

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

Daniel 1 - 6

Work Book

Hearing the Word Daniel 1 – 6 Work Book

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Nigel Barge, January 2014

Scripture Quotations taken from

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Resources

The *New Bible Dictionary* 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press
The *New Bible Commentary* 21st century edition. A commentary on every Bible book, IVP

www.blueletterbible.org

Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



LOOK – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
 - a) What questions does it raise -
Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?
 - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
 - a) the surrounding text
 - b) the Book of the Bible
 - c) the whole Bible
 - d) the place in the Bible Story



LEARN – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



LISTEN – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



LIVE – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God, (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace*
 - c) Jesus / his salvation**
- 2) What should I do?

* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

** The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

Reading Narrative

In seeking to hear the Word of God throughout the Bible, we need to take into account the *type of literature* in which each part is written. Acts is mainly *narrative* (story), the most common type, seasoned with preaching. To approach narrative correctly we need to keep these principles in mind:

1 In General: It is *God's* story

The whole Bible recounts the story of God's dealings with humankind. After creation and the fall in Genesis, the rest describes how God works out his unfolding plan of salvation for humanity in Jesus. The OT prepares for the arrival, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The NT recounts these and looks forwards to his return at the end of time. It is *all* about Jesus. Therefore:

a) Every part relates to Him (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

So as we read, we should be asking – ‘what does this show about Jesus; what is He doing?’

b) Everything is relevant.

In a film every scene plays some part in the overall story. Often, we are shown things in the early stages that make no sense until later. The Bible is the same. So, as we read Bible narrative – knowing how it ends – we should be asking ‘what relevance has *this* part of the story to the *main* story?’

2 In particular: ‘Follow the camera angle’

A film director focuses the viewer's attention on particular shots to tell ‘his story’. In the same way each narrator in the Bible is selective about what to tell us. They leave out much general detail, only giving us what is relevant to what they are trying to convey.

As we read, we should therefore be asking the question, ‘Why is he telling me this and in this particular way?’

3 Warts and all

Human beings often get things wrong. The Bible narrative faithfully records errors, even by people who are elsewhere commended. For instance, Moses murdered a man, King David committed adultery, and Peter, who was praised for realising Jesus was the Christ, was minutes later roundly scolded when he tried to stop Jesus being the Christ through suffering! (Exodus 2:12; 2 Samuel 11; Matthew 16:16-23)

So we can't treat every thought or action in a narrative as something to copy, just because ‘it's in the Bible’. We must ask the Holy Spirit to use the rest of Scripture to discern good examples to follow, and bad ones to avoid.

DANIEL

The context of the book

God chose Abraham and his descendants to be his tools to bring about his plan to bless the world (Gen 12:1-3). He committed himself to them in an everlasting 'covenant' (Gen 17:1-27).

He gave them a land of their own – Canaan. Abraham's grandson, Jacob, also known as Israel, had 12 sons, whose families grew to become known as the 12 tribes of Israel.

God warned Israel there would be consequences if they failed to be faithful to their side of the covenant. Such failure would ultimately result in exile from their land. (Deut. 28:15,36). After the reigns of David and Solomon, the Kingdom divided into two unequal parts. The ten northern tribes were still called Israel; the south was known as Judah. The Lord continued to warn them through his prophets but they took no heed. This led to the exile first of the northern Kingdom, Israel, to Assyria. 125 years later, the Babylonians overran Assyria; they captured Jerusalem and started to take the southerners, Judah, including Daniel, to Babylon.

In exile, the 10 tribes of Israel were dispersed through the Assyrian empire and remained 'lost'. The Jews of Judah, however, kept their identity during their 70 years' in Babylon. When a Persian King, Cyrus, conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539BC, he allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, and rebuild the Temple (2 Chronicles 36:15-23, Ezra; Nehemiah).

Historical background to Daniel

Babylon, a city on the river Euphrates (80km south of modern Baghdad) became the capital of Babylonia (modern South Iraq) and the empire and civilisation based on it. Babylon is first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 11, where it is called Babel.

