



DAILY BIBLE READING NOTES

Daniel

Who rules really?

Term 2, 2014

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Making the most of these notes

There was a time when Christian people would not have dreamt of going a day without reading their Bible and saying their prayers. Even apart from any good work performed or service rendered, a daily devotion was considered to be the most vital activity of everyday life. For this reason, some gave it absolute pride of place. (My grandmother would not even eat her breakfast until she had attentively engaged with God!)

Tales of this sort of regimen often sound a little peculiar (even legalistic!) in the modern ear. And while we would be very slow indeed to criticise them for such a practice – the truth is we are even slower to imitate them!

The contemporary Christian's devotional life tends to be a very different matter, and conducted accordingly. While we may readily acknowledge this sad situation and lament it as our loss, we very often feel unable to do anything about it. We consider the problem to have arisen from a lack of time – a crisis which only we moderns suffer from. Now there is of course some truth to this, although it is also true that we have lost far more than just time.

1. We have lost 'discipline', particularly self-discipline. We have no love of routine. We still of course live with some discipline (life would be unliveable without it!), but we always feel ourselves to have enough – indeed, enough to resent it. For this reason, we are invariably unwilling to impose any more upon ourselves. We see discipline as the stifler of spontaneity, the breeding ground of duty – & unlike our pre-modern forebears, we can find no delight in duty.
2. We have also lost the art of 'meditation'. This is particularly true of the contemporary evangelical scene. We look down on Charismatics who can sing a song through more than twice. If we have to sing the same words more than about three times, it is almost as if they instantly lose their meaning. We don't seem to be able to make meaning last in our hearts & minds more than about 30 seconds. We lack the capacity to ruminate & ponder & reflect – to break something down according to its component parts, to assess it in terms of its inner dynamics & logic, to locate it in relation to other truths, ideas & related concepts, to compare it with the similar, to contrast it with the opposite, to apply it to

our own thinking, attitudes and behaviour, to turn it into prayer & praise & thanks.

3. Finally, we have lost ‘direction’. While once we had a prayer book and lectionary chocked full with programs to follow and material to digest, our movement away from fixed liturgical patterns has left us to our own devices. Modern devotional material tends to focus us hopelessly inward on ourselves & leaves us without examples & models to learn from & emulate. Now many of us feel a bit stuck with what to do & how to do it.

These notes have been designed to help the modern Christian in their devotional life. The joy of hearing God address us in the Bible is still the key to a healthy devotional life. And so these notes are simply that – notes to assist in daily Bible reading. Particularly, they aim to help you to be disciplined, meditative & directed.

What follows then are a series of notes with questions, thoughts for reflection, points to ponder, suggestions for prayer, and the like. Please allow about 10 minutes a day to get through this material. You will note that each week is only broken up into 5 days – that is because it is presumed that for the most part our Bible Reading & Prayer has been incorporated into our regular weekday routine.

At the end of each section are some bigger questions to open up fruitful lines of inquiry for discussion in a small group setting. In each case, you may find you have to do some extra work, searching back through the passage for material related to this theme, setting it in relation to other passages of Scripture, considering the alternatives, applying it to your own situation, converting it into prayer & praise.

Bonne lecture! Happy reading!

Will

Some Background

1:21 tells us that Daniel is in Babylon for the period of the exile; under Cyrus, the Jews were allowed to begin to return to Jerusalem (2 Chron.36:22-23). Not all returned, and the return was not all that it promised to be. So Daniel, although taking place during the exile, addresses both exilic and postexilic communities working out how to live as people of faith under difficult circumstances in a Gentile world. During the exile, the prophet Jeremiah would instruct the exiles to seek the welfare of the city, because in its welfare the exiles would find their own welfare (Jer.29:7)

“Biblical apocalyptic is a revelation of the ending of this present age, which is an age characterised by conflict, and its replacement by the final age of peace. It shows us ahead of time the end of the kingdoms of this world and their replacement by the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. This revelation is unfolded in complex and mysterious imagery, and has the purpose of comforting and exhorting the faithful.” *Duguid*

In the vision in chapter 8, the little horn represents Antiochus Epiphanes IV, king of the Seleucid empire that arose after Alexander the Great (Epiphanes = ‘God made manifest’). He was a tyrant who ruled from 175-164BC, and who enforced Greek culture and practice on his subjects. He banned circumcision and Sabbath observance, brought an end to sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem, and deliberately defiled it by burning pig’s flesh on the altar and setting up an object sacred to Zeus in the Holy of Holies. He burned copies of the Torah and slaughtered those who remained true to their faith. There was a rebellion by faithful Jews, led by the Maccabees, which eventually led to the Seleucids being driven out of Judah and the temple being cleansed and rededicated. *Duguid*

Recommended Reading

The Message of Daniel (IVP) –D.R. Davis (2013)

Daniel ((P & R Publishing) – I.M. Duguid (2008)

Daniel (WBC – Thomas Nelson Inc) J.E. Goldingay (1996)

Week 1 – Daniel 1:1-21

Day 1

Read Daniel chapter 1

Think – How do we get to have a look ‘behind the scenes’ in this chapter, and how does this affect how we view what is happening to Daniel and his friends? How is this different to what the human characters see? Why do you think we are given this insight? What do we learn from it about God’s presence, grace and power in Babylon? Who is really ‘the king’ in Babylon? Although much has changed for the exiles, what has not changed?

Pray - that regardless of the many circumstances and changes you face, you will remember that God is always sovereign, present, faithful.

Day 2

Read 1:1-7

Think - Nebuchadnezzar has apparently defeated both Israel and her God. What happens now to the identity of the young ‘Israelites’? What areas of their lives are to be changed? Is there any sign of resistance at this point? What does this suggest about their attitude generally to living in exile? The new life for these young exiles will involve working out how to live in a culture hostile to their own beliefs and values. Is this an issue you can identify with? Do you ever feel your identity is being shaped by the things around you?

Pray - for clarity about your beliefs and values, so that you can make good decisions about life in the culture you are in

Day 3

Read 1:8-14

Think - Everything up to this point happens *to* Daniel and his friends. But suddenly Daniel takes the initiative with his resolve not to defile himself. Why do you think he does so at this point? What does ‘defile’ suggest that perhaps makes this issue different? Although the actual process involves negotiation, what does that word ‘resolve’ imply for

how this could turn out for Daniel? How readily should we put ourselves on the line like this?

Pray - that you will know when the time comes to take a stand, and that you will have the courage to do so regardless of what it may cost you.

