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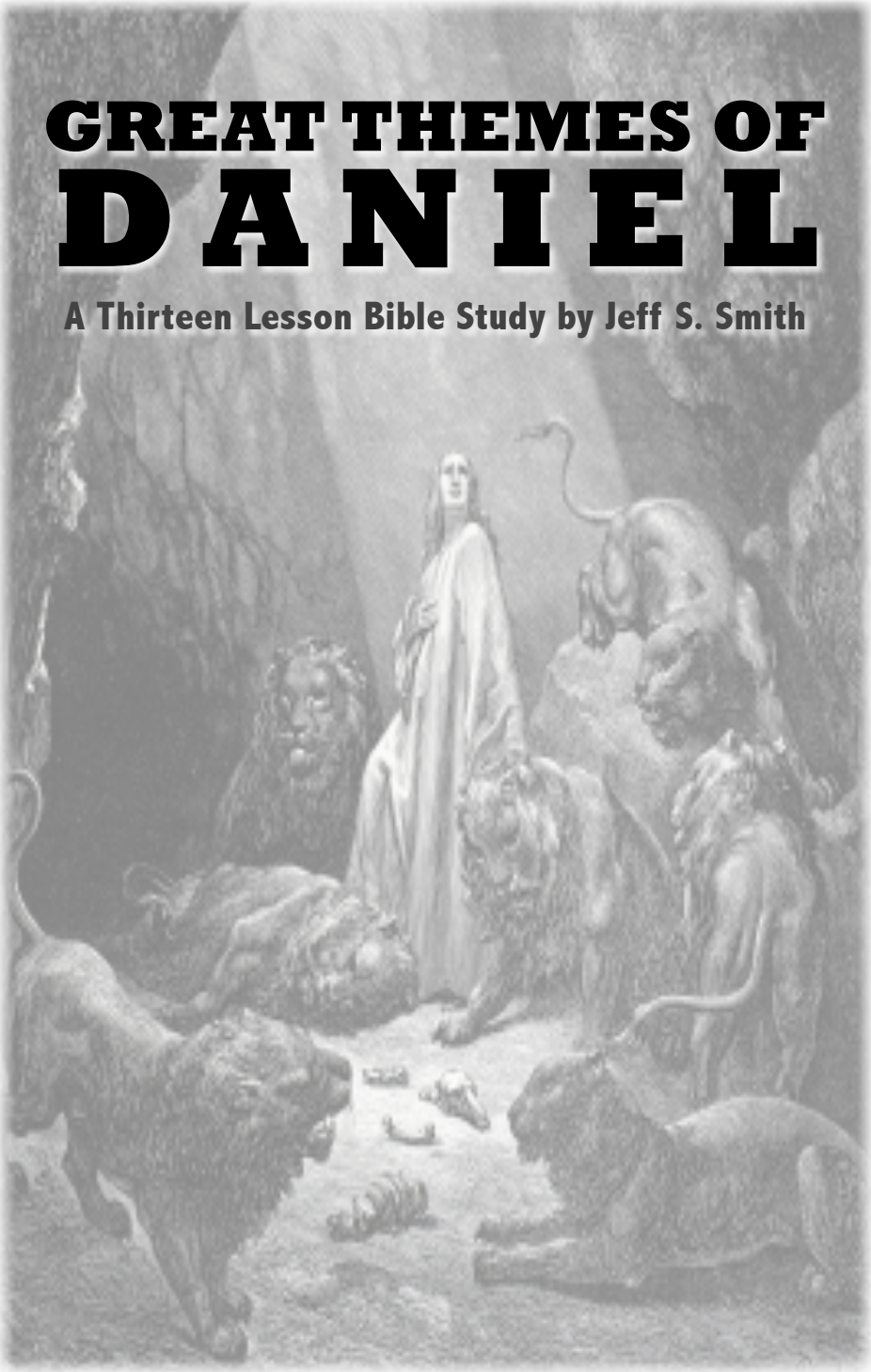
GREAT THEMES OF DANIEL

A Thirteen Lesson Bible Study by Jeff S. Smith



[1] Orr, James, M.A., D.D. General Editor. "Entry for 'MICHAEL'". "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia". <http://www.studylight.org/enc/isb/view.cgi?number=T6015>. 1915.

7. What did Daniel do in response to a decree to stop praying to God (Daniel 6:10)? On what enduring principle (Act 4:19-20, 5:29)? How did Daniel survive his night with the lions (6:16-23)?

8. Who established the Greek empire that followed Medo-Persia? What has the number four to do with that empire?

9. What nation stopped the terror campaign of the Greek Antiochus, soon becoming the last empire (8:23-27)?

10. What sin does Daniel confess (9:3-7)?

11. What does Daniel 10:13-14 suggest about the presence of temptation in our own, mundane lives (cf. Ephesians 6:10-12, 2:1-3; Second Corinthians 10:1-6, Romans 8:26, James 4:7-8)?