By 625BC, Babylonia broke free from the yoke of Assyria. In 605BC, Babylon's crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar, sacked Carchemish, at that time run by Egypt, and annihilated the Egyptian army. Jehoiakim, king of Judah, submitted to him; he carried off hostages (including Daniel) and some of the articles from the temple of God. While he was in Palestine, Nebuchadnezzar's father died and he became king.

In December 598BC he besieged Jerusalem. Read about the fall of Jerusalem (16 March 597BC), the capture of king Jehoiachin and the start of the Jewish exile, in 2 Kings 24:10-17 and 2 Chronicles 36:8-10.

Jerusalem was totally destroyed in 587BC. There was further deportation in 581BC (2 Kings 25:8-21). Nebuchadnezzar died in 562BC.

Nabonidus was king of Babylon 556-539BC. His son Belshazzar ruled as co-regent in Babylon while his father campaigned in Arabia. Belshazzar was killed in 539BC when Darius the Mede captured Babylon. 'Darius the Mede' and 'Cyrus the Persian' are likely to be the same person.

Date and Authorship of Daniel

The book of Daniel starts in 605BC when Nebuchadnezzar deported Daniel and his friends to Babylon (1:1-3). The last recorded date in the book is 536BC (10:1) when Cyrus is in the third year of his reign.

There has been much debate over date and authorship but it is reasonable to say that it was written by Daniel himself: chapters 7-12 are in the first person.

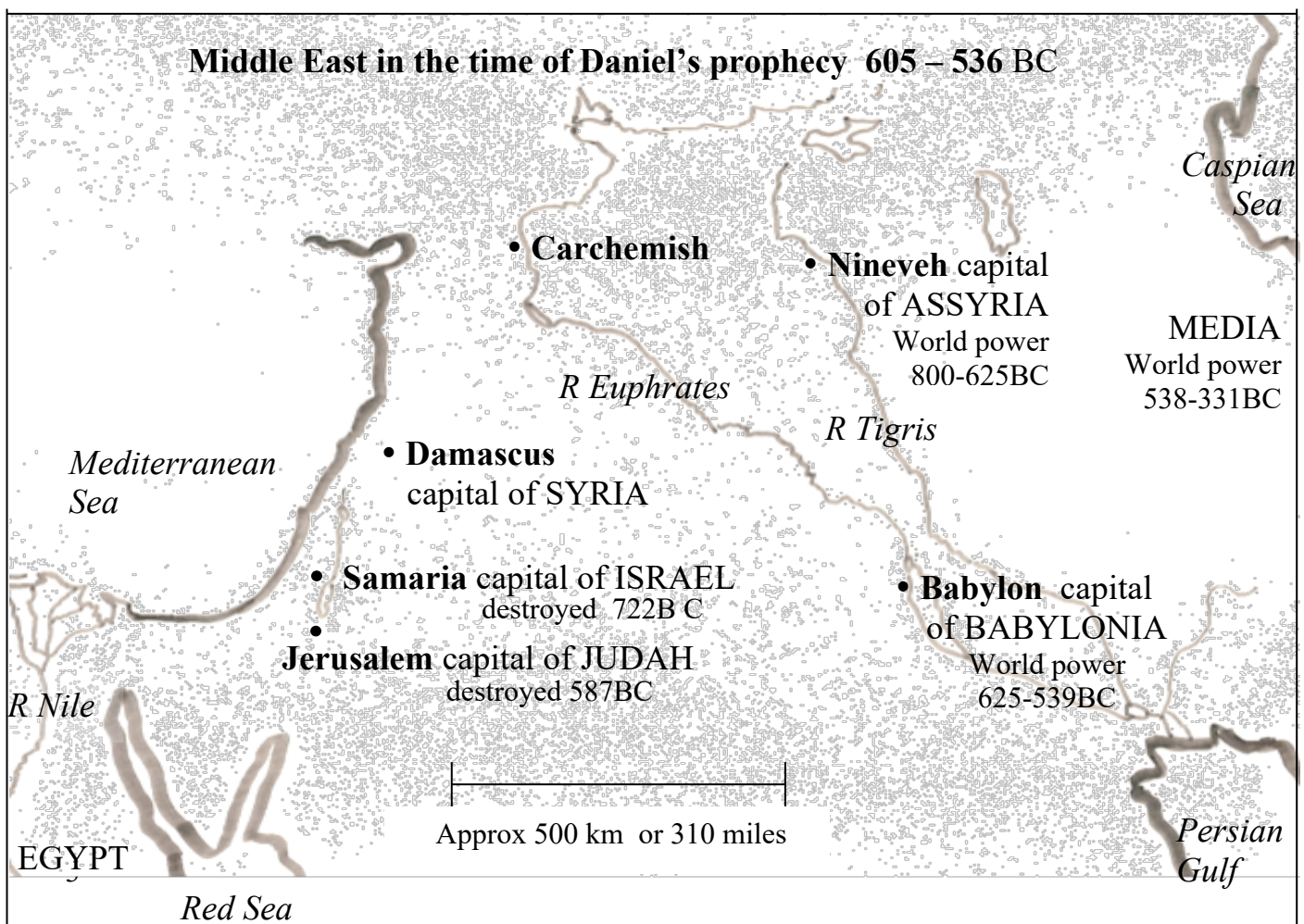
Chapters 1 – 2:4a and 8 – 12:13 are written in *Hebrew* (like the rest of the OT) while chapters 2:4b – 7:28 are written in *Aramaic*, a more widely spoken language. The reason is not known; one suggestion is that chapters 2-7 are the parts of most interest to non-Jewish readers.

