

## **READ The BIBLE Together**



**Daniel 1-6**  
**[1<sup>st</sup> July – 11<sup>th</sup> August 2012]**

**SHALOM CHURCH, SINGAPORE**  
**(Upholding the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith)**

**Introduction to DANIEL 1-6**

When you open the book of DANIEL, you will find yourselves in Babylon during the 6th century B.C. There, you will meet *Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah* – four young Jewish boys who were brought there as exiles. They would be around 13-14 years old then.

The first 6 chapters of DANIEL give us a glimpse into some of the things these four young boys experienced during their time of exile in Babylon. They were in a strange and faraway land, miles away from Jerusalem where the Temple of the LORD God of Israel was located. The Babylonians (people who worshipped idols and not the LORD) ruled them. Yet time and again they would see that the LORD reigns as King of kings even in a foreign and faraway land!

In DANIEL 1, we read that *“the LORD gave Jehioakim king of Judah into his hand”* (verse 2), that *“God had brought Daniel into the favour and goodwill of the chief eunuch”* (verse 9) and that *“God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom”* (verse 17). ***God was at work!*** The final result (as far as DANIEL 1 is concerned) was that these four Jewish boys were ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in Babylon! ***God was being glorified!!***

In DANIEL 2, we read of the unreasonable demands of Nebuchadnezzar and how *Daniel* and his 3 friends, together with all the wise men of Babylon, were nearly killed. But how did this episode end? Verse 47: *The king answered Daniel, and said, “Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.”* ***God was being glorified!!***

In DANIEL 3, we find *Daniel’s* 3 friends thrown into a fiery furnace of fire because of their refusal to bow down to worship the image Nebuchadnezzar set up. How did this whole matter conclude? Hear what Nebuchadnezzar said in verses 28-29, *“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”* ***God was being glorified!!***

In DANIEL 4, Nebuchadnezzar had another dream and he asked *Daniel* to interpret it for him. He later became mad and was restored after some time. After his restoration, he said these words in verses 34-35: *I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.*

*No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" Once more, **God was being glorified!!***

In DANIEL 5, we are introduced to the Babylonian king, Belshazzar. He was having a feast, enjoying himself and mocking the LORD God. The LORD, whom Belshazzar thought was humiliated and defeated, suddenly "gate-crashed" his party. The LORD told him that he was weighed in the balance and found wanting, and that God has numbered his kingdom and will finish it! Once again, **God was being glorified!!**

In DANIEL 6, we enter the age of the Medo-Persian Empire. *Daniel* was thrown into the lions' den. The Persian king Darius liked *Daniel* and tried to save him but couldn't. How did this event end? With Darius issuing a decree containing these words: *He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions* (verses 26-27). **God was being glorified!!**

Yes, *Daniel* was in a faraway land but God was there with him! Yes, the Babylonians and the Persians held sway, and at the word of their kings, heads could be cut off. But God reigned above these kings and His will shall be done! Although Judah was defeated by her enemies, God was still on His throne! God reigned even in pagan lands!!

Day 1 Read the Introduction to DANIEL 1-6 above.

1. What have you learnt from the Introduction?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Imagine yourself sent into exile to a foreign city hostile to the Christian Faith. You are all alone and far from familiar surroundings.

How would you cope in such a hostile setting?

What truths could you cling to?

Would you continue to worship God or would you assimilate into your new surroundings?

Day 2 Read DANIEL 1:1-7

1. Verses 1-2 refer to an event that took place in 605 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army attacked and invaded Judah. They successfully defeated Jehioakim and Judah. How did verse 2a describe the victory of Nebuchadnezzar / defeat of Jehioakim?
  
2. Besides carrying away some of the Temple's articles (verse 2), the Babylonians also took some young Jewish boys back to Babylon, among them *Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah*.
  - (a) What characteristics do these young men possess? (Verses 3-4)
  
  - (b) Verse 5 mentions a 3-year training programme that these young men had to undergo. What did the training entail? (Verse 4)
  
  - (c) What did their diet consist of during this period of training? (Verse 5)
  
  - (d) What was the purpose of putting the Jewish boys through this training programme? (Verses 4-5)

Day 3 Read DANIEL 1:1-7 again

1. The four Jewish boys were given new names. What were they?

Daniel =>

Hananiah =>

Mishael =>

Azariah =>

Note#1: The name '*Daniel*' means '*God has judged*', the name '*Hananiah*' means '*Jehovah has been gracious*', the name '*Mishael*' means '*Who is like God*'

and the name 'Azariah' means 'Jehovah has helped'.

Note#2: The name 'Belteshazzar' means 'keeper of the hidden treasures of Bel', the name 'Shadrach' means 'Aku is exalted', the name 'Meshach' means 'Who is like Aku' and the name 'Abed-nego' means 'the servant of Nebo'.

Bel, Aku and Nebo were names of Babylonian gods.

2. By carrying out this name-changing exercise, implementing 3 years of training in Babylonian language and culture, and allowing for the provision of the king's delicacies and wine, what do you think Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to achieve?
3. Imagine that you were one of the young Jewish boys in Babylon then. Would Nebuchadnezzar achieve his purpose in you?

Day 4 Read DANIEL 1:8-16

1. What did *Daniel* purposed in his heart? (Verse 8a)
2. How did he carry out his purpose?

Verse 8b:

Verse 11:

In what manner did *Daniel* talk with these men? (Verse 12-13)

3. What was the purpose of the 10-day diet test and what was its outcome?

Day 5 Read DANIEL 1:17-21

1. Verse 18 mentions 'at the end of the days'. This indicated the end of the 3-year training programme. The training programme ended with an oral examination

conducted by the king himself. How did *Daniel* and his 3 friends perform in this examination?