Day 4

Read 15-20

Think - Daniel and his friends prosper in Babylon. Compare the situation in v1-2 with that in v17-20. How has the situation on the surface 'reversed', but behind the scenes remained the same? Who else is going to benefit from God's blessing of the exiles? How can the way that God has blessed you be a blessing to the people or culture around you?

Pray - that you will use the gifts God has given you to contribute to the welfare of the people around you.

Day 5

Read 1:21

Think - The beginning and end of the chapter coincide with the beginning and end of the exile; Daniel outlasts Nebuchadnezzar, and the reign of Babylon. Is this then a note of hope, or a reality check? If God does not rescue Daniel out of exile, what can Daniel and his people expect from God in exile? And what will God expect of Daniel and his people in exile? How is this instructive for us, whether we are in a particularly difficult situation, or just living out life here on earth?

Pray - Thank God for his faithfulness to you in the circumstances you are in, and pray that you would remain faithful to him as you endure to the end.

For group discussion

How would you describe the situation of Daniel (and his friends) in Babylon? Is it all that bad? What is the pressure that is on them? Why do you think Daniel takes the stance that he does at this time over food (10:1 suggests that he *can* eat meat and drink wine) - what is at stake for him and his friends (given the reprogramming that has already taken place)? Why might the choices Daniel makes now be important for his future choices in exile? Do you think of the 'stands' you take now as being important for the future? How do you maintain a distinctive identity as a Christian?

Whatever we don't know about Daniel's reasons, we do know that this would 'defile' him. What does this mean? Are there values/behaviours in the culture around us that can defile us? Like Daniel, we are called to be citizens of two worlds (Phil.4:20; John 17:16); how do you live and prosper *in* the world, and yet not be tainted *by* it? How do *you* weigh these things and decide where to draw a line in the sand that other Christians may not see the need to draw? When have you had to do so? Have you ever failed to do so?

What relationship do you see in Daniel 1 between the faithfulness of the exiles and their prospering? It looks like a simple equation: faithfulness = success. God does honour their faithfulness, but can you say their faithfulness causes him to do so? How would you explain the relationship between God's faithfulness and our faithfulness? Does one depend on the other? Is the point of the story simply for us to be more like Daniel? How much depends on us keeping ourselves pure and undefiled?

Consider also the relationship between God's activity and human activity (v1-2, 9-10, 17 - in each of these in the original text, the emphasis is on 'God gave'). How do these verses, and the chapter as a whole depict this relationship? How does it protect the idea of humans being responsible for their own actions, while showing that God is ultimately in control, imminent and active? How does the way that Daniel goes about the food issue demonstrate this point from a different angle? Practically, how do you go about standing firm in the faith, in a way that reflects these twin truths?

Consider the three instances in which God is 'seen' to be active in this chapter. What do they reveal about him? In what sense would you

describe his actions in v1 as an example of his faithfulness? If Israel is in exile because of their sin, how do you see both God's judgment and his grace working together in this chapter - how do the exiles come from a position of judgment to one of hope? How is God's humility/humiliation evident in v1 and in his presence with the exiles? In the New Testament, how does God display his judgment and mercy, and his humility in order to achieve his purposes? Read Col.2:13-15; Phil.2:5-8; 1 Pet.2:22-25.

All the *outward signs* are that the God of Israel has been defeated, yet God was still actively king in Babylon. How is this true today? What bearing does your faith bring to bear on your interpretation/reading of world events (v1-2)?

Week 2 – Daniel 2:1-49

Read Daniel 2

Day 1

Read 2:1-13

Think - Nebuchadnezzar asks the humanly impossible. Consider the response of his astrologers in v11. Why do they have no access to the answer that the king seeks? Given chapter 1, what will be the difference for Daniel in his understanding of God? How does our God dwell among us?

Pray - thank God that he chooses to dwell among his people; thank Christ that he came to live among us; thank the Holy Spirit that he dwells within you

Day 2

Read 2:14-23

Think - Daniel does not go immediately to the king with the revelation – despite the urgency of the situation, and what depended on it. What do you learn from v17-23 about the priority, nature and content of praise? (Notice that the ‘way’ Daniel praises God changes between v21-22, and v23 – how would you describe the difference?). How is Daniel’s praise shaped by (a) his knowledge of God? (b) his circumstances? Who is the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor.1:22-24)?

Pray - use Daniel’s prayer as a basis to praise God for who he is; thank him for what he has made known to you in Jesus Christ.

Day 3

Read 2:24-30

Think - Daniel further defers immediate telling of the dream – to say what? Why do you think he would be determined to get this in first? How does what Daniel says in 27-30 help us to understand the main point of the dream – indeed of the chapter?

Pray - that you will have the discernment and courage to tell people what they need to hear, not just what they want to hear; thank God he chooses his people to reveal himself to others.

Day 4

Read 2:31-45

Think - Who/what is the dream primarily about? What do you learn of the Kingdom of God? Is this how you normally think of it? What confidence do you draw from Daniel's interpretation of the dream?

Pray - Praise God that his kingdom will prevail over all other kingdoms, that it will always be God that rules over his kingdom, that it will endure forever, that you one of God's subjects.

Day 5

Read 2:46-49

Think - How does Nebuchadnezzar's situation change from the beginning to the end of the chapter? How does Daniel's? Although Daniel prospers, how might the dream disappoint the exiles' future hopes for the kingdom of Israel? Do you contemplate God's long-term plans; do you find them to be a source of hope?

Pray - that we will be patient as God continues to work to prosper his people today in their present 'exile', while he works out the course of history and the final establishment of his kingdom

For group discussion

Whilst the dream revealed to Daniel focuses on the future, Daniel's praise is for the God he knows in the present. What does he reveal about the activity of God's wisdom and power in his own life, and in the world? How self-evident are these in the world we live in? How do you hold together the truths expressed here with your perception of how the world and its power structures work? When a ruler's regime is particularly evil, should you be able to accept and testify that God has raised up that ruler? Consider the wisdom of Ps 73:1-20. How do God's power and wisdom help you keep living in a world where evil so often seems to prevail? Do Jesus' parables about the Kingdom of God encourage you (eg, Matt.13:31-33)?

How does God choose to reveal himself to the world? Here, God reveals himself through Daniel; through whom has he ultimately revealed himself? The word 'mystery' appears often in this chapter (v18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 47), in the sense of something that is beyond the ability of humans to comprehend. Consider the use of the word 'mystery' in the New Testament – to what does it refer, and who has access to it? How? (eg, Rom.16:25-27; Eph.1:9; 3:1-13; Col.1:25). What wisdom do Christians have that is not available to unbelievers? Do you consider yourself as someone who has heavenly mysteries to reveal to others?