This study looks at the historical events recorded in chapters 1-6.

Chapters 7-12 record Daniel's visions of how in the latter days the God of heaven will erect a kingdom that will never be destroyed.

The purpose of the book of Daniel

To teach that when God deals with human kingdoms, he is *sovereign*.



(Empire)

Key Dates (BC)

(Assyria)

721 10 Northern tribes of Israel dispersed among the Assyrian

621 Nineveh, capital of Assyria, falls to the Babylonians

(Babylon)

605 Babylonians defeat Egypt at Carchemish

Nebuchadnezzar, emperor of Babylon, annexes Judah, carries off some Temple vessels and youth of nobility (including **Daniel**)

597 Jehoiakim of Judah rebels. Succeeded by son Jehoiachin -3 months.

Nebuchadnezzar returns and crushes the revolt removing the Leaders and the professional classes.

Zedekiah placed as a puppet King

587 Zedekiah rebelled. Jerusalem crashed and destroyed. Mass deportation of population to Babylon.

(Persia)

539 Cyrus allows the Jews to return

486 Xerxes 1 (Ahasuerus of the book of Esther)

331 Darius III

(Greece)

334-33 Alexander the Great conquers the Persian Empire

323 Death of Alexander – empire divided into 4 (The Ptolemies of Egypt ('the Kings of the South' ch 11) and the Seleucids in Syria ('the Kings of the North') predominant.

175-164 Antiochus Epiphanes (Seleucid King)

167 The abomination of Desolation – ie altar to Zeus in the Temple

165-164 Victories of Judas Maccabeus and the cleansing of the Temple

Dates in Daniel

(ch 1) Neb took Jews into exile inc Daniel and royal youth. 605 BC

(ch 2) Neb's 1st dream 604 BC

(ch 4) Neb's 2nd dream - (? the year of Jerusalem's destruction 587 BC

(ch 5) Neb Dead - 562 BC (son (Nabodinus) fighting, (?)
grandson (?), Belshazzar, in charge 539 BC

ch 6 Darius(Cyrus) and the lions' den c 539 BC

ch 10 3rd years of reign of Cyrus 536 BC

Questions of the Jewish people?

Faced with exile from the promised land, many questions must have been asked by God's people. Some are expressed below. Daniel is acutely aware of these and seeks to address the dilemma that they present eg –

1) **The Supremacy of God?**

Where is the Lord, who brought judgement on the God's of Egypt.(Ex12:12)

2) **The Covenant of God?**

What has happened to the promise to Moses and David that God's love would never be taken away from them. (2 Sam 7:5)

3) **The Land of Israel?**

What has happened to the promise to give this land to His people? (Deut 1:8)

4) **The centre of God's promise?**

What has become of Jerusalem, 'Mt Zion, the city of the great King'? (Ps48:2)

5) **The fate of Jerusalem?**

How like a widow is she who once was great among the nation? (Lam 1:1)

6) **The fate of the people?**

How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a foreign land? (Ps 137:4)

Daniel's training in Babylon

Background information

Daniel and his friends were brought into an environment that was affluent, materialistic and godless. The king of Babylon wanted to eliminate God from their consciousness and so a comprehensive process of education and 'brainwashing' began.