Verse 19:

Verse 20:

2. How can we explain the performance of *Daniel* and his 3 friends during this oral examination?
  
3. Verse 21 says that '*Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus*'. This would be the year 539/538 B.C.

How many years would *Daniel* have been in exile by this time?

How old would *Daniel* be at this time?

Why, do you think, did the author insert this piece of information here for us?

#### Day 6 Summary Notes for DANIEL 1:1-21

*"The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting"* says **Psalm 93:1-2**.

Is this true in the year 605 B.C. when the Babylonians defeated Judah, when Nebuchadnezzar carried the articles of the Temple back to the temple of his gods, when the young and able men of Judah were taken to Babylon as exiles?

Outwardly, the LORD God of Israel appeared to be defeated and humiliated. However, that was far from the truth. Verse 2 informs us that though militarily it was Nebuchadnezzar who defeated Jehoiakim, theologically it was God who gave Judah into the hands of the Babylonians! And God did this because of His faithfulness! He had said years ago (Deuteronomy 28:49-67) that if His people turned their backs on Him, and continued to do so despite pleadings and warnings, then one day they would go into exile!!

While in Babylon – a foreign land where idols were worshipped, God showed Himself to be present and reigning there! He enabled *Daniel* and his 3 friends to find favour in the eyes of the authorities, He blessed their effort to be faithful by causing them to be healthier than others who ate the king's provisions, and made them 10 times wiser than

the wise men of Babylon. We need to see that DANIEL 1 is about the LORD God of Israel and Him displaying His glory even in an idolatrous land!

*Daniel* and his 3 friends were subjected to the most intense and intentional re-programming by Nebuchadnezzar. He wanted them to learn the Babylonian culture and language so that they would forget their Jewish roots. He gave them Babylonian names so that they would forget their Jewish faith. He gave them Babylonian food, in fact the very food he himself ate, so that they would develop Babylonian taste. In short, he wanted them to think and talk like Babylonians, live and act like Babylonians, and even eat and drink like Babylonians! It appears that many of the Jewish boys brought to Babylon in 605 B.C. did align themselves to this aim of Nebuchadnezzar.

*Daniel* and his 3 friends knew that they were exiles in Babylon and that there were things they could not change. Hence they accepted their Babylonian names, though it appears that they did not forget their Jewish names. They learnt the culture and language of the Babylonians. But when it came to the issue of their diet, they knew they could do something and took a stand for the LORD. This was why *Daniel* resolved in his heart not to eat the king's provisions. We know from the rest of DANIEL 1 that God honoured his faith and made him healthier than his peers, and wiser than all.

This is a small but important start for *Daniel* and his 3 friends. If they did not take a stand for the LORD in this 'small' area of food, then it was unlikely that the 3 friends would stand so firmly for the LORD in the face of the fiery furnace, nor would *Daniel* have chosen to be thrown into the lions' dens than stop praying. "*A steadfast self-denying adherence to God and duty in less instances will qualify and prepare us for the like in greater.*" (Matthew Henry)

What have you learnt from the Summary Notes above?

Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

Day 7 Read DANIEL 2:1-13

1. (a) What did Nebuchadnezzar want the wise men to do? (Verses 5, 9)

(b) Why did Nebuchadnezzar make such a demand? (Verse 9)

(c) What would happen to the wise men if they failed to meet the king's demand?  
(Verse 5)

2. What was the answer of the wise men to the king's demand?
3. What was the reaction of the king to the answer of the wise men?

## Week 2

[8<sup>th</sup> Jul – 14<sup>th</sup> Jul 2012]

Day 1 Read DANIEL 2:14-23

1. (a) Facing the threat of death, what did *Daniel* do?

Verse 14-15:

Verse 16:

Verse 17-18:

(b) What a man does in an hour of crisis is a good gauge of his character and values. So what does the action of Daniel here tell us about his character?

2. Re-read verses 19-23. What truths about God can we learn from these 5 verses?
3. What lesson can we learn concerning prayer from verse 18-19?
4. Take time to read Matthew Henry's comment on this passage:

*“His humble petition for this mercy, that God would discover to him what was the king's dream, and the interpretation of it. When he had gained time he did not go to consult with the rest of the wise men whether there was anything in their art, in their books, that*



*might be of use in this matter, but went to his house, there to be alone with God, for from him alone, who is the Father of lights, he expected this great gift.*

*Observe, he did not only pray for this discovery himself, but he engaged his companions to pray for it too. He made the thing known to those who had been all along his bosom-friends and associates, requesting that they would desire mercy of God concerning this secret, v. 17, 18. Though Daniel was probably their senior, and every way excelled them, yet he engaged them as partners with him in this matter. Praying friends are valuable friends; it is good to have an intimacy with and an interest in those that have fellowship with God and an interest at the throne of grace; and it well becomes the greatest and best of men to desire the assistance of the prayers of others for them. St. Paul often entreats his friends to pray for him. Thus we must show that we put a value upon our friends, upon prayer, upon their prayers.*