“A man among the exiles from Judah” (v25) emphasises that this wisdom is not accessible to the ‘wise men’ of Babylon (v12, 13, 18, 24 (x2), 27, 48); Daniel has his own wisdom (chapter 1), but does not avail himself of the Babylonian wisdom he has been trained in. How do you see the relationship between the wisdom the world has to offer and ‘godly’ wisdom?

Read through the dream and note those things that are clear, following Daniel's interpretation, and those which are not. Apart from the head being Nebuchadnezzar, why do you think it is so unclear in its details? What does this reveal about its main purpose? What message for Nebuchadnezzar is there in those two words, “After you” (v39)? Why does God bother with Nebuchadnezzar? As much as God cares for you as an individual in the present, do you think of yourself as being part of a bigger, eternal story?

What do we learn about the rock (v34-35, 44-45)? What /who is the rock described in the dream? In the New Testament Jesus adopts this terminology for himself (Luke 20:9-19; 1 Peter 2:7-8; Ps 118:22: Is.8:14). How does the description of the rock, and what it does, help your understanding of Jesus – who he was and is, and what he has done and will do? In the dream the rock seems to be a kingdom - what is the relationship between Jesus and the Kingdom?

What are the features of the fifth kingdom, and how does it differ from the others? Does this passage add to your understanding of the Kingdom of God? It is revealed here as a future event. Do you see it as still in the future? In what sense are we still waiting for it, and how does that help us to be realistic about life in the present? How is God's kingdom 'manifested' today (given that the King, Jesus, is enthroned at God's right hand)? If this is the only kingdom that lasts, what does that suggest about where our energies should be invested?

Week 3 – Daniel 3:1-30

Read Daniel 3

Day 1

Read 3:1-7

Think -As Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel at the end of chapter 2, in awe of Daniel's God, so now he commands all nations and languages to fall prostrate before the image that he has set up (the passage emphasises again and again that it has been made and set up by the king). What kind of 'worship' is this? What is in it for Nebuchadnezzar? Why is there no resistance from the majority? Have you ever experienced enforced religion (eg, as a child)? What does it achieve?

Pray – that more and more people from all nations and languages will come to worship Christ, not because they must, but because they know he is worthy?

Day 2

Read 3:8-15

Think - How do Nebuchadnezzar's words in v15 sum up the key question in the chapter? In chapter 1, we saw a certain amount of compromise by the Jews, before they drew a line in the sand which they would not cross. Here, why could they not have quietly continued to worship God, while outwardly being seen to obey Nebuchadnezzar's command – he would have been satisfied with this. Consider Ex:20:1-2. Would it have been possible for the Jews to obey Exodus 20, and be *seen* to be obeying Nebuchadnezzar. Is what you are seen to be doing as important as what you are in fact doing?

Pray - that you will be driven by what is right to do, not what others require of you, and that you will be consistent in the practice of your faith whether you are seen or unseen

Day 3

Read 3:16-23

Think - For the first time we hear in person from Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. What is the first thing they want the king to know, and why? How would you describe the relationship between their faith and their expectations of God in this situation? How does what they say address the attitude, ‘if I only have enough faith God will deliver me from my trials’? What is the real hope offered in this chapter? What is your expectation regarding God’s faithfulness in tough times?

Pray - that you will be driven by what is right to do, not by the possible consequences to yourself of your actions.

Day 4

Read 3:24-30

Think - How does God ‘rescue’ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? Does he prevent them from having to go through the fire? How is this a model for the way we view trials and suffering generally? What about the fact that they do not suffer in it, and come through it completely unscathed by it? Is this how you expect God’s presence and protection to operate in times of trial? Read 1 Peter 4:12-14

Pray - that you will trust God to be present with you in the trials you undergo and to deliver you in the way he deems best.

Day 5

Read 3:24-30

Think - What do you think of Nebuchadnezzar’s summing up of the situation? What key points does he make about true service and worship? What is missing in his summary? Do you know people who know all about God, (and respect your faith) – but don’t know God? What does the Bible say about these people? It’s often said that it’s the journey that’s important, not the destination. Is this a Christian perspective?

Pray - for those known to you who know about the Christian faith but do not know God. Pray that they would repent of their sins and believe.

For group discussion

How do you view Nebuchadnezzar's actions in chapter 3 in view of his 'praise' of God in chapter 2? Is it common for people to show a belief in and understanding of God, but at the same time 'fit him in' to their own beliefs and practice – add him to their gods? What's wrong with this as long as God is being duly honoured? Is this a trap for Christians also? How does our culture pressure us to put our God, and his demands, in second place? Why does God claim exclusive rights to our worship?

The concept of 'deliverance' has different connotations for different Christians (eg, "deliverance ministries"). Where can all Christians find common ground? What does deliverance look like – for the believer, and for the not-yet believer? When we read a story like this we can (and should) be wowed by the wonder of it all. Is there a temptation to undervalue God's quiet acts of deliverance while being awed by the spectacular? Luke 15:6-7. How does the spectacular nature of this chapter translate into the ordinariness of our daily lives?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew to whom they belonged – to God first, and only then to Nebuchadnezzar. A believer's exclusive allegiance to God will be respected by some, and seen as fanaticism by others. Is 'religious fanatic' as a description of your faith a badge you would be happy to wear with pride? What does it mean for our witness in the world? In order to appeal to the world, it could be argued that we need to appear 'normal' and 'relevant'. Equally it could be argued we need to look different, distinctive. How do you draw the line between your desire to be, and make your faith, attractive to others, and being true to your Christian walk?

We cannot put ourselves in the shoes of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (although there are Christians in other countries who certainly can). What gives them such clarity to be able to take the stance that they do? Consider your motives for obedience. In a tight spot, where there might be consequences, which 'habit'/practice will stand you in best stead both to obey and to accept the consequences? When someone is considering becoming a Christian, how important is it that they know the cost of being one of God's people?

Consider the example of Jesus:

- How is his situation in Gethsemane similar to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? What did he know about the outcome of his obedience that they could not know for certain about theirs?
- When Jesus passed through the fire of God's wrath on the cross, who was with him?
- Does his death ensure that we can come through the ultimate 'fiery ordeal' unscathed? Read 1 Cor.15:54-57

Week 4 – Daniel 4:1-37

Read Daniel 4

Day 1

Read 4:1-3

Think - Who is Nebuchadnezzar addressing? Compare with chapter 3 – what does he now want the nations and peoples to hear about? Without even knowing the context of what follows, what is different in his testimony to the previous chapters? What lessons, that he paid lip service to in the previous chapters, does he now appear to have embraced?