12. When would the abomination of desolation return again (Matthew 24:15)? Who would survive both episodes (Daniel 11:32, Matthew 24:16-22)?

Introduction

The book of Daniel is numbered among the Old Testament's major prophets, called that not because of greater significance, but relative length. Daniel was a prisoner-of-war, captured by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon when Jerusalem finally met its long-predicted demise. Daniel was taken away, educated and trained that he might serve his new king in government service, but he maintained so much of his Hebrew culture and upbringing that he and many like him were able to preserve a faithful remnant on which a new Israel was founded. The book that bears his name begins with six historical chapters about his own exploits, while the last half displays a series of prophetic images.

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Printing Instructions

1. Download the booklet and open it in Adobe Reader.
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Lesson 13: Review

1. What would you say is the theme of this book, uniting its two very different halves?

2. Why did Daniel refuse to eat the king's delicacies (1:8-16)? Can you see how Daniel might have arrived at a different conclusion? What might his reasoning have been? Why would that have proven faulty?

3. Summarize Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation (2).

4. Were Shadrach, Meschach and Abed-Nego convinced they would survive the fiery furnace (3:16-18)? What would become of their faith if they should watch each other incinerated (Second Corinthians 1:8-11, Hebrews 3:12-15)? How is Christ likewise able to save us to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25-28)?

5. What brought on Nebuchadnezzar's downfall (Daniel 4:28-33)? What did Nebuchadnezzar learn from this experience (4:34-37)? What did you learn?

6. What did the original handwriting on the wall mean (5:24-28)?

7. How long would the fulfillment of these wonders be (Daniel 12:5-7)? What does that mean?

8. How would one understand the meaning of this and other prophecies, especially those regarding the fate of mankind generally (Daniel 12:8-10; cf. Ephesians 3:4, Matthew 7:7-11, 13:10-17; Second Thessalonians 2:9-12)?

9. What did another angel say about those intent on doing wickedness (Revelation 22:10-11; cf. First Corinthians 14:38)?

10. How can one be purified, whitened and refined (Second Timothy 2:20-23, Titus 1:15)?

11. How long would the desecration continue (Daniel 12:11-12)?

12. What could Daniel anticipate at the end of the days (12:13)?

13. What can the Christian anticipate (Second Timothy 4:7-8, First Peter 1:3-5)?

Lesson 1: The King's Service

Text: Daniel 1:1-21

1. How did Nebuchadnezzar apparently defeat Jehovah in 605 B.C. (Daniel 1:1-2; cf. Second Chronicles 36:5-7)? How could God allow himself to be humbled like this (see Second Kings 20:17-18 and Habakkuk 1:1-11)?

2. The Babylonians carried out at least three deportations of the Hebrews, beginning with this one. What was Ashpenaz looking for in a captive (Daniel 1:3-5)? How long were Daniel and his three friends to train?

3. Discuss the benefits and dangers of a secular education as it relates to the spirit of a man (see First Corinthians 1:19-24 and Acts 4:13).

4. Complete the name change chart below (Daniel 1:6-7):

Hebrew Name	Hebrew Meaning	Chaldean Name	Chaldean Meaning
Daniel			
Hananiah	Jehovah hath favored	Shadrach	of the Sun god
Mishael			
Azariah	Whom Jehovah helps	Abed-Nego	Servant of shining fire

5. Why did Daniel refuse to eat the king's delicacies (1:8-16; see also Leviticus 11:41-47 and Deuteronomy 32:36-38)?

6. Think about the reasoning in which Daniel might have engaged. Consider what has happened, not only to him, but to the temple and all Israel. Can you see how Daniel might have arrived at a different conclusion? What might his reasoning have been? Why would that have proven faulty?

7. Why did the chief of the eunuchs give Daniel and his three friends a chance to observe their own diet?

8. What is the danger of wine (Proverbs 20:1, 23:29-35; First Peter 4:1-4)?

9. How did they appear after 10 days? Was this effect natural or miraculous?

10. How did they get their wisdom (Daniel 1:17)? How did Solomon get his (First Kings 3:5-14)? How can we get wisdom (Proverbs 4:5-7, 16:16; James 1:5-8)?

11. How long was Daniel's public ministry (Daniel 1:18-21)?

Lesson 12: The End

Text: Daniel 12:1-13

1. After a period of great persecution in which Judaism was corrupted by the imposition of heathenism, a time of resistance and restoration under the Maccabees followed. How does Daniel describe the persecution (Daniel 12:1-3)?

