the Son of Man (v14) compare with the kingdoms of these beasts (vv11-12)? How would this have been a comfort to God's people in Babylon?

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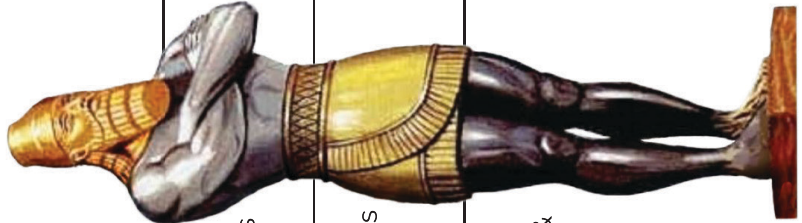
THE BEASTS VS THE SON OF MAN

The book of Daniel contrasts the kingdom of God with human kingdoms. Humanity was meant to rule God's world under Him (Gen 1:28), mimicking God's style of rule (just, merciful and kind). But time and again we fail to mimic our God, and descend into an inhuman or beastly style of rule. For this reason God will judge all human kingdoms – the beast will be slain (v11). But, in His mercy we meet in Daniel 7 "one like a son of man" (v13) – a human who exercises his rule in a truly human way (i.e. under the overarching rule of God). To him is given "an everlasting dominion that will not pass away" (v14).

Identification of the Four Kingdoms

Chronology of Major Empires

VISION IN DANIEL 2	VISION IN DANIEL 7	VISION IN DANIEL 8	IDENTIFICATION	626 BC
Head of Gold	Lion		BABYLON 2:28	BABYLONIA
Chest & Arms of Silver	Bear	Ram	MEDO-PERSIA 8:20	MEDO-PERSIA
Belly & Thighs of Bronze	Leopard	Goat	GREECE 8:21	GREECE including Ptolemies & Seleucids
Legs of Iron & Feet of Iron & Clay	Terrifying & Frightening Beast		ROME	ROME



APPLY

4. Think of the representation of God as the Ancient of Days:

a. "His clothing was white as snow" – a picture of God's purity/holiness. God's holiness can seem daunting, but how might the *purity of God* also give you peace in turbulent times?

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b. "The hair of his head was white like wool" – possibly a representation not only of purity, but of the wisdom that comes with age (note that he is "Ancient"). How does the *wisdom of God* give you peace in turbulent times?

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c. "His throne was a flaming fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out before him." Here is a fierce warrior riding on a chariot, having the power to enact justice. How does the *power of God* give you peace in turbulent times?

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5. Read Mark 14:61-62. The message of Daniel 7 is that the crucifix is not the end of the story. For now, we live in a day of monstrous beasts, but a Day is coming when the Son of Man will return on the clouds of heaven to institute an eternal reign of righteousness. To what extent do you think about that coming Day of Jesus' return (be honest!)? How might it help us to think more of that Day?

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6. “Then the sovereignty power and greatness of all the kingdoms will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High.” (v27) Through Jesus, God's people will once again rule God's world as we were meant to (Gen 1:28). The idea here is of a return to the kind of rule that humanity was meant to have in the days of Eden.

a. What frustrations do you face in caring for God's world well today (consider your work, relationships, internal struggles, attempts to do good)

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b. What does it mean to you that through Jesus, we will one day return to an Edenic rule over God's Kingdom?

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7. “His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed” (v14). When do you need to be reminded that the things of Jesus and His Kingdom are that which is enduring?

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 **PRAY**

Pray for one another – that we might face our fears by looking to the return of Son of Man who truly is on the Throne; and that we might rest in the purity, wisdom and power of our God.

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MEN'S

WINTER CAMP

JULY 22-24

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christcentral.org.au/mens-camp





BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday June 19

DANIEL 8

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THE RAM AND THE GOAT

DANIEL 8

STARTER

Would you describe yourself as a pessimist or an optimist? Is there any advantage to your way of thinking?

EXPLORE

Read Daniel 8:1-27

1. Read and complete the following section. Some has been done for you.

- v3** - *"I looked up and there before me was a ram with two horns"*
v20 - Interpretation:
- v5** - *"a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west"*
v21 - Interpretation:
- v7** - *"I saw it attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering its two horns."*
- Interpretation: Greece defeats Media and Persia
- v8** - *"The goat became very great, but at the height of its power the large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up."*
v22 - Interpretation:

v9 - *"Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land"*

v23 - Interpretation:

v10 - *"It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them."*

v24 - Interpretation:

v11 - *"It set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the LORD; it took away the daily sacrifice from the LORD, and his sanctuary was thrown down."*

v25 - Interpretation: The King sets himself up against God himself, the 'Prince of princes'.

v14 - *"...then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated."*

v25 - Interpretation: The power of this king will "be destroyed" by God

A VIEW INTO HISTORY

Media and Persia is the empire that came after Babylon. It was a united empire with the Persian part arising later and becoming superior in power (*one of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later*). Under King Cyrus who we read about in Daniel 1:21, the empire extended its boundaries and no other nation could stand against it (*it charged toward the West and the North and the South... none could rescue from its power. It did as it pleased and became great*). But at the time of the Persians, another figure arose who would dominate the world stage – a Greek known as Alexander the Great. The Persian empire was easily overthrown by Alexander (*suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west..., striking the ram and shattering its two horns... none could rescue the ram from its power*).