Word List

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | <i>Jehoiakim</i> | A 'bad' king, though son of good king Josiah. |
| 3 | <i>Ashpenaz</i> | responsible for education of royal princes and well-being of the king's harem |
| 4 | <i>well informed etc literature...</i> | In Hebrew usage these words have ethical and religious overtones
polytheistic texts on magic, sorcery, charms, astrology etc. |
| 5 | <i>food...king's table</i> | A special honour to be served this |
| 6 | <i>Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah</i> | these Hebrew names all include 'el' (God) or 'yah' (The LORD) |
| 7 | <i>Belteshazzar</i> | might mean: 'lady protect the king'. Marduk (title Bel) the chief 'god' of Babylonia had a 'wife', Belet. |
| | <i>Shadrach</i> | 'I am very fearful (of god)' |
| | <i>Meschach</i> | 'I am of little account' |
| | <i>Abednego</i> | 'servant of the shining one' – wordplay on a god's name |
| 8 | <i>not to defile himself...</i> | in eastern thinking, sharing a meal amounted to committing oneself to friendship/loyalty |
| 20 | <i>ten times</i> | a common idiom, hyperbole |
| 21 | <i>remained until ...Cyrus</i> | i.e. from 606 to 539BC |

Bible Connections

- Jehoiakim's reign* see 2 Kings 23:36-24:6; 2 Chronicles 36:5-8
- honouring God* see 1 Cor 6:19-20; Romans 12:1-2; Phil 2:14-16
- God intervening on behalf of his people* see 1 Kings 8:50; Psalm 106:46
- Wisdom is God's gift* see Colossians 1:9; 2:9,10

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Background information

It does not say *why* Nebuchadnezzar's mind was troubled. In 604-603 BC he had to use considerable effort to ensure that taxes were paid in different parts of his empire. Perhaps such a show of prestige hid a fear of inadequacy.

The 'dream experts' worked on the principle that dreams and their sequels followed an empirical law which, given sufficient data, could be established. Known 'dream manuals' listed historical dreams and the events that followed them. They were very long and complicated and only the expert could find his way through them.

According to eastern superstition it was ominous not to be able to remember a dream.

Word List

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--|
| 31 | <i>statue</i> | Aramaic word means statue not idol; it was in human form |
| 49 | <i>at royal court</i> | equivalent to a position of cabinet rank today. |

Bible connections

- 17 Support of friends *see also* Exodus 17:8-13; Mark 14:32-41
- 18 Daniel's response is confident prayer *see* Heb 4:14-16; Rom 8:28
- 20b-23 This psalm is a model of thanksgiving *cf* Ephesians 3:20-21

(Some Dreams in the Bible:

OT: Jacob at Bethel: Genesis 28:10-17

Joseph as child; Genesis 37:1-11; as an adult: Genesis 40:1-40

Gideon: Judges 7:9-15

Daniel: chapters 2 and 4

NT: Joseph, Wise men: Matthew 1:20; 2:12; 2:13, 19, 22

Note, at other times the Bible uses the word '*vision*', which appears to mean something different from a dream. Daniel 7-12 records 'visions'. cf Peter and Cornelius 'vision', 'trance': Acts 10:3,11.

Paul 'vision' Acts 16:9.)

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The image of gold and the fiery furnace

Background information

The size of the image and its shape are both remarkable – it was about the same height as the date-palms - 60 cubits (90ft) that still grow in the plains of Iraq and almost as slender at 6 Cubits (9ft) in width. It must have been more like an obelisk than a statue (The Colossus of Rhodes was 105ft high)

Furnaces in Babylon were connected with the firing of clay bricks. The fuel used was charcoal which, with the draught, provided the high temperatures necessary. Some large brick kilns have been excavated outside Babylon.