*Whatever is the matter of our care must be the matter of our prayer; we must desire mercy of God concerning this thing and the other thing that occasions us trouble and fear. God gives us leave to be humbly free with him, and in prayer to enter into the detail of our wants and burdens. Secret things belong to the Lord our God, and therefore, if there be any mercy we stand in need of that concerns a secret, to him we must apply; and, though we cannot in faith pray for miracles, yet we may in faith pray to him who has all hearts in his hand, and who in his providence does wonders without miracles, for the discovery of that which is out of our view and the obtaining of that which is out of our reach, as far as is for his glory and our good, believing that to him nothing is hidden, nothing is hard.”*

What have you learnt from the comments of Matthew Henry? Write it down in the space below:

Day 2 Read DANIEL 2:24-30

The king asked Daniel, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?” (Verse 26) Daniel’s reply can be found in verses 27-30. Note what he said:

Verse 27:

Verse 28a:

Verse 29b:

Verse 30:

In your own words, and using no more than 30 words, summarize *Daniel's* reply to the king's question:

What can we learn from *Daniel's* reply to the king?

Day 3 Read DANIEL 2:31-45

1. The image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream had distinct parts: head of gold, silver chest and arms, bronze belly and thighs, legs of iron with feet partly iron and partly clay. What did each part represent?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. (a) What happened to the image when the stone appeared? (Verse 34)  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (b) What happened to the stone afterwards? (Verse 35)  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (c) What did the stone represent?  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (d) When would the stone appear?

Note: The stone represents Christ and His kingdom. *"This kingdom has several features. It is God's creation, His kingdom: 'And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom' (v44). It is an indestructible and infallible kingdom 'which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people' (v44). It is an all-victorious kingdom, eternal in its duration: 'it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever' (v44). Furthermore, it will be a universal kingdom: 'And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth' (v35). All this will occur despite the obscurity and apparent weakness of its origin; it is represented by a mere stone, 'cut out without hands' (v34)." (Sinclair Ferguson).*

## Day 4 Read DANIEL 2:46-49

1. Note the outcomes of this event:

Verse 46-47:

Verse 48:

Verse 49:

2. DANIEL 2 begun with the king angry and *Daniel* staring at death. It ended with the king humbled and *Daniel* promoted, with his 3 friends.

(a) What was the reason for this change?

(b) What can we learn about God from this account?

## Day 5 Read Summary Notes for DANIEL 2:1-49 (I)

### DANIEL 2:1-13

This event took place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. It was like any other night. The king went to bed and he had a dream. But it was no ordinary dream. God gave him the dream, telling him what was to come in the centuries ahead!

Nebuchadnezzar wanted the wise men of Babylon to tell him his dream and interpret it for him. It appears that he had either suspected all along that they were fakes, or he wanted to use this opportunity to put them to a test. The wise men protested, "*There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter ... there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.*"

Nebuchadnezzar reacted with great anger and decreed to kill all the wise men in his kingdom. This meant that *Daniel* and his 3 friends would also be killed! Could they escape? Could the LORD their God rescue them?

### DANIEL 2:14-23

Upon hearing this death threat, *Daniel* acted with counsel and wisdom:

- (1) He sought to clarify the matter (verse 14-15) so that he would not act upon hearsay.

- (2) He asked the king for some time so that he could attend to this matter (verse 16)
- (3) He gathered his 3 friends together and prayed to the LORD, pleading for mercy.

What a man does in the hour of crisis is a good gauge of his character and values! Having done what he could – (1) and (2), he turned to the LORD in prayer. He cast himself upon the mercy of God. He prayed. *Do you pray in your hour of crisis? To whom do you pray?*

Verse 19 tells us that God answered his prayer. *Daniel* was told of the king's dream and was able to interpret it! Remember what the wise men said in verses 10-11? How wrong they were! Indeed, their gods could not tell them because they are not real! The LORD God is the only God of this universe. Only He can reveal secrets, and He will, to whom He pleases!!

What was *Daniel* doing in verses 20-23? Having learnt the dream and its interpretation, we do not find him rushing off to tell the king in order to save his own life! Instead, we find him on his knees worshipping God! He took time to praise God and thank Him for His mercy!

*“His God-centered reaction to the impending catastrophe is matched by his God-centered response when the catastrophe is averted. It is not always so. The test of our spirituality does not lie only in the fervency of our prayers in times of crisis, but in the wholeheartedness of our worship when God acts in grace. Relief unaccompanied by worship is never an adequate response to the mercies of God.”* (Iain Duguid)

What have you learnt from the Summary Notes above?

Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

Day 6 Read Summary Notes for DANIEL 2:1-49 (II)

### DANIEL 2:24-30

*“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks,”* says Luke 6:45. Look at Arioch and hear what he said (verse 24-25). He claimed to have found a man who could make known to the king his dream and its interpretation, implying that he should get the credit. How false his words were! Have we met such people in our lives? Hopefully we are not like Arioch!!

Now turn and see *Daniel*, and hear his words (verse 27-30). He repeated what the king already knew -- *that no wise men could fulfill the king's demands*. He denied that he was

someone special. Instead, he gave all the glory to God – *There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets!*

### DANIEL 2:31-45

Nebuchadnezzar's dream concerned the future. The head of gold stood for Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire. The silver chest and arms stood for the Medo-Persian empire. The bronze belly and thighs stood for the Greek empire. The legs of iron with feet partly iron and partly clay stood for the Roman empire. In the days of the Roman empire, a stone will appear. This stone stands for Jesus Christ and His everlasting kingdom.