Pray - that you might share Nebuchadnezzar's enthusiasm to tell the world what he now knew to be true about God.

Day 2

Read 4:4-18

Think – The king is contented and prosperous – but afraid. As in the previous dream, there is an impressive structure that is nonetheless fragile in the face of the power of God. Whereas the previous dream showed Nebuchadnezzar what would happen 'after' his reign, this one relates to the present. What purpose is revealed in the dream for what will take place (v17)? What is the purpose of the dream itself? Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar is given this warning?

Pray - that in his grace God will confront us in our comfort and security, warn us of our need to repent, and give us the opportunity to do so; pray that you would heed his warnings.

Day 3

Read 4:19-27

Think - What picture emerges of Nebuchadnezzar's reign? What does it lack that makes it vulnerable? What picture emerges of Daniel's attitude towards the pagan king (v19, 27)? Why does he add to the interpretation? What does he know about God and his word that puts him in a position to offer such advice to the king? What is he hoping to achieve?

Pray - that you will have the courage and love to use what you know to be true to bring God's word of warning to those who need to hear it.

Day 4

Read 4:28-33

Think - The dream does not come true immediately, but it does come true – God's word is reliable. What is the immediate cause of the king's downfall? Why is the king's pride such an affront to God? What promise is there of God's grace to Nebuchadnezzar in the midst of his judgment?

Pray - that you will be mindful of any pride in you that you need to confess, and that if God exposes your pride you will respond with humility.

Day 5

Read 4:34-36

Think - Where is Nebuchadnezzar looking at the peak of his pride? Where is he looking in the depths of his humility? What has he recognized comes from heaven (v13, 23, 26, 31, 34)? What follows from this shift in focus? Has God's purpose been fulfilled (v17, 25, 32)? Is there any sense of self-achievement left in Nebuchadnezzar?

Pray - Thank God that both judgment and mercy come from heaven.

For group discussion

Recall what God has already revealed of Himself to Nebuchadnezzar in the preceding two chapters. What does this chapter reveal has been a stumbling block to the king responding to those revelations in a way that is genuine and pleasing to God? From this passage, how would you define both human pride (and how it reveals itself) and proper humility? Why is God so opposed to pride? What would be some of the common ways people today express their stumbling blocks in responding to God? Is human pride the main stumbling block – or indeed that which is at the root of all of them?

How do we, practically, avoid the pride that God so actively opposes and continually humble ourselves (1 Peter 5:1-6)? Can you think of ways in which pride can creep into the way a person practises their faith, conducts their spiritual life (for example Luke 18:9ff)? How do we

maintain our dependence on God, without claiming credit for our own contributions? In what way does Nebuchadnezzar offer both a warning/example to us, and a promise for us? Read Heb 12:7-11. How is the Biblical notion that God humbles the proud both a comfort and a warning to believers? How do we respond when God exposes our pride?

What do you think are the ‘miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for’ Nebuchadnezzar? Why is it his ‘pleasure’ to tell a story that is essentially against himself and his own pride? To all appearances, Nebuchadnezzar ends up right back where he began – a prosperous king. How do we know the difference (note “the living’ in v17)? Consider the importance of testimony for others to know what God has done in your life.

Chapter 2 has given Nebuchadnezzar the assurance that his kingdom will stand at least as long as he is king; in other words, if he believes the dream, he can face his future with some certainty about the end. Has God remained true to what he revealed to Nebuchadnezzar? What does this chapter reveal about the way God goes about achieving his revealed word, and his concern for how people live out their lives? Is it possible as a Christian to rest in the assurance of your security in Christ, with too little concern for how you live in the present?

God takes drastic action to humble Nebuchadnezzar. In this humbling of a human king, how is the coming of Christ seen? How is the humbling and exaltation of Jesus both like, and utterly different from, that of Nebuchadnezzar? Read verse 17, and Heb 12:1-2. Is there a sort of boasting that God does permit, and which, paradoxically, enables us to avoid the pride that God condemns in Daniel 4? Read 1 Cor. 1:26-31

Week 5 – Daniel 5:1-31

Read Daniel 5

Day 1

Read 5:1-4

Think - Take yourself back to the opening verse of Daniel 1:1-2. Where were the vessels placed in Babylon, and what did this signify to the Babylonians and the exiles about the power of the exiles' God? How do Belshazzar's actions demonstrate this? What do *we* know from 1:1-2 that Belshazzar has not acknowledged? How would you describe his attitude and actions?

Pray - for this world that does not recognize the power and presence of God, and ascribes its praise to the idols it creates.

Day 2

Read 5:5-12

Think - Compare the king's demeanour (v6), his demand (v7), and the means of solving his problem, with the stories in chapters 2:1-6, 25-28; & 4:4-9. What are the similarities? What are we meant to learn from three such similar stories? What does the repetition convey to Daniel's readers, then and now (Daniel is now about 80 years old, serving another king, and Nebuchadnezzar has been dead for 25 years)?

Pray - for a lasting and deepening conviction about the unchanging truths you have learnt, that you will hold them firm through all the length and changing circumstances of your life.

Day 3

Read 5:13-17

Think - What shift do you detect in Daniel's attitude to *this* king? How do you account for his attitude to the king's offer of reward (given that he has accepted similar reward in chapter 2, and in fact accepts the rewards at the end of this chapter)? Is it similar to the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in chapter 3 to do his bidding in exchange for their lives (3:15)?

Pray - that you will remember the source of your gifts, and always seek to use them, not to your own or other's advantage, but to serve, please and bring glory to God.

Day 4

Read 5:18-24

Think - Daniel could have simply answered the king's questions (reading and meaning). But instead he answers that which hasn't been asked: why the hand has been sent. How do Daniel's opening words in v18 & 19a immediately challenge the king (given what he has done in the opening verses), and his view of where his power comes from? Why does Daniel recount what happened to Nebuchadnezzar? How does Daniel interpret, not the writing, but the king's actions?

Pray - that you will increase in your awareness of whether your actions are honouring or offensive to God, and an increasing will to change.

Day 5

Read 5:25-31

Think - In the opening verse Belshazzar mocks the God of Jerusalem – of the exiles. How do these 6 verses reverse the appearances at the beginning, and show the reality? How can v28 speak already of what 'is' before it has taken place? How is the dream of chapter 2 beginning to come true (2:36-39)? How do all these show that the God of the exiles is not to be mocked – even in exile?