The image was probably gold plated.

Word List

1	<i>Dura</i>	possibly Tell Der, 27km SW of present day Baghdad
	<i>Satrap</i>	provincial governors (highest rank , then declining order of power – prefects, governors etc)
8	<i>astrologers</i>	<i>or</i> the Chaldeans, the dream experts
	<i>denounced</i>	maliciously accused ie slandered
19	<i>seven times more</i>	a proverbial expression
26	<i>Most High God</i>	jewish title for God
30	<i>promoted</i>	caused to prosper /‘showered favours on’

Bible connections

26	<i>Most High God</i>	Genesis 14:17-22; Psalm 7:10; Daniel 7:18,25,27
28	<i>angel</i>	<i>see also</i> Psalm 34:7
	<i>deliverance in trials</i>	<i>see</i> Isaiah 43:1-2; John 12:26; Romans 8:28

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Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a tree

Background information

This chapter belongs to the period when Nebuchadnezzar's great building projects had been completed. It is written in the accepted style of ancient letter-writing with the author naming himself and those whom he is addressing.

The illness referred to, known as lycanthropy, is well attested in pre-scientific times. Nebuchadnezzar was evidently aware of some degree of guilt which worked itself out, first in the dream and then in delusions.

It would seem from other writings, not in the Aramaic text (the Old Greek Story of Daniel), that this happened in the 18th Year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. In Jeremiah 52:59 this is given as the year of the final fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the whole Jewish nation.

Word List

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---|
| 2 | <i>Most High God</i> | A Hebrew title for God |
| 8 | <i>'spirit of the holy gods'</i> | i.e. Daniel is 'very spiritual' |
| 13 | <i>messenger</i> | watcher or watchman |
| 16 | <i>times</i> | Aramaic word <i>iddanin</i> is not specifically 'years'; it can signify 'seasons' |
| 26 | <i>Heaven</i> | synonym for God (unknown elsewhere in OT) |

Bible connections

- | | | |
|--------|---|--|
| | <i>God exalts the lowest of men</i> | see 1 Sam 2:8; Psalm 113:7,8; Luke 1:52 |
| 25b-27 | <i>good deeds are the fruit of repentance</i> | see Acts 26:20 |
| 34 | <i>suffering has a kindly role</i> | cf John 11:4 |
| 34-35 | <i>song of praise</i> | - reminiscent of Psalms 145:13; 115:3; Isaiah 40:17; |
| 37 | <i>God humbles the proud</i> | see Job 31:4; 40:11-12; Isaiah 13:11; Matthew 23:12 |

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The writing on the wall

Background information

Chapter 5 jumps to 539BC, the very end of the Babylonian empire, the night on which the besieged city fell to the Medes and Persians and its last ruler was killed. Daniel was an elderly man by this time.

It would seem that Nabodinus, the emperor, was away fighting. His son, King Belshazzar, crown prince was at home and ‘in charge’ (?) Hence his offer to Daniel to become third in line (5:7.16,29)

Daniel’s interpretation of what Belshazzar saw based not on nouns, but on verbs associated with them *viz* *mene* - ‘numbered’, *tekem* - ‘weighed’ (or ‘assessed’) and *parsin* - ‘shared’

Word List

2	<i>father</i>	predecessor or ancestor also in v11, 13
5	<i>lampstand</i>	unusual word - not known elsewhere
7	<i>purple</i>	expensive, so used for royalty
	<i>gold chain</i>	symbol of office
	<i>third ruler</i>	may be an army rank, or meant literally ie third ruler after Nabonidus and Belshazzar
10	<i>queen</i>	or queen mother ie Belshazzar’s mother
	<i>came into...</i>	against normal protocol (cf Esther 4:11)
22	<i>son</i>	descendant or successor
25	<i>mene</i>	mina, unit of weight, about 1.25lbs
	<i>tekem</i>	Aramaic equivalent of shekel
	<i>parsin</i>	half of something eg a half shekel
30	<i>Darius the Mede</i>	name unknown to history apart from this book, likely to be same person as Cyrus the Persian. (Ezra and Nehemiah refer to a later Darius.)