Let us hear Sinclair Ferguson once again as he explained the nature of this kingdom:

*“This kingdom has several features. It is God’s creation, His kingdom: ‘And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom’ (v44). It is an indestructible and infallible kingdom ‘which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people’ (v44). It is an all-victorious kingdom, eternal in its duration: ‘it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever’ (v44). Furthermore, it will be a universal kingdom: ‘And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth’ (v35). All this will occur despite the obscurity and apparent weakness of its origin; it is represented by a mere stone, ‘cut out without hands’ (v34).”*

### DANIEL 2:46-49

DANIEL 2 began with the king angry and *Daniel* staring at death. DANIEL 2 ended with the king humbled and *Daniel* promoted, with his 3 friends. Who turned the situation around? God! How is it that God will act to turn around this dire situation? In answer to the prayers of *Daniel* and his 3 friends! O what an inspiration for us to persevere in prayer!!

Once again, like in DANIEL 1, we see God being highly exalted and glorified. The most powerful man on earth then – Nebuchadnezzar admitted with his own mouth that God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings. The king wasn't yet a worshipper of the LORD, but at this point, he was beginning to see that the LORD is above many of his gods.

What have you learnt from the Summary Notes above?

Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

Day 7 Read the Introduction to DANIEL 3

Introduction to DANIEL 3

The third chapter of DANIEL continues with the conflict motif that we have already noted runs throughout the book. From one point of view, there is a certain monotony about the underlying structure and recurring theme in the succeeding chapters of this book. The scenario changes, but the plot remains the same. Yet even this feature of DANIEL teaches us a valuable lesson. Later, in *Daniel's* visions in chapter 7, we will read of the activity of a beast that will “persecute the saints of the Most High” (7:25). “Persecute” here is literally “to wear out”. Both Scripture and personal experiences teach us that the dogged persistence of the kingdom of darkness may wear down the resistance of God’s people. Isolated trials may be withstood, but only by wearing “the whole armour of God” (Eph. 6:10) can we stand in the face of continuing onslaughts. This is why the New Testament places such emphasis on watching, praying, and persevering in obedience to the Lord.

Here in chapter 3, the conflict is centered on the image erected by Nebuchadnezzar. It is a symbolic representation of Babylon and the kingdom of this world. In contrast to it, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego represent those in whom the image of God is being recreated (cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). In that sense they are God’s representatives. The issue therefore is this: will that which is made in the image of God by God Himself (cf. Gen 1:26-27), bow to the image made by man? This is resolved by the faith of the three friends. It was through faith that they “quenched the violence of fire” (Heb. 11:34).

We should not be so impressed by the persistence of the kingdom of darkness in its conflict with the city of God that we fail to notice a second underlying pattern. The three friends were promoted at the end of the crisis – they graduated with the highest honours in chapter 1; they were promoted following the crisis in chapter 2; and now they attained even higher ranks in chapter 3 (v30). God can also be monotonous in His commitment to honour His people. In fact, trials and tribulations are the pruning knife He uses to produce yet more lavish and significant fruit in our lives (John 15:2). This chapter aptly illustrates the maxim of John Calvin: “The church of Christ has been so constituted from the beginning that death has been the way of life and the cross the path to victory.”

Sinclair Ferguson

What have you learnt from the Introduction? Write it down in the space below and share it with someone:

### **Week 3**

**[15<sup>th</sup> Jul – 21<sup>st</sup> Jul 2012]**

Day 1 Read DANIEL 3:1-7

1. Imagine that you were present in the plain of Dura then.

(a) What would you see? (Verse 1) [A cubit is about 20 inches / 51 cm]

(b) Who else would be present? (Verses 2-3)

(c) What would you hear? (Verses 5, 7)

2. What did Nebuchadnezzar want the people to do? Did he get what he wanted?
3. Assuming you were present in the plain of Dura, what would you have done when you hear the sound of the musical instruments?

Day 2 Read DANIEL 3:8-18

1. Three young men disobeyed Nebuchadnezzar's command to bow in worship to the image he set up. Who were they?
2. How did Nebuchadnezzar know that they had disobeyed him?
3. Nebuchadnezzar gave these three young men a chance to put things right (v15). What were their replies?

Verse 17:

Verse 18:

4. Imagine that you were present in the plain of Dura then. Will you stand with these three young men and speak the same words to Nebuchadnezzar?

Day 3 Read DANIEL 3:19-25

1. Verse 19 informs us that Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury.

(a) Why was he so angry?

(b) How did he vent his anger?

2. What happened to the men who took the three young men to the furnace?
3. What happened to the three young men after they were thrown into the furnace? (Verses 24-25)

Day 4 Read DANIEL 3:26-30

1. Describe the conditions of the three young men after they came out of the furnace (Verse 27):

How is this possible?

2. Write down what Nebuchadnezzar said in the last line of verse 29:

Write down what he said earlier in the last line of verse 15:

Contrast the two statements of Nebuchadnezzar. What do you see?

3. At the end of this event, who was being humbled and who was being exalted?
4. What happened to the three young men finally? (Verse 30)
5. Write down one lesson you have learnt from DANIEL 3:



## Day 5 Summary Notes for DANIEL 3:1-30

After DANIEL 2, DANIEL 3 is somewhat of a surprise! At the end of DANIEL 2, we've heard Nebuchadnezzar praising the LORD God and giving glory to Him. Yet at the beginning of DANIEL 3, we find him making a golden image and demanding that everyone in his kingdom bow down to it. And when he realized that there were people who refused to do as he said, he was determined to punish them severely (never mind that they were servants of the God whom he had praised earlier).

