

## Aim of lesson

To show God's knowledge and control of the future.

## Bible background

Daniel 2; Daniel 7 (optional)

## Outline of lesson

### What does the future hold?

People have always wanted to know what would happen in the future, but they have not been able to guess anything other than an extension of the sort of thing that was happening at the time. You may like to ask the class what things they would have to explain if they were giving a visitor from the Middle Ages a tour of the areas in which they live. They would be a great many things the visitor would find impossible to have even imagined.

### The king's dream

If your class have heard about Nebuchadnezzar's dream, you may like to set the scene by means of questions and answers. If they have not, spend a few minutes outlining the narrative of Daniel 2 without including the content of the dream. It is worth noting that Daniel is concerned to save the lives of the other wise men. He makes sure he stops their execution before he goes to the king.

### The statue

Let the class read Daniel 2:27-35 to find the details of the dream. They should label the picture in the workbook by writing the metals on the left of the picture of the image. A young class may like to use colours to distinguish the parts of the statue.

### The interpretation

The class should note that the dream is about things to come, v28. It speaks of kingdoms that would come and go, v39. The first, represented by the head of gold is identified in verses 36-38 as the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. The others are described but not named. You may like to use historical atlases or reference books to show the sequence of powerful empires that the statue represents: Babylonia, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman. Alternatively, you could have the class refer to the time chart of the occupation of Jerusalem and the land of Israel, as the dates when these nations ruled over the land are given there. In this way the class can label the nations represented by the parts of the statue on the right of the drawing in the workbook. They can then see how the prophecy was fulfilled in history.

### For older students

If your class would like to look at the prophecy of Daniel in more detail, it would be appropriate here for them to study the vision of beasts in chapter 7. The same empires are represented with extra details given.

Babylon	A lion with eagle's wings. See Jeremiah 4:7,13; 50:17. The details of standing up like a man are reminiscent of Daniel 4.
Medo-Persia	The bear is raised up on one side as the Persian side of the partnership became more powerful.
Greece	The leopard had four wings for the great speed with which Alexander the Great conquered other nations. It had four heads representing the division of his kingdom to four generals at his death.
Rome	Similar language as Daniel 2 about breaking nations in pieces is used again to show the strength of the Roman Empire.

The feet of iron and clay in chapter 2 have their parallel in chapter 7 in the little horn which speaks boastfully against the Most High, oppresses his saints and tries to change times and laws, v24-25. The class could draw the beasts of Daniel 7 in the workbook, on the right of the picture of the statue. In this way the two prophecies can be seen side by side.

Older students who are interested in the reference to the little horn lasting for 3½ years may like to consider the following information on the time chart of the occupation of Israel. The length of time from the beginning of the Moslem occupation in 640 AD to its end in 1917 is 3½ x 365 -> 1277 years – the principle of a day for a year in Bible prophecy being given in Ezekiel 4:4-6. If you do include a study of Daniel 7 in this lesson it is important that the class see that not only have all the details of the nations worked out in history, but both prophecies tell us about what is still future: the coming of the kingdom of God when the Son of Man rules for the Ancient of Days over a kingdom that will last for ever.

## Digging deeper

### Major prophets and Lamentations

This is an overview of these books, and it suggests that the students learn the names of the books in order.

## Relevance to our lives

The last two questions in the workbook are to encourage the class to consider what it means to them that God knows the future. The first is to encourage them to realise that God knows a lot about them that they do not know themselves. He has known them since before they were born, and he now knows what their future life holds.

The second is to summarise what the class has learned about the certainty of what God has planned for the future. It should also encourage them to consider how they feel in facing the future.

## **Prayer**

It would be appropriate for the class to contribute to a prayer addressed specifically to the One who knows the future.

## **Other suggestions for activities**

- Daniel asks his three friends to join him in praying that God would reveal the dream to him. The class could dramatise the scene when Daniel returns from the king and explains to his friends all that had happened.
- The class could write a newspaper report about the last minute reprieve for the wise.
- The class could show on a map of the Middle East the extent of the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires and consider the countries which occupy these lands today.