

# Living like a Stranger, Readings in Daniel

*Scripture taken from The Holy Bible: New International Version (Anglicised Edition, 2011)*

Day	Bible Readings	Verse reference	Questions
1	In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure-house of his god.... Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way. Now God had caused the official to show favour and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, 'I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men of your age? The king would then have my head because of you.'	Daniel 1:1, 6-10	The Daniel episodes record the life of Daniel and his friends living in exile in Babylon. The Daniel narratives happen in a very particular moment in Old Testament history. What do we learn here about the context? How were God's people drawn into the new Babylonian culture? How did Daniel respond to the new culture? What is God doing for his people in exile? In what sense do we live in exile? How does this episode encourage us now?
2	To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.	Daniel 1:17-21	Episode 1 ends with Daniel and his faithful friends commended by God and Babylon. What gift did God give to Daniel? What do we learn about living in different cultures? What do we learn about God?

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3	<p>In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, he said to them, 'I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means.' Then the astrologers answered the king, 'May the king live for ever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it.' The king replied to the astrologers, 'This is what I have firmly decided: if you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honour. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me.' Once more they replied, 'Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it.'</p>	Daniel 2:1-7	<p>The second episode begins with King Nebuchadnezzar having a dream. What was the King's response to the dreams? Who did he look to for wisdom? Why did the wise men fail? How would you have responded to the King's request?</p>
4	<p>When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. He asked the king's officer, 'Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?' Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him. Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.</p>	Daniel 2:14-18	<p>What was the King's response to the failure of his court to interpret the dream? Why was Daniel sought after? From Daniel 1:17, what was Daniel's response to the crisis in the court? What do we learn about responding to crisis here? What can you cry out to God for mercy for?</p>

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5	<p>During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said:</p> <p>‘Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors: you have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king.’</p>	Daniel 2:19–23	How did Daniel come to understand the dream? What do we learn about God from Daniel’s song of praise? This psalm of Daniel helps us to understand how God is working in the days of exile? What does this teach you about God and the days in which we live? How can you praise God like Daniel does?
6	<p>The king asked Daniel (also called Beltshazzar), ‘Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?’ Daniel replied, ‘No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these: ‘As Your Majesty was lying there, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than anyone else alive, but so that Your Majesty may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.</p>	Daniel 2:26–30	What do we learn about Daniel’s words to the King? What do we learn about God from them? How can Daniel interpret dreams? How does Daniel get his wisdom? Who is the source of wisdom and understanding? What can we thank God for?

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7	<p>‘This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. ‘After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. ‘In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.</p> <p>‘The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.’</p>	Daniel 2:36–45	<p>How does Daniel interpret the dream? What do we learn about human Kingdoms? What do we learn about God’s Kingdom? How would this have been an encouragement to Daniel and his friends? What did Nebuchadnezzar need to learn from the dream? What do you learn from this?</p>
8	<p>Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honour and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, ‘Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.’ Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. Moreover, at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego chief ministers over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.</p>	Daniel 2:46–49	<p>How does King Nebuchadnezzar respond to what he learns? What does he learn about Daniel’s God? How do you respond to this?</p>

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9	King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it. Then the herald loudly proclaimed, 'Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: as soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.'	Daniel 3:1-6	Episode 3 describes Nebuchadnezzar building a statue in his honour. Why did he set up the statue? How were the nations invited to respond? What are the consequences of disobeying the King? How would this compromise Daniel and his friends? How would you have responded to the request?
10	"But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.' Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?' Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'	Daniel 3:12-18	The enemies of Daniel's friends use this as an opportunity to have them removed. What is the charge against them? What do you learn about God from their reply? What do we learn about their expectation of how God works? How would you have responded?

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11	<p>Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude towards them changed. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisors, 'Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?' They replied, 'Certainly, Your Majesty.' He said, 'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.'</p>	Daniel 3:19-25	<p>How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to Daniel's friends? How do we know the fire was hot? What happened in the furnace? Who do you think the fourth figure was? How do you respond to this miracle? What do you learn about how God works?</p>
12	<p>Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!' So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisors crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.' Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.</p>	Daniel 3:26-30	<p>How does this incident change Nebuchadnezzar's mind? What does he learn about Daniel's friend's God? What does he learn about Daniel's friends? How does he respond? What do we learn about the God of the Bible?</p>



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13	<p>I said, ‘Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me. These are the visions I saw while lying in bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed. ‘In the visions I saw while lying in bed, I looked, and there before me was a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven. He called in a loud voice: “Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. “Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him. ‘ “The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.” ‘This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you.’</p>	Daniel 4:9–18	<p>Episode 4 introduces another more personal dream for Nebuchadnezzar. The chapter is written in his first person? Why does he call Daniel to interpret the dream? What do you make of the dream? From Chapter 1 &amp; 2, where does Daniel get his capacity to interpret dreams? How would you have felt having this dream?</p>
14	<p>Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you.’ Belteshazzar answered, ‘My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries! The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds—Your Majesty, you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth. ‘Your Majesty saw a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven and saying, “Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live with the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.”</p>	Daniel 4:19–23	<p>What is Daniel’s initial response to hearing the dream? Why does the meaning of the dream alarm Daniel? What does the tree in the dream represent? How does this dream apply to King Nebuchadnezzar? What was God teaching the King? What do you learn from this moment?</p>