This shows us that the experience of Nebuchadnezzar in DANIEL 2 was not a conversion experience. He was spiritually affected but not spiritually changed. In fact, we could even consider DANIEL 3 as a demonstration of his resistance to what he had heard and experienced in DANIEL 2!

If we were present at the plain of Dura then, the scene must have been quite intimidating. A huge image of gold was set up. Every important official in the kingdom was present. An orchestra was set up to play music, and at the sound of its music, everyone must bow his knees to the image, according to the decree of the king. Would anyone dare to disobey Nebuchadnezzar?

Yes, 3 young men: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (*Daniel's* three friends)! Apparently, there were other officials who were jealous of them and saw their refusal to worship the image as their chance to get rid of these 3 young men. They swiftly reported the matter to the king, emphasizing that they have not paid due regard to Nebuchadnezzar (verse 12). By putting it this way, they knew that the king's pride would be hurt and he would respond in the strongest manner possible, which he did.

The 3 young men were delivered – not from the fiery furnace but through it! Miraculously, they were totally unharmed! Once again, we hear Nebuchadnezzar praising God and giving Him glory. The arrogant man was humbled while God was exalted! The last verse reminds us of 1 Samuel 2:30: *Those who honour Me I will honour, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.*

1. Remember that this event took place in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in Babylon. Imagine that you were one of the Jews living there then. You've seen what happened. What would be your response?
2. After DANIEL was written (sometime in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), many Jews would have read it in the following decades and centuries. Imagine that you were one of the Jews living in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in Palestine but under foreign domination. You've read DANIEL 3. How would it help you spiritually?

3. How does DANIEL 3 help you spiritually today?

Day 6 Read DANIEL 4:1-3

1. DANIEL 4 is actually a letter.

(a) Who wrote this letter?

(b) To whom was this letter addressed?

(c) What was the intention of the writer in writing this letter? (Verse 2)

2. In verse 3, Nebuchadnezzar sang the praises of God. He said that God's signs are great, His wonders mighty, His kingdom everlasting and His dominion forever.

Do you think his words here are like those in 2:47 and 3:28-29, in which he proclaimed that God is great with his mouth but not with his heart? Or do you think that these words now flow from a spiritually changed heart? (Hint: Get your answer from these 3 verses)

Day 7 Read DANIEL 4:4-18

1. (a) Describe Nebuchadnezzar's condition as depicted in verse 4:

(b) Describe Nebuchadnezzar's condition as depicted in verse 5:

(c) What was the reason for the change in Nebuchadnezzar's condition from verse 4 to verse 5?

2. Verses 10-12 narrate the 1<sup>st</sup> part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Describe what he saw:

Day 1 Re-read DANIEL 4:4-18

1. Verses 13-17 describe the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

(a) A decree was passed concerning the tree. What would happen to it?

Verse 14:

Verse 15a-c:

(b) What would happen to the person represented by this tree? (Verse 15d-16)

2. According to verse 17, what was the purpose for this decree?

Day 2 Read DANIEL 4:19-27

1. The tree in the dream stands for Nebuchadnezzar. What would happen to Nebuchadnezzar in the coming days? (Verse 24-26)

2. What was Nebuchadnezzar meant to learn from this humbling experience?

Verse 25:

Verse 26:

3. (a) What advice did *Daniel* give Nebuchadnezzar after interpreting his dream? (Verse 27)

(b) Did Nebuchadnezzar take *Daniel's* advice?

(c) If you were Nebuchadnezzar, would you take *Daniel's* advice or ignore it? Why?

Day 3 Read DANIEL 4:28-33

These 6 verses inform us that Nebuchadnezzar's dream did indeed come to pass!

1. Verse 29 tells us the *time* when this happened.

When was it?

What is the significance of this?

*"Daniel having counseled him to repent, God so far confirmed his word that he gave him space to repent; he let him alone this year also, this one year more, before he brought this judgment upon him." (Matthew Henry)*

2. Verse 29-30 tell us *what* Nebuchadnezzar was doing when this happened.

What was he doing then?

What is the significance of this?

3. What lessons can you learn from these 6 verses?

Day 4 Read DANIEL 4:34-37

1. Verse 34 tells us that at the end of the time, Nebuchadnezzar was restored. What was Nebuchadnezzar doing just before his reason returned to him?

2. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar after he was restored? (Verse 36)

3. What did Nebuchadnezzar do and say after he was restored?

Verse 34d:

Verse 35:

Verse 37:

4. Write down one lesson you have learnt from DANIEL 4:

#### Day 5 Summary Notes for DANIEL 4:1-37 (I)

In DANIEL 2, Nebuchadnezzar said that the LORD God of Israel was the God of gods and Lord of kings (2:47). Back then, he confessed the supremacy of the LORD with his lips but did not bow his knees to Him.

In DANIEL 3, Nebuchadnezzar said that the LORD God of Israel was very special – *There is no other God who can deliver like this* (3:29). Though he confessed (verbal assent) the uniqueness and greatness of the LORD, Nebuchadnezzar did not demonstrate a corresponding commitment to Him.

Now in DANIEL 4, we find Nebuchadnezzar going beyond mere verbal assent. He actually bowed his knees in worship to the LORD God of Israel. Verse 37 says: *Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven . . .* It is no longer just “*I know He is like this and like that*” but now it is “*I bow in worship*”. In verse 2, we read that Nebuchadnezzar wanted to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked *for him!*

The change in Nebuchadnezzar is certainly most amazing! When you read of him defeating Judah and carrying away the boys to Babylon in DANIEL 1:1, would you have believed that one day, he would say what he said in DANIEL 4:2-3, 34-35?