Alexander achieved unprecedented dominion, from Italy to India in an unbelievable time (*see map on page 24*). But just as Alexander's power looked complete, he died suddenly in 323BC at the age of 32 (*at the height of his power the large horn on the goat's head was broken off*). Alexander had no natural heir and so his empire was divided amongst four of his generals (*four prominent horns replaced the one prominent horn of Alexander; see map on page 25*). From one of these generals arose another leader Antiochus IV (*out of them came another horn*). In 167BC Antiochus invaded Jerusalem. His soldiers entered the temple (*the surrender of the sanctuary*), slaughtered a pig on the altar of the Lord and dedicated the temple

to his Greek god (*the rebellion that causes desolation*). In fact, history records that Antiochus took the meat of the pig and tried to make some Jews eat it. Those who refused to eat, he cut their tongues out then burnt them on the temple altar. It was a time of great persecution for the Jews (*the trampling underfoot of the LORD's people*). But it all came to an end. The Jews rebelled and after a lengthy struggle (*it will take 2300 evenings and mornings*), the soldiers were driven out of Judah, Antiochus died suddenly (*he will be destroyed, but not by human power*) and the temple was cleansed and rededicated in 164 BC (*then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated*).

2300 EVENINGS AND MORNINGS

The 2300 evenings and mornings could refer to the time separating the appointment of a specific High Priest through to the rededication of the temple in 164BC. In any case, the figure tells us that this would be a rather long period, but the fact that it is calculated means that it is limited. The time of persecution and suffering would come to an end.

Read Revelation 5:6

2. The book of Revelation has some big similarities with Daniel – it contains strange beasts with horns who rise up against God and His people. And when you read Revelation you wonder – how is God going to defeat these beasts and make Himself known as the true King? The answer: it all centres on Jesus, the One who takes the path of suffering to become the King.

How is this so different to the beasts in Daniel?