Pray - that you will have a concern for God's name to be honoured among the nations; praise him that one day this will indeed be a reality.

For Group Discussion

There is a sense of inevitability to Belshazzar's fate, but how do v21-24 emphasise Belshazzar's own responsibility for what happens to him (note how many times the word 'you' (or 'your') appear in these verses)? What is the root of his problems? What do we learn about the relationship between knowledge/information and proper response to that knowledge? How do people move from knowledge to proper response? Read Ezek.11:9-20. Does this suggest that the word alone is not enough? What is *God's* response to knowledge without response (Romans 1:20-22)? Should we sit in judgment on Belshazzar, or consider whether there are areas of our own lives in which we know what we ought to do, but fail to do it (Jas 4:17)?

Consider what it means to mock God. What did it look like in Belshazzar? Is this something that you would normally think is the preserve of the non-Christian, or even just the anti-Christian? How might believers actually mock God? Is it more than the 'small' acts of disobedience we are all prone to? Read Galatians 6:7-8 – what does it mean that God is not mocked? What is the outcome of mocking God? Do Christians have a role to play when we perceive that God is being mocked? How can we, individually or as a church, protect his honour?

Compare the judgment on Belshazzar with that on Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 – its reason, its immediacy, its form and outcome. Is it right for us to question why Belshazzar was treated so differently, so finally? Is the difference between chapters 4 & 5 simply that one reveals divine mercy and one reveals divine judgment? What truths about God's judgment and mercy are affirmed in chapter 5? What are the hard realities we have to accept about God's judgment (Read Romans 9:14-18)? What do the events in Daniel 5 foreshadow of God's final and definitive judgment at the end of days?

The lavish banquet in the opening verses brings to mind the wedding banquet that will be held for the one who was mocked by those who did not recognize him for who he was (Ps. 22:7; Matt. 20:19; 27:27-31; 41-44). What does the New Testament affirm about God's 'weighing' of Jesus, and what are the consequences for those who believe in him – will we be found wanting? What is the basis for our invitation to the king's banquet (Matt. 22:1-14)? What of those who "paid no attention" to the king (v5)?

Week 6 – Daniel 6:1-28

Read Daniel 6

Day 1

Read 6:1-9

Think - Why do the administrators and satraps take aim at Daniel through “the law of his God”? What do they know about Daniel that assures them that this plan will work? Do you consider an exemplary moral life as important in your witness as your ‘religious’ practice? Can they be separated?

Pray - that your life will be of such exemplary quality that no one will have good cause to accuse you of wrongdoing, and that what will distinguish you will be your obedience to God.

Day 2

Read 6:10-16

Think - “Now when Daniel learned”; compare Daniel’s knowledge, and his response to it, with that of Belshazzar in 4:22. In what regard are they similar? What do you think enabled Daniel to respond as he did? In a society where, at this point in time, there are few ‘laws’ against the practice of religion, have you aroused the attention of others by the overt practice of your faith?

Pray - that regardless of what you ‘learn’, you will “serve [your God] continually” by practising your faith consistently and courageously for his glory.

Day 3

Read 6:17-23

Think - Compare the night that Darius has spent in the luxury of his palace, with Daniel’s night in the lion’s den. How has the faith that proved to be Daniel’s ‘weak spot’ in the opening scene proved to be his strength? Contrast Darius - what is his only hope now that events are out

of his control? What can tempt our trust because of their apparent strength? How can we guard against putting our trust in them?

Pray - that you will not be deceived or disheartened by the apparent strength of the ‘forces’ around you, but will grow in your trust in God as the source of your strength

Day 4

Read 6:24-27

Think - For Darius, what is it about Daniel’s God that makes him “the living God” (also in v20)? What would he be comparing him with? What can Daniel’s God do that Darius’ gods cannot? How do people today come to recognize these things about God – does it require a supernatural act from the living God?

Pray - that by the power of God’s Spirit working through us his people, and in those yet to believe, he will cause more and more people to praise him as the living God.

Day 5

Read 6:26-28

Think - The praise of God by the Babylonian kings, and the prosperity of the exile Daniel (and his friends) have been consistent conclusions to the ends of most chapters.

How do they both offer encouragement in the present, and look forward to what is still to come (Ps.102:15; Ps 138:4-5; Rev.1:5; 7:9-17)?

Pray - Praise God that he *is* the living God whose kingdom and dominion endure forever; that Jesus *is* the ruler of the kings of the earth; that one all knees will bow before him.

For Group Discussion

Daniel was the ‘exile from Judah’ almost his entire life in Babylon (v13) – he never truly belonged to that world. The events in chapter 6 make the point that, although kings came and went, neither changes in his circumstances, nor his faithfulness, were ever a guarantee that his situation, or his future, would be trouble-free. What is the ‘secret’ of Daniel’s perseverance in the faith? Jesus makes the truth of Daniel’s situation our truth as well (John 15:18-19). Why is perseverance so hard? How costly is it to maintain one’s faithfulness to God? Have you had times when you felt your spiritual life was ‘at risk’? What understanding of God, and the way he works, and what habits, are most helpful to underpin a life of perseverance, and to prepare to endure times of testing?

There was no ‘law’ that required Daniel to pray in public view three times a day -would he have been disobedient to God had he obeyed the king’s edict? Was there any compromise he could have reached, and so served God and served his human master? There are many ways for Christians to practise their faith. Do you find that there are some areas of your spiritual disciplines that you are prepared to treat as ‘flexible’ according to circumstances, for example, when you pray, church attendance, giving. Strictly speaking, there are no ‘laws’ about these things – so what is the bigger principle that enables you to be consistent in these things regardless of circumstance? Or would an adherence to such consistency be disparaged as ‘legalism’?

Daniel speaks only once in the story – and he doesn’t say much. We have few details of what happened in the lion’s den. The ‘rescue’ is similar to that in chapter 3, but here we have from Daniel a reason for his rescue. What is it? What do you understand by it? Discuss the relationship between Daniel’s faith/faithfulness and God’s faithfulness.

Where was Daniel’s real battle fought in this chapter? What was the idol he was really facing (had he given in to the edict, what would he really have been putting first before his worship of God?)? In chapter 9 we will look more closely at a prayer of Daniel’s. But here, although the details are sparse, what can we learn from: his determination to pray, and why; the ‘direction’ of his prayers (1 Kings 8:46-51); the content of his prayers; his habit of prayer; his posture of prayer? Despite the almost ‘legalistic’ aspect to Daniel’s prayer life, should we, who can approach

God's throne of grace with confidence (Heb. 4:16) learn from his example?