What lessons can you learn from this most amazing change in Nebuchadnezzar?

How would these lessons change your life?

#### Day 6 Summary Notes for DANIEL 4:1-37 (II)

Life for Nebuchadnezzar can't be more comfortable and wonderful (v4, 10-12). Perhaps he was then saying to himself, like the rich fool in Luke 12:13-21: “*Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.*”

Just at that very moment, God “gate-crashed” his party, gave him a dream and as a result, Nebuchadnezzar became very troubled! Why would God so trouble him?

Because God was warning Nebuchadnezzar that he was heading towards the cliff and God was giving him time to turn back (verse 27)!

Sadly, though Nebuchadnezzar heard the warning, he ignored it. In God's mercy, He gave Nebuchadnezzar time to repent, as indicated by the phrase "*at the end of the twelve months*" (v29). Not only did Nebuchadnezzar abuse God's longsuffering, he even boasted about his own achievements and greatness (v30). At that very moment, God's judgment fell upon him and he went mad for a period of time (v31-33)!

The conclusion of this entire episode has G-R-A-C-E written all over it. Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his right mind although he didn't deserve it. It was pure grace from God! Nebuchadnezzar was also spiritually transformed. He now knows the LORD God of Israel and worships Him. He didn't deserve this blessing. Again, it was the pure grace of God!

What have you learnt from the Summary Notes above?

Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

Day 7 Read DANIEL 5:1-4

1. Who was the king mentioned here and what was he doing? (Verse 1)
2. Who were the king's companions? (Verses 2-3)
3. What command did the king give? (Verse 3) What was his intention in giving this command?
4. What were the king and his companions also doing apart from drinking wine? (Verse 4)

Note: Belshazzar was probably the son of Nabonidus and the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Nabonidus was often away from the capital and his son Belshazzar was his co-regent. This explained why Belshazzar could only make *Daniel* the third ruler in the kingdom (Verse 29).

Note (2): “*We must know that about two years before this Cyrus king of Persia, a growing monarch, came against Babylon with a great army; Belshazzar met him, fought him, and was routed by him in a pitched battle. He and his scattered forces retired into the city, where Cyrus besieged them. They were very secure, because the river Euphrates was their bulwark, and they had twenty years’ provision in the city; but in the second year of the siege he took it, as is here related.*”  
(Matthew Henry)

## Week 5

[29<sup>th</sup> Jul – 4<sup>th</sup> Aug 2012]

Day 1 Read DANIEL 5:5-12

1. Verse 6 tells us that ‘*the king’s countenance changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosed and his knees knocked against each other.*’ Why was this so?
  
2. (a) How did Belshazzar try to handle the problem? (Verse 7)  
  
(b) Did he succeed in handling the problem? (Verse 8)  
  
(c) What was the outcome? (Verse 9)
  
3. According to verses 10-12, how did the queen (queen mother) advise Belshazzar?
  
4. Do you think Belshazzar knew *Daniel* before this event? Explain your answer.

Day 2 Read DANIEL 5:10-12, 13-16

1. Summarize what the queen (queen mother) said about *Daniel* in verses 10-12 here:

From her speech, what do you think is her attitude towards *Daniel*?

2. Summarize what Belshazzar said to *Daniel* in verses 13-16 here:

From his speech, what do you think is his attitude towards *Daniel*?

Day 3 Read DANIEL 5:17-23

1. From verses 18-21, we see *Daniel* giving Belshazzar a short history lesson.

(a) What was the history lesson about?

(b) What was *Daniel's* purpose in recounting this piece of history?

2. What sins did *Daniel* charge Belshazzar with?

Verse 22:

Verse 23:

3. Why do you think *Daniel* was so brave as to say these things to the Babylonian king?

Day 4 Read DANIEL 5:24-31

1. "MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN" were written on the walls of the king's palace. What do these words mean?

2. What happened to Belshazzar that night? (Verse 30)



3. What happened to the Babylonian kingdom that night? (Verse 31)
  
4. What lessons can we learn from the fall of the Babylonian empire as narrated in DANIEL 5?

Day 5 Summary Notes for DANIEL 5:1-31 (I)

*“Nebuchadnezzar was an incredibly wicked man, but everything worked out all right for him in the end. This is because God humbled him, and the once proud king became His subject.*

*But it does not always work out all right for wicked people. This is the lesson of DANIEL chapter 5.*

*The road which unconverted people walk has an invisible line across it – a line seen by God alone, and not by us. God is patient and long suffering with those who neglect and despise Him. He gives them many opportunities to turn to Him. He invites them to come to Him, and pleads and beseeches and persuades. His consistent desire is that the unconverted should turn around and seek Him, rather than continue to walk away from Him.*

*Those who persist in walking the road that they have chosen one day cross the invisible line. They cross the thin boundary between God’s patience and His wrath. At last He says, ‘Enough is enough,’ and gives them up. There is no special road which leads to hell. You just have to stay on your present road long enough.*

*Men and women are not lost because they are great sinners. The Lord Christ is well able to save the greatest of sinners. Nor do people go to eternal torment because of the number or frequency of their sins. There are great sinners in hell, and also what people call ‘little’ sinners. Men and women perish because during their lifetime their hearts are pockets of resistance to God, and they walk their own way until God’s patience runs out. Stifling their conscience again and again, they arrive at the point where God has nothing more to say to them. They never humbly seek His mercy. They never approach the appointed Saviour, but remain stubborn, arrogant and self-willed. Men and women are lost through lack of abasement and prostration.”*

Stuart Olyott

Read the above abstract by Pastor Olyott.