Bible connections

1	<i>extravagant feast</i>	c.f. Esther 1
18	<i>Attributes here are ascribed to the Lord elsewhere in Scripture.</i>	see 1 Chronicles 29:11-12; Revelation 5:13
26	<i>Our days are numbered.</i>	see Psalm 90; Jesus’ parable in Luke 12:20
	<i>futility of setting ourselves above God</i>	see Isaiah 14:13; Jeremiah 50:29

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Daniel in the den of lions

Background information

The Persian empire, which incorporated that of the Medes, a vast area forming an arc to the north of the Babylonian territories, extended eventually as far *west* as Asia Minor (Turkey), Libya and Egypt, and as far *east* as the Indus river and the Aral Sea. It was the largest empire the world had yet seen. Under Darius, Daniel now in his eighties(?), played a significant part in its administration and the king was set to promote him further.

The other administrators are jealous of his success and try to depose him but can find no way unless they involve the law of Daniel's God.

In the ancient Near East, lion-hunting was the sport of kings. The pit in which they were kept also provided a trouble-free way of disposing of undesirable members of society in Roman as well as Persian times. Throwing false accusers and their families to the lions was according to the accepted standards in Persian society.

Word List

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | <i>Darius the Mede</i> | name unknown to history apart from this book, likely to be same person as Cyrus the Persian. |
| 2 | <i>Satrap</i>
<i>not suffer loss</i> | Provincial governors
ie in territory due to uprisings, or in taxation due to corruption |
| 7 | <i>all agreed</i> | verb used is a little weak; collusion and conspiracy are implied |
| 10 | <i>windows</i> | in that part of the world, windows are small and high |
| 28 | <i>and</i> | has the force of 'namely' or 'that is' see v1 |

Bible Connections

- | | | |
|---------|---|--|
| 8,12,15 | <i>Laws of the Medes and Persians cannot be revoked</i> | see Esther 1:19; 8:8 |
| 10 | <i>windows opened towards Jerusalem</i> | see 1 Kings 8:41-43; 2 Chronicles 6:34 |
| 17 | <i>stone sealing the den</i> | c.f. Matthew 27:66 |
| 21 | <i>dominion over the beasts</i> | see Isaiah 11:6; 65:25; Hosea 2:18 |
| 25-27 | <i>decree of Darius</i> | c.f. that of Nebuchadnezzar in 3:29 |

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Sharing the Word

Use

'Hearing the Word' can be used alone, with one other person, or in a group

Preparing for a group

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE.

Write down your own questions and answers *

A format

If you have 45 mins together, you might like to try dividing it up like this.

(If longer or in a large group, you can extend the times)

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1) Drink, bite to eat, chat | (10 mins) |
| 2) A Bible reading | (2 mins) |
| 3) A Bible study | |
| a. Any questions? (Whether answer is known or not!) | (2 mins) |
| (Don't answer any, till all questions noted!) | |
| b. Any relevant cross references? | (2 mins) |
| c. Discussion of answers | (13 mins) |
| d. Conclusion | (10 mins) |
| i. A Key verse and Main Point? | |
| ii. What does it show about God / Jesus? | |
| iii. What should I do? | |
| 4) Sharing (Trials and joys – family, work, self) | (5 mins) |
| 5) Prayer | (1 min) |

Remember!

As we gather round God's Word

- a) Listen to the views of others
- b) Make room for the novice. They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others' especially, 'seekers' in your sharing together.

* The **process** is explained and practised in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called '**An Introduction to 'Hearing the Word'**'. Email: office@tpc.org

“I can read the Bible for myself!”

To show that the Bible is accessible to all,
the Rev Nigel Barge, minister of Torrance Parish Church,
has devised a tool called ‘Hearing the Word’.
The Manual explains the basic principles of Bible reading,
teaches them by means of an interactive course,
and practices them on a single passage, Mark 10:35-45,
Participants follow in a Workbook: *Hearing the Word - Introduction*,
which includes the next six passages in Mark,
so they may follow on for themselves.

As the principles apply equally to all, the course will both
instruct the novice and refresh the ‘hardened’ Bible student!