For those of us who live this side of the cross, discuss how this story of rescue/deliverance is a type of that which is perfected in Christ? Daniel is rescued, but still in exile; how is this true of us? How does Hebrews 11:13-16, and 39-12:2 complete the story for Daniel and for us? What does it mean for those who are exiles that the promises are still in the future?

Week 7 – Daniel 7:1-28

Read Daniel 7 (refer to the definition of apocalyptic literature in the introduction)

Day 1

Read 7:1-8

Think - The beasts come out of the sea (symbolic of chaos and rebellion in the Old Testament), but what does the opening line of the vision – the association of the four winds of heaven with the churning water - suggest about how what follows should be read (Gen. 1:1-2; 8:1; Ex. 15:8-12; Job 41; Jeremiah 49:35-36)? Who is controlling Israel's history and salvation? Do you think the beasts are called from the water by God himself for his purposes?

Pray - that when the forces of evil seem to be overwhelming, you will rest in the knowledge that even evil can be used by God to effect his purposes, which will not be thwarted.

Day 2

Read 7:9-12

Think - How does the scene in v9-10 suddenly, abruptly undermine the power and rampaging of v1-8? Go through each thing that you learn about the God here (consider his title, white clothing, white hair, seated, on a throne, fire, attendants). Would you describe this event in v1-12 as a confrontation that needs to be won? God sits on a throne, but what role is he performing here?

Pray - Praise the majesty of him who was before all human empires; him who is holy and wise; him who judges and has the power to punish evil.

Day 3

Read 7:13-14

Think - The beasts come from the sea. Where does the 'one like a son of man' come from? 'Son of man' means 'human being' (and in Ezekiel it actually emphasizes the difference between a mere mortal and God (2:1,

8; 3:1)); but what is the significance in the Old Testament of one who comes with clouds (Psalm 18:9-12; Ps. 68:4; Isaiah 19:1)? What do you think, then, that the vision is trying to portray about this one? The arrogant beast in v11 is slain, the others are stripped of their power - what reception does the 'one like a son of man' receive? Even though he is not identified, why is his coming good news to the Jewish exiles?

Pray – praise the one like a son of man, whose dominion is everlasting and whose kingdom will never be destroyed.

Day 4

Read 7:15-28

Think - How do you reconcile v14, 18, 22 and 27? How is it that they both will receive and possess the kingdom? What do you understand to be the relationship between the holy people of the Most High and the one like a son of man? How do v21 and 25 qualify v18?

Pray - for those saints today who live under the heavy hands of oppressive regimes; pray for the day when the books are opened and God's judgment finally pronounced in their favour.

Day 5

Read Mark 2:10, 27; 8:29-33; 10:45; 14:zzzz; 60-64; John 12:20-25

Think - – How does Daniel 7 help you understand why Jesus might assume 'Son of Man' as a title for himself? What does it say about him? In Daniel 7 we see final victory and worship – what does Jesus add to this in his use of the title? What do we learn from these passages about his authority on earth, his suffering, his mission, and his return? Why do his words in Mark 14 so enrage the religious authorities, and effectively seal his death?

Pray - Praise the Son of Man for who he was and is, that he is at God's right hand, and that he will come again on the clouds of heaven to exercise dominion of his eternal kingdom.

For Group Discussion

Chapter 7 is sometimes seen as a start to a new part of the book, as if Daniel were in effect two books in one. How does the opening line of the chapter make it clear that they are closely connected? What links do you see between chapters 1-6 and chapter 7? What key messages of 1-6 does chapter 7 both reinforce and bring to a climax? How does the focus of attention shift? How does it develop the main messages even further, and bring a new perspective to them? How can seeing the ‘big picture’ behind the scenes as Daniel does here, both help us with the struggles of daily living, but also risk our disengagement from the world and its problems? How do chapters 1-6 provide a necessary balance to chapter 7? God may not *need* us to achieve his purposes, but what does he require *from* us?

The beasts are generally taken to represent world empires - what should be our reaction to them? Despite their looks, is their power and ability unrestrained? Does this confirm the truths already expressed in Daniel by previous dreams and narratives (eg, 4:17; 5:18-20)?

How is the fourth beast “different” from the first three (see also v11)? What does Psalm 2 say about kings and rulers who arrogantly set themselves against God? Again, despite its fierce reality, what do you think is suggested by the one horn that uproots the others (compare the fourth kingdom in 2:40-44)? How does this view of the *pattern* of human history (and its climax) reinforce for us the reality Daniel has faced over the course of his time in Babylon under different kings? If this is the way history *will* be, how does this shape our prayers for the world?

Not even Daniel can interpret this vision. Do the interpretations (17-18; 23-27) give him much more information than he had gained from viewing the vision? Does he learn any specifics of the events that will take place? How can we respect the mystery of this type of Scripture, but still learn from it? What should we be seeking to learn from it? What do you think is the central purpose of end-time passages such as this and the visions in Revelation?

The ‘Son of Man’ title is used sparingly outside the gospels (its most common use if by Jesus himself). Why would Stephen use it (Acts 7:56-59) at the end of his speech to his Jewish persecutors? How does his vision and death bear out the witness of Daniel 7 both about the Son of Man, and his people, the Holy Ones? How does the use of the

expression/title from the Old Testament, through the gospels, and to Revelation (1:7,13; 14:14) help you 'tie together' the threads of God's salvation in Christ? Apart from when you come across it in Scripture, do you ever use this title when thinking and talking about Jesus? When you do read it, do you pause to think about what it signifies? Is it a title that was helpful for Jesus' audience then to establish his identity, but is not especially helpful for us now?

When the books are opened, and the court sits (v10, 22 & 26), there is a judgment not only against the beast for oppressing the holy people of the Most High, but a judgment in favour of the holy people. Who do you understand these holy people to be? Is this the way you normally think of God's final judgment, or is your tendency to view it more from an individual perspective? How does one relate to the other? Do you generally see your identity as a Christian primarily in individual terms, or as a member of 'the holy people of the Most High'? When the books are opened, what will be revealed in our favour?

Week 8 – Daniel 8:1-27

Read Daniel 8; refer to notes on Antiochus IV in the introduction

Day 1

Read 8:1-8

Think - The symbol of strength (the horns) that we saw in the chapter 7 is here again. How do these verses build up the image of their power, only to cut them down again and show their futility? What is ominous about the four horns growing up towards the four winds of heaven – how does God deal with that sort of ambition (Gen. 11:1-9)?