- (a) Do you agree that it provides a fair summary of Belshazzar’s life? Explain your answer.

(b) “*Men and women are lost through lack of abasement and prostration.*” Have you abased and prostrated yourself before the LORD?

Take time to pray for yourself that you will never cross the invisible line that Pastor Olyott talked about.

## Day 6 Summary Notes for DANIEL 5:1-31 (II)

The picture given to us of Belshazzar in verses 1-4 was that of a useless king given to pleasures and determined to mock God! The enemies had actually surrounded the city (see verse 30) and yet he was partying with his lords, his wives and his concubines! He crossed the line when he decided to mock the LORD God of Israel by drinking wine from the vessels taken from the Temple (something even Nebuchadnezzar did not do!) and praising the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone!! We are looking at a debauched man, a fatuous king and a hardened sinner!!

We read of the queen in verses 10-12. She was probably the queen mother, or even the queen grandmother. It depends on whether we understand Nebuchadnezzar to be Belshazzar’s father or grandfather. This lady was quite different from the rest of the people present in the palace that night. In the first place, she didn’t join the party. And if you read her words to Belshazzar carefully, you would realize that she was actually chiding him! In short, she disapproved of what Belshazzar was doing while she was full of praises for *Daniel*, the very person who could interpret the writings and whom Belshazzar despised!

The words of Belshazzar to *Daniel* in verses 13-16 clearly revealed his contempt for this wise old man. He called him ‘one of the captives from Judah’. He questioned if *Daniel* could really give the interpretation. To *Daniel’s* credit, he ignored the contempt of Belshazzar and refused his reward. As a faithful prophet, he told the king what those words meant and how they would apply to him.

Verse 29 is shocking! Belshazzar heard what *Daniel* said but he acted as if he didn’t! There was no remorse, not to say repentance! He just wanted to be known as the king who kept his word. So he rewarded *Daniel* as he had promised. What followed? We don’t know what went on in his heart and mind after that, except what verses 30-31 said – *He was killed that night and the Babylonian empire was replaced by the Medo-Persian empire!*

Once again, God was glorified and this time through the death of Belshazzar and the demise of the Babylonian empire!!

What have you learnt from the Summary Notes above?

Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

Day 7 Read DANIEL 6:1-5

*"It is a very observable improvable story that we have in this chapter, how Daniel by faith "stopped the mouths of lions," and so "obtained a good report," Heb. xi. 33. The three children were cast into the fiery furnace for not committing a known sin, Daniel was cast into the lions' den for not omitting a known duty, and God's miraculously delivering both them and him is left upon record for the encouragement of his servants in all ages to be resolute and constant both in their abhorrence of that which is evil and in their adherence to that which is good, whatever it cost them." (Matthew Henry)*

1. (a) Who was the king mentioned in verse 1?
  
- (b) We assume that Darius in DANIEL 6:1 is the same Darius in DANIEL 5:31 and DANIEL 9:1. This means we are now in 539/8 B.C.

How old would *Daniel* be at this time? (Hint: Look up Week 1 Day 1 and Day 2)

*"Certainly the powers of darkness had endeavoured to wear out Daniel since the beginning of his captivity by wave upon wave of attacks on his faithfulness to God. One final effort now occurs in this chapter. It serves as a salutary reminder to us that temptations to compromise are never isolated incidents in our spiritual life but are part of a larger strategy of Satan against us."*

Sinclair Ferguson

2. What was Darius planning to do? (Verse 3)
  
3. What were the governors and satraps planning to do? (Verse 4)
  
4. Read what the governors and satraps said concerning *Daniel* in verse 5.
  - (a) What does it mean and what does it imply about *Daniel*?
  
  - (b) Could the same words be said of you today?

Week 6

[5<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> August 2012]

Day 1 Read DANIEL 6:6-11

1. What was the new law that Darius signed into effect?
2. Why did the governors and satraps advise Darius to pass this law?
3. What did *Daniel* do in response? (Verse 10)
4. What would you have done, if you were in *Daniel's* shoes then?

Day 2 Summary Notes for DANIEL 6:1-11

Here in DANIEL 6, *Daniel* would be around 80 years old! He had been in exile for about 66 years. For the past 66 years, he had been faithful in all that was placed in his hands, never mind if the king was a Babylonian or a Mede. What did he get in return for his faithful service and blameless conduct? Enemies who envied him and plotted to get rid of him! *Daniel* was probably safer in the lions' den (v16-17) than in Darius' court!

His enemies knew that the only way they could get *Daniel* into trouble was in the area of his faith! This in itself was a powerful testimony of the spirituality of this man who had lived almost all his adult life in a pagan land! Hence, they flattered Darius into signing a law that would effectively (humanly speaking) sealed *Daniel's* fate.

If we read DANIEL 9:1-3, we know that the period and setting of DANIEL 9 is the same as that of DANIEL 6. This would mean that when *Daniel* continued to pray after the law forbidding prayer was passed (6:10), he was actually praying for the restoration of Jerusalem! Such was his love for God's people that he would not stop his prayer for their restoration, even if that meant the lions' den for him!!