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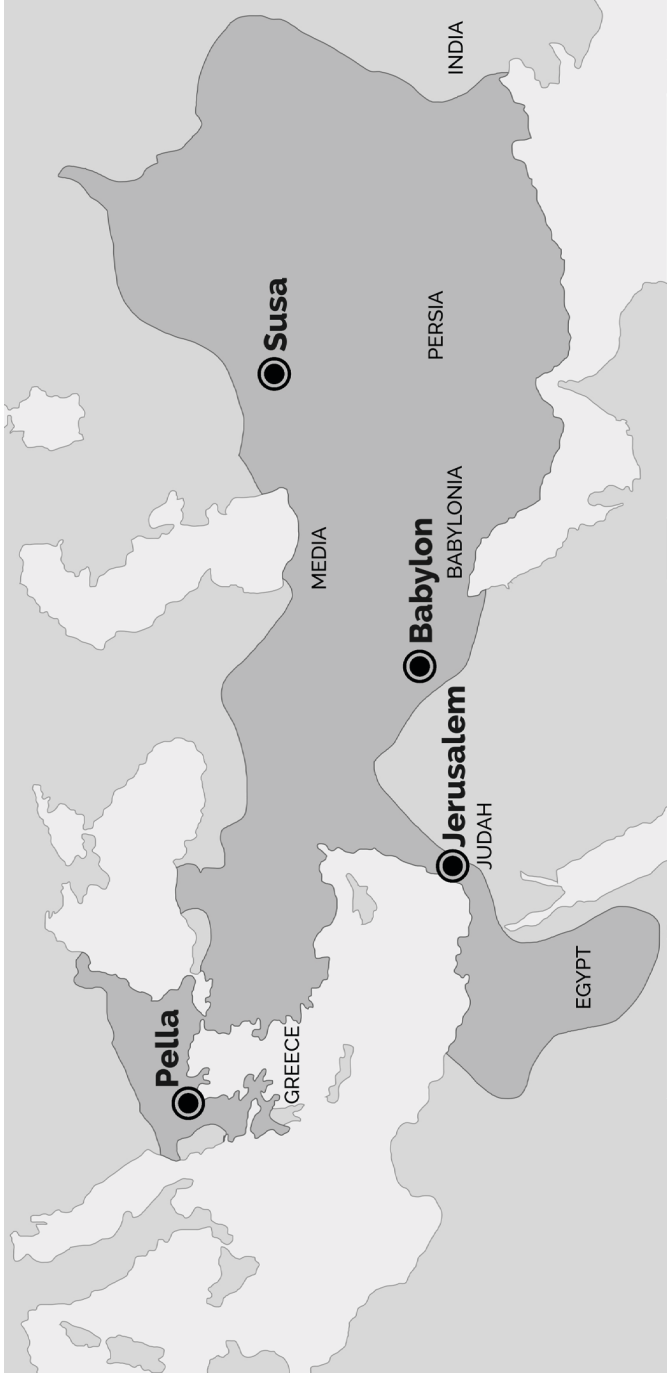
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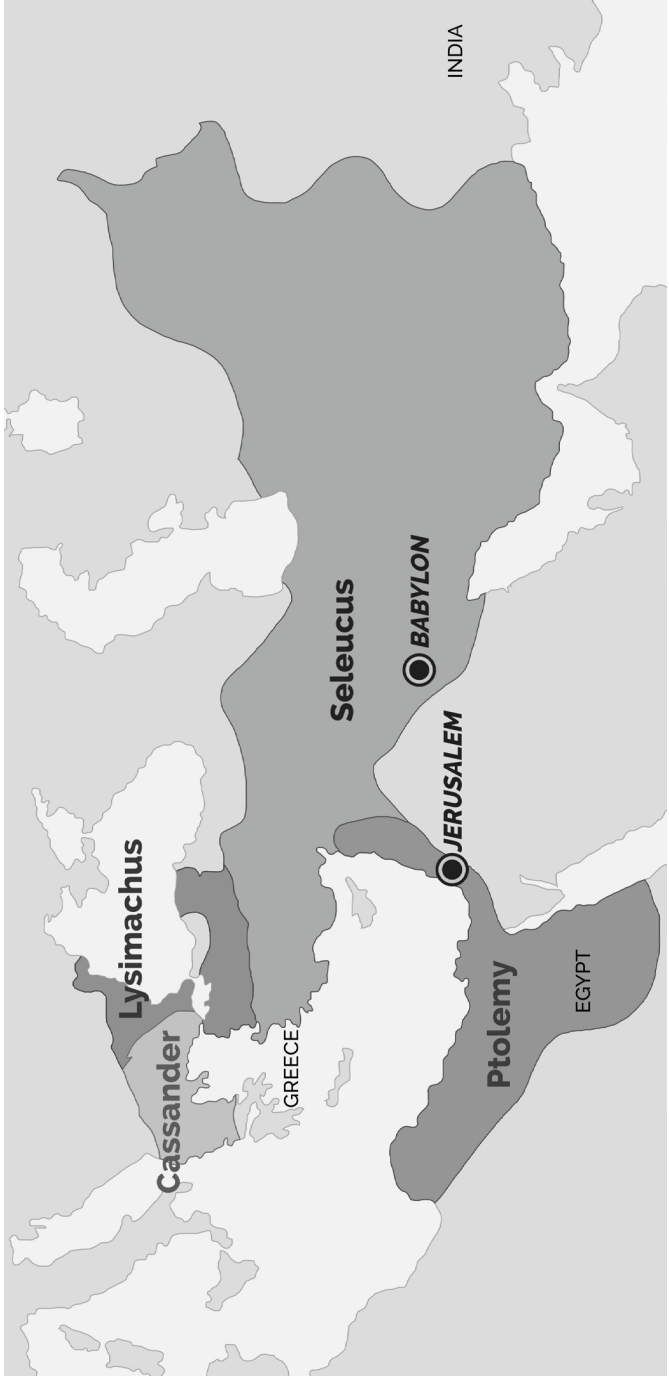
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THE EMPIRE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

334-323 BC



FOUR KINGDOMS AFTER ALEXANDER THE GREAT



APPLY

3. How has Daniel shaped the way you view the kingdoms and authorities of this world?

4. How has Daniel shaped the way you might expect them to treat people who belong to God? Can knowing this help you in any way?

5. How has Daniel shaped the way you should view the future? How can having this perspective be a help to you?

6. The rise and fall of these real historical nations are predicted accurately centuries ahead of time by the Lord through His prophets. What should this teach you about the course of history? How can this encourage you?

7. In the history books, Alexander the Great gets many pages and Antiochus Epiphanes is hardly noticed. Here Alexander gets brief mention (v21b) but the magnifying glass is on Antiochus Epiphanes (v23-25), because of how he affects the people of God. How should this 'bias' of God encourage you? When might it help you to be reminded of this?

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8. How does Jesus' character as a King who has suffered help you as you face opposition? Can you think of a time when this has been meaningful to you in your own experience?

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 **PRAY**

Pray that we might trust in the God of history. And, that we might be patient in opposition, knowing that we have a loving King who has suffered and who has the future in His hands.

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[Studies by Kirk Zylstra. Some adaptation of material by Andrew Reid and Karen Morris (and Garnet Swann for Study 8).]



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