Pray - Pray for all people who are even now caught in the crossfire of the constant struggle for power between (and within) nations, that Daniel shows to be a persistent theme of world history. Pray for God's peace and justice on earth

Day 2

Read 8:9-14

Think - How is this horn different in the details of what it does from any we have seen previously in chapter 7 & 8 (the Beautiful Land in v9 = Israel - Ez. 20:6, 15)? Who are its actions aimed against? Although the number, 2300, may be symbolic, what does the giving of such a specific number suggest? What will happen at the end of this time – is this the ending you would expect to read? What does it imply has happened to the horn, and what does it imply about God's priorities?

Pray - for God's people in countries where their faith is under fire. Pray for an end to their persecution at God's appointed time, that they might be able to practise their faith openly without fear.

Day 3

Read 8:15-19

Think - If Daniel's interpreter is the angel Gabriel, who do you think is instructing Gabriel? Why does Daniel react the way he does? What do you make of the angel raising Daniel to his feet? What does their direct involvement suggest about the validity and importance of the vision?

What does the vision concern – v19? Why would God want his people to know this?

Pray - that you will gain a greater understanding of God's purposes in revealing what is to come, and respond appropriately in faith and obedience.

Day 4

Read 8:20-25

Think - The symbols are interpreted as specific kings to come – from Media, Persia and Greece. The Greek king (the goat) is believed to be Alexander the Great – so well known historically, and yet in this vision he pales into insignificance compared with the 'horn which started small' (v9) – the little known Antiochus IV. Why would the vision all but ignore Alexander in order to focus on Antiochus? What does it indicate about God's priority in history?

Pray - giving thanks to God that although he is concerned with the whole sweep of human history, he has a special concern for his people, their place in that history, and their sufferings.

Day 5

Read 8:26-27

Think - What is the immediate effect of the vision on Daniel? Given that Daniel will not personally have to live through the main events in this vision, what might account for this reaction? Where does his concern lie? The vision has been explained to him – what could he be finding so hard to understand?

Pray - that you will identify deeply with God's people, those present and those to come, Christ's universal church, in their sufferings – and in their joys (Rom.12:15)

For Group Discussion

Consider the relationship in this vision between heaven and earth. What does the “How long ………” of the holy ones in v13-14 who are observing the vision express (see Ps. 74:10, 79:5-7, 89.46, 94:3; Rev. 6:10). What do these holy ones share with the psalmist?

“What does the imagery of Antiochus engaging in battle with the heavenly forces (v10 & 11) and God himself (v25) suggest about the connection between the temple worship and God’s people, and God in heaven? Is an attack on the physical realities *just* that? What does it indicate about the significance of the people, the truth (probably the Torah) and worship of God? When you think of gathering with God’s people, how much do you think of it as a heavenly reality (Heb. 12:18-24; Eph. 2:6)? When people and worship of the church are under attack, is it as an attack on God? (See also Matt. 25:37-46)

Daniel receives both an interpretation and an instruction. Who is the vision ultimately intended to benefit? *How* will they benefit from it - is it more than a mere forecast of a particular incident in the future? How does the means by which Antiochus is destroyed (end of v25) recall the dream of chapter 2 (the rock)? Does that mean that this particular incident in history has a broader application than for those it was primarily intended for? What will be God’s pattern when the very people of God and their worship are under attack?

Daniel is told to *seal* up the vision ‘because it concerns the distant future’ – what purpose is served by sealing the vision?

Although the vision assures the ‘time of the end’ (in context, the end of Antiochus’ era), the end of this particular ‘time of wrath’, and there is a reconsecration of the sanctuary, is there any suggestion that the trials of God’s people are over, once and for all? Are you ever troubled by what you know the future may bring to God’s people?

How does Jesus, in his grace, forewarn and forearm his people (John 16:1-15)? How do you make use of this forewarning?

Week 9 – Daniel 9:1-27

Read Daniel 9

Day 1

Read 9:1-19

Think - What circumstance takes Daniel to the Scriptures (see Jeremiah 25:8-14; 29:10)? What prompts his prayer? How does what he reads in the Scripture determine what he prays? Consider the relationship between Scripture and prayer; why is prayer the appropriate response to Scripture? Is Scripture *always* the basis for our prayers? Why/why not? How does it both expand and limit the scope of our prayers? How does it affect our approach to God, and our stance before him?

Pray - in a way that reflects your meditations on God's word today.

Day 2

Read 9:4-19

Think - How does Daniel's prayer, and the different ways he addresses God, reveal what he knows of the *sovereign* God, what he knows of God *personally*, and what he knows of him as the *covenant* God of Israel ('my God', 'our God', LORD (Yahweh – the distinctively Jewish name for God), God, Lord)? Why do you think, in his own prayer, he might pray to 'our God'? We know Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father" – do you think of this as a way to pray in private? Why/why not?

Pray - Praise God for who he is, for his character and deeds as revealed to us in this prayer of Daniel's.

Day 3

Read 9:4-19

Think - How can Daniel both acknowledge the rightness of God's judgment, and make his pleas for restoration? How is knowing one's guilt before God a prerequisite to knowing and appealing to his mercy? What reasons does he have for why God might do as he asks (eg, v4, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18)? In what way might it be for God's sake that God

grants Daniel's request? Do you think of your petitions as being for God's sake?

Pray - that you will come to a deeper understanding of both the righteousness and mercy of God, for his sake.

Day 4

Read 9:20-23

Think - Consider both the immediate appearance of Gabriel, and what he says to Daniel. What do both contribute to our understanding of prayer and how God responds?

What is the significance for Daniel of Gabriel's assurance that he is highly esteemed/treasured? What hope might this give him in this situation? When you come before God in prayer, do you think of yourself in this way, or is this only a word for Daniel?

Pray - that you will be obedient to God's call to prayer for yourself and others, and that your trust will grow in God's delight to both hear and respond to your prayers.

Day 5

Read 9:24-27

Think - Does Daniel receive the answer that he is seeking in his prayer? How does v24 directly address the issues he raises? What 6 purposes does it outline, and how do they 'balance' each other? What does the repetition of terms tell you about how God plans to deal with sin? Even without a precise understanding of the verse, what encouragement would they have offered to Daniel?

Pray - Praise God that even then he had set in motion his plan to deal with the sins of his people, and that he will bring it to completion.

For Group Discussion

Daniel has read the promise in Jeremiah – why does he still feel the need to pray that what God has said will be, will be? Does fulfilment of the promise depend on the people’s repentance or on Daniel’s prayers? What is the relationship between God’s promises and our prayers? Can you think of particular promises that shape the way you pray? Is God’s sovereignty ever a deterrent to prayer?

