Seeing Things God’s Way

DANIEL

BY BRYSON SMITH

PATHWAY BIBLE GUIDES

matthiasmedia
Sometimes things are not what they seem. Sometimes things that seem important turn out to be unimportant. Sometimes things that seem permanent turn out to be temporary. Sometimes things that seem valuable turn out to be worthless.

That’s why Daniel is such an important book. It powerfully reminds us to always see things God’s way. At the heart of the story is a young man named Daniel, far from home, forced to study the learning and wisdom of the empire that had gutted his own, destroying the temple of his God and killing many of his countrymen.

Behind this story lies a greater reality. The powerful kingdom of the Babylonians will not last, and even the powerful kingdom that replaces it will be torn down to be replaced by more temporary dynasties. One king, however, rules over all. The Lord of Israel uses the story of Daniel to point towards an eternal kingdom that reveals the power of his Son Jesus.

Any Christian who picks up the book of Daniel will find much to sympathize with. Political power and social pressure will push us around, and challenge our faith, in ways that we don’t expect. Where are we going to find encouragement? In Daniel’s God—the same God that rules over the kings of the ancient world is the God who rules today through the king he’s appointed—Jesus Christ.

To get the most out of this Pathway Guide to Daniel, please read the whole of Daniel at least once before you get started on the studies, and ask God to give you his wisdom to live the message that’s in the book.

_Bryson Smith_
March 2007
1. **COURAGE**

Daniel 1

**Getting started**

If the Christian life is hard, what comfort does Jesus give us? Consider Jesus’ words: “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

**Light from the Word**


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

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

Read Daniel 1:3-7.

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

4. How do you think Daniel may have felt about all the changes being forced upon him?
5. How is Daniel’s experience like ours?

Read Daniel 1:8-20.

6. Why do you think Daniel refuses to eat the king’s food?

7. Compare what the royal official expects to happen to Daniel (v. 10) with what actually happens (v. 15). What do you think is the lesson of this incident?

8. This chapter describes a time of trouble and trials for God’s people. What evidence do you find in the chapter that God is still in control?

To finish

What are some areas of life in which you are tempted to compromise on your obedience to Jesus? In what way is this chapter a good encouragement to us?

Give thanks and pray

Give thanks to God for his promise that nothing can separate us from his love (Rom 8:37–39). Pray that we won’t compromise in the areas mentioned in the previous question.
2. WISDOM

Daniel 2

Getting started

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

Light from the Word


1. What effect does Nebuchadnezzar’s dream have on him?

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

Read Daniel 2:14-30.

3. What effect does Nebuchadnezzar’s dream have on Daniel?

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

Read Daniel 2:31-45.

5. Describe Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s interpretation in your own words.
6. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that the Babylonian Empire is represented by the gold head in the dream. Why do you think he doesn’t identify the other kingdoms represented in the dream (vv. 39-43)?

7. What do you think is the most important kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream? Why?

Read Daniel 2:46-49.

8. What does Nebuchadnezzar come to realize about God?

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

To finish

If we really believe what Daniel says about God in verses 20-23, how will it show in the way we live?

Give thanks and pray

Re-read Daniel 2:20-23 and use it as a basis for thanks and prayer.
## 3. SALVATION

### Daniel 3 & 6

#### Getting started

In what situations do you feel like the ‘odd one out’ for being a Christian?

#### Light from the Word

In this study we will be reading two chapters in which quite similar things happen. Read Daniel 3 and 6 and fill in the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is the king at the time of this chapter?</th>
<th>Daniel 3</th>
<th>Daniel 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does the king command?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which followers of God are focused on in these chapters?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do these followers of God respond to the king’s command?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What punishment do the followers of God face?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are the followers of God rescued?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does each rescue highlight that it is God who is saving his people?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does the king eventually decide about the God of Israel?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. “Regardless of the particular empire, the particular king or even the particular type of ruler in power, God’s people will inevitably face opposition.” How do Daniel 3 and 6 illustrate this statement?

2. In chapter 3, the king’s command is for people to do something, whereas in chapter 6, the king’s command is for people to not do something. What are some of the varied ways in which our present world opposes God’s people?

Read Hebrews 11:32-12:3.

3. Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Daniel all showed great faith—a faith that is perfected in Christ. How should this be an encouragement to us?

To finish

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

Give thanks and pray

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

Daniel 4-5

Getting started

“Pride goes before a fall.” Do you agree? Can you think of any examples from your own experience, or from observation, when this has happened?

Light from the Word

In this study we will again read two chapters that are very closely linked.

Read Daniel 4.

1. What is it that prompts Nebuchadnezzar’s pride (vv. 29-30)?

2. Why is Nebuchadnezzar’s pride especially disappointing given:
   a. the dream he had in 4:1-27?
   b. what he had already learnt in chapters 2 and 3?