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15	<p>'This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: you will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.'</p>	Daniel 4:24-27	<p>How does Daniel interpret the dream? Why does God respond to the King like this? What does Daniel call the King to do? What do we learn about how God deals with human kings? What do we learn about God's rule?</p>
16	<p>All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, 'Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?' Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, 'This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.' Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.</p>	Daniel 4:28-33	<p>How is the dream fulfilled in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar? What lesson does the King need to learn? Why does God humiliate him in this way? What do we learn about the holiness of God? How is this an encouragement?</p>
17	<p>At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes towards heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honoured and glorified him who lives for ever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?' At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honour and splendour were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisors and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.</p>	Daniel 4:34-37	<p>When King Nebuchadnezzar is restored, what does he learn? How does he respond to Daniel's God? What is the Kings' attitude towards Daniel's God at the end of the episode? What do you learn about God here?</p>



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18	<p>King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone. Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.</p>	Daniel 5:1-6	<p>Episode 5 describes the last days of King Belshazzar. How does King Belshazzar disrespect Daniel's God? What has the new King failed to learn from the lessons of Nebuchadnezzar? How does God intervene? How do you respond to this? How does the King respond to this extraordinary moment? What do we learn from this passage?</p>
19	<p>The king summoned the enchanters, astrologers and diviners. Then he said to these wise men of Babylon, 'Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed round his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.' Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled. The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. 'May the king live for ever!' she said. 'Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.'</p>	Daniel 5:7-12	<p>How did the wise men cope with the situation? Why is Daniel (aka Belteshazzar) summoned? What does the Queen remember about Daniel? What do we learn about how God works in history here?</p>

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20	<p>Then Daniel answered the king, ‘You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means. ‘Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendour. Because of the high position he gave him, all the nations and peoples of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.</p>	Daniel 5:17-21	<p>What does Daniel remind the king about the lessons Nebuchadnezzar learnt in previous chapters? What do you learn about the God of the Bible? How should we respond to the God of the Bible?</p>
21	<p>‘But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honour the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.</p>	Daniel 5:22-23	<p>What does Daniel charge Belshazzar of? How is idolatry expressed here? What is wrong with the King’s actions? What did Belshazzar fail to understand?</p>
22	<p>Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription. ‘This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN</p> <p>‘Here is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.’ Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed round his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.</p>	Daniel 5:24-31	<p>What was the content of the writing on the wall? How does Daniel interpret it? What was the message for the King? Why was Daniel promoted? How was the message fulfilled? What do we learn about how God works through human kingdoms? How should we respond to God?</p>

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23	It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three chief ministers over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the chief ministers and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the chief ministers and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.'	Daniel 6:1-5	Episode 6 describes an incident in the time of the Persian kings. What authority does Daniel have in the land? How do Daniel's enemies view this? How do they seek to destroy him? How are there parallels with the arrest of Jesus?
24	So these chief ministers and satraps went as a group to the king and said: 'May King Darius live for ever! The royal ministers, prefects, satraps, advisors and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.' So King Darius put the decree in writing.	Daniel 6:6-9	What law did the wise men seek to set up? How do the enemies of Daniel use the law against him? What is the Kings' role in this? How do you respond in the face of persecution?
25	Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: 'Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions' den?' The king answered, 'The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.' Then they said to the king, 'Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.' When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sunset to save him.	Daniel 6:10-14	What is Daniel's response to the new law? What spiritual habit is described here? Why is Daniel not ashamed to pray? How do his enemies use this against him? How does the King respond to Daniel's conviction? When does being Christian draw persecution for you?

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26	<p>Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, 'Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.' So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, 'May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!' A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.</p>	Daniel 6:15-18	<p>What Is the sentence for failing to pray to the king? How is the law used against Daniel? What do we see about the authority of royal decrees? How does the King respond to Daniel's sentence? What does the king hope for Daniel's God? Why is the King restless that night? What do we learn about how God works?</p>
27	<p>At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?' Daniel answered, 'May the king live for ever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.' The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.</p>	Daniel 6:19-24	<p>How does King Darius show his concern? How does Daniel respond? How do you feel about this surprising turn of events? How does the King respond to Daniel's rescue? What does the death of his enemies confirm? What do we learn about how God works?</p>

# Living like a Stranger, Readings in Daniel (continued)

Day	Bible Readings	Verse reference	Questions
28	<p>Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: ‘May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.</p> <p>‘For he is the living God and he endures for ever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.’</p> <p>So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.</p>	Daniel 6:25-28	<p>What do we learn from the declaration of the King? What does Darius learn about Daniel’s God? What does he praise God for? What do we learn about God here?</p>
29	<p>In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. Daniel said: ‘In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. ‘The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it. ‘And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, “Get up and eat your fill of flesh!” ‘After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. ‘After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. ‘While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.</p>	Daniel 7:1-8	<p>Daniel chapters 7-12 are a series of visions Daniel has while in exile. Episode 7 is in the reign of Belshazzar whom we met in chapter 5. The emergence of apocalyptic writing happens in these times. What is characteristic of this style of writing? How would you feel if you had this vision? What is the vision about? How do the great beasts represent different human kingdoms? What is your response to these visions?</p>

# Living like a Stranger, Readings in Daniel (continued)

Day	Bible Readings	Verse reference	Questions
30	<p>'As I looked, 'thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.</p> <p>A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.</p> <p>'Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.) 'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.</p>	Daniel 7:9-14	<p>The second part of the vision focuses in on the Ancient of Days, another name for God. How do the word pictures help us to grasp the majesty of God on his judgement seat? What is the fate of the great beasts? What do we learn about the authority of God? How does Jesus apply this vision to himself in Mark 13:26 or Luke 21:27?</p>
31	<p>'I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this... As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favour of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. 'He gave me this explanation: "The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.' "But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed for ever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." 'This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.'</p>	Daniel 7:15-28	<p>How did Daniel feel about this vision? How is the vision explained to him? What comfort is there in this vision for the faithful living in exile? What does this teach us about God's rule today? How is this a comfort? What have we learnt from Daniel and his friends about God?</p>