Daniel has prospered in Babylon, but what does his comment about the time of the evening sacrifice indicate about him (it is 70 years since Daniel was in Jerusalem, and 50 since the temple was destroyed)? How do we maintain this sort of perspective when our citizenship is in heaven? Consider the pattern of Daniel’s prayer for God’s people, noting each item that it covers. Is it a good model for us? How important do you think is the confession of guilt/sin? Why? Is prayer for God’s whole church something you do privately, or only when gathered with God’s people? Do you pray for God’s church in the world with pleading and sacrifice and humility?

The vision

The 70 years of the exile in Babylon are nearly over (v2), but what does the seventy ‘sevens’ suggest for God’s people? Does the end of the exile complete the restoration of Israel?

Consider the first purposes expressed in v24. From a New Testament perspective, would you say that they have all been fulfilled now, that none of them have been fulfilled, or a mixture of both? What did Jesus’ death achieve fully and immediately, and what are we still awaiting? When he uttered the words, “It is finished”, what was he referring to? If some of these purposes are complete, and some yet incomplete, how is the warning to the Jews about the return from exile also a word to us? With Jesus’ death on the cross, do you see the Christian life as a victory won already, as a battle to be fought, or both?

V25-27 pose many interpretative issues, and how they are interpreted as a whole is largely dependent on how the details are interpreted (eg, When does the time begin? What is the word that goes out? What do the numbers represent? Who is the anointed one in v25, and is he the same person in v26?). Nb – ‘anointed one’ in the Old Testament can refer to, for example, the pagan King Cyrus (Is 45:1) – it does not need to be a messianic figure). Because there are many different possible

interpretations, it is best at this stage to be as general as possible while still trying to get the main points.

What does v25 promise will happen in the seven ‘sevens’ and the 62 ‘sevens’. How is there both a note of encouragement and of forewarning? What do ‘times of trouble’ suggest (as opposed to what comes in v26)? What then is the task for God’s people over that extended period? How do events escalate in v26? List what happens. With a New Testament perspective on this, how would you broadly interpret these events in Jerusalem – who is the one who shall have nothing? How is this an apt description of the Son of God?

How does the end of v26 possibly move beyond Jerusalem? What is the connection between the stopping of sacrifice and the setting up of an abomination? If these verses relate to the end days, how do you think we are to understand this? How do the final words denote how the ruler’s end will come (compare the judgment of God on his people in v11)? The passage seems to suggest an enormous power and influence of ‘the ruler’ in the last ‘seven’, but a definitive defeat at the end. How do you live as a Christian with these twin truths?

Reflecting back on v24-27, and without trying to lock down the specifics of the seventy ‘sevens’, how does the way they are divided up help you to understand the span of salvation history from the time of the exile? What does it say to us in the last ‘seven’? What do you think is the main message of the vision for Daniel, his people then, and for us now?

Week 10 – Daniel 10:1-12:13

Day 1

Read Daniel 10:1-11:1

Think - Daniel 10 introduces the last 3 chapters of Daniel.

What is Daniel doing (v2 & 12)? Why is Daniel so ‘undone’ by God’s own messenger (8-11; 15-19) – and why might we hear this in such detail? What does it say about the cost of being the conduit of God’s word through the Scriptures to the generations that follow? (see also Ezekiel’s reaction in Ezek.3:14-15). When you read the scriptures, do you treasure them? Why, primarily?

Pray - that every time you open God’s word you will treasure it as just that.

Read Daniel 11

What themes or expressions do you come across that are now familiar to you having read chapters 8-10? What new ideas catch your attention here? What is the overall impression that you gain of the chapter? What/who stands out? What is the fate of Israel in all this?

Day 2

Read 11:1-35

Think -Why does the writer record the history of all these world empires in this way (again, Alexander the Great is probably the king in v3-4, but is not even named)? What is the overwhelming impression we are meant to have of human kingdoms? Again the focus is on Antiochus Epiphanes IV (v21ff). How will God’s people respond to him? How would knowing the book of Daniel help them in their effort to resist him? Apart from this chapter, what might they draw on in Daniel? What recurring phrase shows that even this kind of evil does not ultimately do as it pleases?

Pray – with thanks for Jesus’ words, that he has conquered the world (John 16:33); that the kingdom you will invest in, though it may appear insignificant, will be the Kingdom of God (Matt:6:33; 13:31-33).

Day 3

Read 11:36-45

Pray – that whether you will be one who experiences, or is spared, the distress of the end times, you will go your way, that God’s way will be your way till the end, and you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.

For Group Discussion

What do you learn in chapter 10 of the invisible war that goes on behind the scenes of world governments? What do you think is the primary goal of these evil powers? Should the descriptions we are given here unnerve us? What is the appropriate response to the knowledge of their activity? Are there responses that should be avoided? Read Eph.1:20-13; Matt.16:18; 26:53; Rev.12:7-9.

What does ‘the book’ refer to, and what assurance does it refer to (Ex 32:32-34; Ps.69:28; Luke 10:20; Phil.4:3; Rev.3:5; 20:12)? Why do you think the Bible uses the imagery of a book (surely God can remember) – what does it suggest? Can we know who is in the book and who is not? In principle? In reality? What does the book contain? Is it different to the books in Daniel 7?

Note how the distressed ones will be delivered. The bodily resurrection Daniel refers to (rare in the Old Testament) – is it *in itself* the promised deliverance? What is the purpose of the resurrection? Who rises, and who judges their ultimate destination (John 5:25-29)? What, then does the ultimate deliverance consist of?

Who do you think the ‘wise’ are in 12:3 (see also 11:32-35)? What is their role, and why would they be given special mention by this title? Does the focus on wisdom in the first few chapters of Daniel (who had it and where it came from) throw any light on this question? What does being wise mean in this? Do you consider yourself one of the wise? How is being wise the opposite of being wicked?

What is the reality of the future of the church in v7? How do you respond to this sort of statement? Are you perplexed, like Daniel? Angry that God would (and does) allow his people to suffer so? Anxious? Curious about what it means for their power to be finally broken? Why is suffering, inevitably, one of the marks of the church? As members of the world-wide church, but living in our part of the world, what do 1 Cor.12:26 and Heb.10:32-35 mean to you in practice?

What would you say are the key purposes and themes of Daniel that 'hold' the book together as one? How do both parts contribute to your understanding of God's reign, of his kingdom now and still to come? Daniel paints a picture of a broken world awaiting restoration, and looks forward to both the coming of the only one who can cure that brokenness, and his final defeat of the evil one. Read Rev.19:11-16