3. How is Nebuchadnezzar humbled by God?

4. What does Nebuchadnezzar come to realize about God (4:1-3, 34-37)?
Read Daniel 5.

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

6. How is King Belshazzar humbled by God?

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

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

9. How are these chapters a challenge to God's people?

10. 1 Peter 2:22-23 describes Christ suffering for us and leaving us an example to follow. In what ways does Jesus exemplify the lesson of these two chapters in Daniel?

To finish

Are there any areas of life in which you are especially prone to pride? What are ways in which we can encourage humility in each other?

Give thanks and pray

Think about the examples of pride in these chapters. Thank God that he has delivered us from sin in Jesus, and pray that he would continue to deliver us and make us humble.
5. DOMINION

Daniel 7

Getting started

What were the most important things you did last week?

Light from the Word

Read Daniel 7:1.

1. How is this chapter different from any of the previous chapters?

Read Daniel 7:2-14.

2. Daniel’s dream has three scenes. Describe the main thing that happens in each scene.
   - Scene 1 (vv. 2-8)
   - Scene 2 (vv. 9-12)
   - Scene 3 (vv. 13-14)

Note: The phrase “son of man” refers to a human being (i.e. someone who is a member of mankind). For this reason Daniel himself is referred to as a “son of man” in 8:17.


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

4. Who does the “one like a son of man” represent (vv. 18, 26-7)?

5. How is the lesson of Daniel’s vision a comfort for God’s people?

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

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

8. In what ways does this world tempt us to underestimate the importance of Jesus?

To finish
Considering what we have discovered in Daniel 7, what would God say were the most important things we did last week? How does this compare to your answer to the ‘Getting started’ question?

Give thanks and pray
Jesus’ dominion is “an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed”. Ask God to help you live in light of this.
Getting started

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

Light from the Word

Read Daniel 8:1-14.

1. How is the ram described in Daniel’s dream?

2. How is the goat described in Daniel’s dream?

3. What feelings and emotions does Daniel’s dream evoke in you?

Read Daniel 8:15-27.

4. Who is the ram identified as?

5. Who is the goat identified as?
**Historical note:** Daniel’s vision provides a good overview of the history of the Greek Empire. Under the leadership of Alexander the Great (v. 21), the Greek Empire grew in size and power. After Alexander’s early death, however, the empire was divided amongst four of his generals (v. 22).

6. Considerable attention is especially given to one of the goat’s horns (vv. 9-12, 23-25). Why do you think this particular horn is given so much attention?

**Historical note:** It is generally considered that the “king of bold face” (v. 23) is a reference to Antiochus Epiphanes. Epiphanes was a particularly vicious persecutor of God’s people and, amongst other things, banned Sabbath-keeping and circumcision amongst the Israelites, violently punished those who disobeyed him, and set up sacrifices to his god in the Jerusalem temple.

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

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

9. “In Daniel’s vision we see that God is still in control even when things seem to be going wrong.” How is this lesson also seen in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

**To finish**

What things help you to persevere when you’re being criticized for being a follower of Jesus?

**Give thanks and pray**

As in study 3, pray again for Christians in the world who are struggling against fierce persecution. Thank God that he will return to judge those who persecute Christians.
7. FORGIVENESS

Daniel 9

Getting started

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

Light from the Word


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

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

These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon...

“For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.” (Jer 29:1, 10-14)

a. What does God promise to do?
b. When does God promise to do it?

3. The first year of Darius (v. 1) places this chapter about 65-70 years after the start of the Exile—when the Persian Empire had conquered the Babylonians. Given your answers to the previous two questions, how might Daniel be feeling at this time? What does Daniel do in response (v. 3)?

Read Daniel 9:4-19.

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

5. What does Daniel ask God to do?

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

7. Is Daniel’s prayer an appropriate one for us all to pray? Why and in what way (or why not)?
Read Daniel 9:20-23.

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

Read Daniel 9:24-27.

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

9. How does God’s plan to “bring in everlasting righteousness” find its fulfilment? (Look up Rom 3:21-26, 4:22-25; 2 Cor 1:20.)

10. In Daniel 9 we see God’s eagerness to forgive. How is this even more obvious at the cross of Christ (1 John 4:9-10)?

To finish

At what times do you doubt God’s goodness and generosity to you? How does this chapter help at those times?

Give thanks and pray

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

Daniel 10-12

Getting started

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

Light from the Word


In this study we will cover a very complex vision that Daniel received. The vision will go right through until the end of the book. These are difficult chapters. A helpful summary of these chapters is provided in the Matthias Media Interactive Bible Study on Daniel, *Kingdom of Dreams*. This summary has been reproduced at the end of the study. For the purposes of this study, we’ll be content just getting some of the main ideas and not worrying too much about the detail.

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

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

Skim read Daniel 11:2-45 (it’s very complex, so don’t get too worried about all the details).

3. What human kingdoms does this chapter involve (11:2)?
4. The chapter is full of quite precise predictions of the political intrigue and struggle for power within the Greek Empire following Alexander the Great. This certainly happened in history, although it’s hard to know exactly what is being referred to in some of the verses. What feelings and emotions does this chapter produce in you?