Do you love God's people? Will you love God's people to the same extent i.e. willing to die for them?

*"Yet the temptation to compromise was objectively a very great one. It was now the first year of the reign of Darius. Daniel's study of Jeremiah 25 and 29 had convinced him that the day of restoration was near (cf. Dan. 9:2). The seventy-year period that the prophet had described was on the verge of completion. Under such circumstances, did it make sense to lay his life on the line by continuing his practice of daily devotions and intercessions? From a purely human viewpoint such a sacrifice seems utterly pointless. Daniel would lose his life, and he would not live to see the day toward which his whole life had been directed.*

*Furthermore, Darius' decree had a duration of only thirty days. It was not as though Daniel was asked to deny his faith or worship an idol. The heroics of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego might be understandable in the face of blatant idolatry and Nebuchadnezzar's insistence on public worship of his image. Darius' decree, though, made no such demands. It did not command idolatry, it only forbade the making of petitions to God, and that for only one month out of the year, one month out of an entire lifetime. It would not be too cynical to suggest that the presence or absence of such a decree would have made little or no difference to the lifestyle of some of Daniel's fellow exiles who had lost the heart to 'sing the LORD's song in a foreign land' (Ps. 137:4).*

*We may well ask ourselves in this context if it would make any substantial difference in our lives or the lives of our church fellowship if prayer were banned for the next thirty days. Perhaps in many instances the answer would be both embarrassing and startling, for prayers have become a neglected discipline and a forgotten art in many Christian churches."*

Sinclair Ferguson

Write down two lessons you have learnt from this Summary Notes:

Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

Day 3 Read DANIEL 6:12-17

1. Read verse 13.

(a) How did the governors and satraps describe *Daniel*? (Cf. 5:13)

What does this tell you about their attitude towards Daniel?

(b) What did the governors and satraps emphasize to Darius, as they lay the charge on *Daniel*? (Cf. 3:12)

2. Why did Darius finally sent *Daniel* to the lions' den, though he initially tried to save *Daniel*?

Day 4 Read DANIEL 6:18-24

1. (a) What happened to *Daniel* after he was thrown into the lions' den?  
  
(b) What happened to *Daniel's* accusers after they were thrown into the lions' den?  
  
(c) How can we account for the different outcomes as seen in (a) and (b)?
2. From what we have read of Darius in DANIEL 6 thus far, what kind of a man/king do you think he was?

Day 5 Read DANIEL 6:25-28

1. (a) Note down what Darius said about God in his new decree (v26-27):  
  
(b) Based on what he said, do you think he had become a worshipper of the LORD God like Nebuchadnezzar? Explain your answer.
2. What is the significance of verse 28?

Day 6 Summary Notes for DANIEL 6:12-28

Darius may be king over the entire Medo-Persian empire, but we see his utter helplessness here. He realized that he was 'tricked' into passing a law but he could not back out of it. He wanted to rescue *Daniel* but his hands were tied. So much for being a powerful sovereign! How different is our King who sits on His throne in heaven! He will never be 'tricked' or out-manuevered by His subjects! Like what Nebuchadnezzar said a few years ago, "*He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'*"

That night, Darius had a most uncomfortable time. He was troubled, he was sleepless, he had no peace. And all these came upon him even though he was the most powerful

sovereign in the world then, staying in his very own luxurious palace! In contrast, *Daniel* was in the lions' den but note how calm and peaceful he was while there! What accounts for this difference? God! With God's presence, it is heavenly even if you are in the lions' dens. Without God's presence, it is all misery even if you are in the king's palace.

The death of the accusers (v24) shows us that the lions were indeed the ferocious (and should we say, very hungry) creatures that they were. Hence, the reason why *Daniel* was unharmed was as what he said in verse 22 – *God protected him and God did that via an angel*. God wasn't only just in a pagan land. God was even in the lions' den of a pagan land! Surely this must be a huge encouragement to God's people when they've read DANIEL 6!

Verse 28 underlines a very important truth for us: *You can be in a very hostile environment, but you can still live a holy life by God's grace*. That was what *Daniel* did! For 66 years in idolatrous Babylon, he lived for God. His God is our God!

Take some time to worship our God with this hymn by Martin Luther:

*A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing;  
For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great,  
And armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.  
Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God's own choosing:  
Doth ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth is His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

*And tho' this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us.  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.  
That word above all earthly powers,  
No thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Thro; Him who with us sideth;  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is forever.*

What have you learnt from the Summary Notes above?

Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

## Day 7 Review DANIEL 1-6

We have completed our study of the 1<sup>st</sup> six chapters of DANIEL. The *genre* of these six chapters is history. They record for us real, historical events.

The author of DANIEL could have recorded many other events in this book, but he chose to record these 6 historical events. What do you think is his purpose in calling our attention to these 6 events?

Before we proceed to the next part of DANIEL, take time today to review DANIEL 1-6. What is the one most important lesson you've learnt from these 6 chapters:

How has this lesson changed your life?

Take time to thank God for teaching you this precious lesson, and ask God for His strength to always remember this lesson!

### **Acknowledgement**

Whatever the weaknesses of this Read-The-Bible-Together guide, they would have been far greater without the kind help of brother Paul PHUA and sister Sarah SOH.

They have very kindly given their time and energy to review the entire guide, asking questions all the way and giving many valuable suggestions. Thank you, fellow Shalomites!

*Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another!* (Proverbs 27:17, ESV)