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

Read Daniel 12.

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

7. What is going to happen to those who are not God’s people?

8. Look back over your previous two answers. In what ways should those truths influence:
   - how we spend our time?
   - how we spend our money?
   - how we treat other Christians?
   - how we treat people who don’t yet know Jesus?
To finish

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

Give thanks and pray

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

| Dan 10:1-14 | It is the third year of Cyrus, King of Persia, and Daniel is deep in prayer. In response to his prayers, God sends a messenger to instruct him and to outline for him future history. |
| Dan 11:2-4 | The Persian kings of Daniel’s time will be overthrown by a mighty Greek king, Alexander the Great (11:3). He will die early, leaving an empire to be divided among four generals. Two of the kingdoms which spring out of this division will become prominent—Egypt in the South and Syria in the North. |
| Dan 11:5-17 | These two kingdoms will war against each other, attempt alliances and act treacherously with each other. There will even be a time of peace between them. |
| Dan 11:18-28 | However, eventually a particular king in the North will be murdered and his natural successor will be prevented from coming to the throne by the quick action of a usurper, Antiochus Epiphanes IV. This contemptible person will depose the current Jewish High Priest and murder him, seizing rich lands and acquiring wealth. He will make two campaigns against Egypt and plot to destroy his nephew in the South. He will also resolve to destroy all those in Palestine who are loyal to the covenant God made with his people. To this end, he will stop at the Holy City, Jerusalem, on his way back from Egypt and enter the temple and plunder its sacred treasures. |
| Dan 11:29-30 | His second campaign against Egypt in the South will bring him face to face with the Romans, who will stop him from waging war against Egypt. Fresh from this rebuff, he will decide to strengthen his rule at home through making his citizens fully Greek. This programme will start with dissident Jews who have given up the covenant made by God with Moses. |
| Dan 11:31-32 | He will then act to stop the daily sacrifice in the temple, knowing that only faithful Jews will resist. They act as expected, resisting even under brutal persecution, pillaging, death and imprisonment. Nevertheless, persecution continues. |
| Dan 11:33-35 | The faithful Jews are not rescued by divine intervention as Daniel and his friends had been, although they do receive a little help (perhaps through the encouragement of the first Judean guerillas and activists). |
| Dan 11:36-39 | It is at this point that the picture painted by the angel becomes quite fuzzy and unclear to us. Like all those who step out from under the king of heaven’s rule, this king will claim to be God, doing as he pleases. He will succeed, but only until God chooses to put an end to it. |
| Dan 11:40-12:3 | Yet again the details become hard for us to understand. The messenger’s telescopic lens focuses even more on the distant future, stating that there will be opposition and the falling of many nations. There will be an affront against the people of God and the land of God’s people, a subsequent retreat, and the death of this one who sets himself against the King of heaven and against the people of the king of heaven.  

   In this last great battle there will be many deaths. The godly and ungodly will alike die. Together they will sleep in the dust of the earth and together they will awake from sleep to judgement.

   The wise, who have feared God and turned many to right relationship with the God of heaven, will awake to everlasting life. They will shine like the stars for ever and ever.

   On the other hand, the godless, who have rejected the King of heaven, will wake to everlasting contempt and disgrace. |
Matthias Media is an evangelical publishing ministry that seeks to persuade all Christians of the truth of God’s purposes in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible, and equip them with high-quality resources, so that by the work of the Holy Spirit they will:

- abandon their lives to the honour and service of Christ in daily holiness and decision-making
- pray constantly in Christ’s name for the fruitfulness and growth of his gospel
- speak the Bible’s life-changing word whenever and however they can—in the home, in the world and in the fellowship of his people.

It was in 1988 that we first started pursuing this mission, and in God’s kindness we now have more than 300 different ministry resources being used all over the world. These resources range from Bible studies and books through to training courses and audio sermons.

To find out more about our large range of very useful resources, and to access samples and free downloads, visit our website:

www.matthiasmedia.com

**How to buy our resources**

1. Direct from us over the internet:
   - in the US: www.matthiasmedia.com
   - in Australia and the rest of the world: www.matthiasmedia.com.au

2. Direct from us by phone:
   - in the US: 1 866 407 4530
   - in Australia: 1300 051 220
   - international: +61 2 9233 4627

3. Through a range of outlets in various parts of the world.
   Visit [www.matthiasmedia.com/contact](http://www.matthiasmedia.com/contact) for details about recommended retailers in your part of the world, including www.thegoodbook.co.uk in the United Kingdom.

4. Trade enquiries can be addressed to:
   - in the US and Canada: sales@matthiasmedia.com
   - in Australia and the rest of the world: sales@matthiasmedia.com.au

Register at our website for our free regular email update to receive information about the latest new resources, exclusive special offers, and free articles to help you grow in your Christian life and ministry.