2. Who would enjoy deliverance? Who would suffer more shame?

3. With what similar book are Christians concerned (Revelation 3:5, 20:11-15; Exodus 32:31-34)?

4. This resurrection of Judaism paved the way for Christ to come and foreshadows the final general resurrection of the dead on Judgment Day. What is the standard of judgment on that day (Romans 2:5-11, John 12:48, Romans 14:23)?

5. Who are the wise of verse three (James 3:1, Hebrews 5:12-14, First Corinthians 3:5-6, First Timothy 4:6)?

6. What was Daniel told to do with the book (Daniel 12:4)? How are Christians treated similarly (Second Timothy 2:19, Second Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 4:30)?

7. Did the king of the north finish victoriously or in defeat (Daniel 11:17-19)?

8. Describe the two rulers who followed (Daniel 11:20-24).

a. verse 20:

b. verse 21:

9. What brought about the downfall of the new king of the South (Daniel 11:25-28)?

10. What grieves the vile person (Daniel 11:29-35)? What does he do in response?

11. When would the abomination of desolation return again (Matthew 24:15)? Who would survive both episodes (Daniel 11:32, Matthew 24:16-22)?

12. Describe his blasphemy (Daniel 11:36-45). How does Paul paint a similar portrait for more modern times (Second Thessalonians 2:1-12)?

Lesson 2: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Text: Daniel 2:1-49

1. Whom did Nebuchadnezzar call to treat his insomnia (Daniel 2:1-3)? What did they request before offering a diagnosis (4)?

2. Why did he refuse to tell them the details of his dream (2:5-9)?

3. His interpreters were classic "Yes-Men," who feared the truth and the way their master would respond. How do you go about telling the truth to your own employers and job superiors (Ephesians 4:15, 6:5-8; Revelation 22:15)?

4. What conclusion did Nebuchadnezzar draw when the wise men refused even to try to describe his dream (Daniel 2:10-15)? How did Daniel and his three friends escape his rage?

5. What penalty did the Law of Moses determine for false prophets (Deuteronomy 18:17-22)?

6. What is to be done with false prophets and teachers today (Revelation 22:18, Second Peter 2:1-3, Second Timothy 3:5, Romans 16:17-18)? How can their reliability be tested (First John 4:1-6, Acts 17:11)?

7. How did Daniel discern the dream and its interpretation (Daniel 2:16-23)?

8. Explain Daniel's mercy and humility (2:24-30).

9. What was the theme of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? To whom do the secret things belong (Deuteronomy 29:29)?

10. Complete the chart (Daniel 2:31-45).

	Body Part	Material	Kingdom
1	Head		
2	Chest, Arms	Silver	Medo-Persia
3	Belly, Thighs		
4	Legs, Feet	Iron, Iron and clay	Rome

11. Summarize the dream and its interpretation.

12. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond?

Lesson 11: Wars and Rumors of Wars

Text: Daniel 11:1-45

1. What then future conqueror and monarch is the subject of this section of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 11:1-4)?

2. What happened to his kingdom?

3. Chapter 11 contains a recapitulation of the vision of chapter eight, only with much more detail (Daniel 11:5-20). Who were the primary characters of that vision and chapter?

4. Who is the king of the South (Daniel 11:5-8)?

5. How does the king of the North find success (11:9-16)?

6. Three spiritual lessons can be gleaned from that success when compared to the New Testament. What are they?

   a. Second Timothy 2:1-4, 4:6-8:

   b. Ephesians 6:10-18, Second Corinthians 10:1-6:

   c. Second Thessalonians 3:6, Hebrews 10:24:

6. Give some thought to what humility has to do with understanding the Bible (Jeremiah 10:23, Proverbs 16:18, Ecclesiastes 12:9-14, First Corinthians 10:12, Hebrews 12:7-11). What do you come up with?

7. What had delayed the person from coming to Daniel (10:13-14)? Who is this mysterious Michael (cf. 12:1, Jude 9)?

8. What does this suggest about the presence of temptation in our own, mundane lives (Ephesians 6:10-12, 2:1-3, Second Corinthians 10:1-6, Romans 8:26, James 4:7-8)?

9. Why was Daniel sad (Daniel 10:15-19)? What strengthened him?

10. Where can a Christian draw strength when he feels discouraged (Psalm 55:22, Second Timothy 1:12, Romans 15:4, Hebrews 10:24-25)?

11. What other prince was due to arrive (Daniel 10:20-21)?

Lesson 3: Fiery Furnace

Text: Daniel 3:1-30

1. What did Nebuchadnezzar quickly do about his dream (Daniel 3:1-7)?

2. Nebuchadnezzar not only summoned every bureaucrat of his government, but also made his declaration to all his "peoples, nations and languages." What might have been his intent with the idol in the midst of a religiously-mixed empire?

3. What is implied when one worships?

4. Why didn't Shadrach, Meschach, and Abed-Nego comply with Nebuchadnezzar's decree (Daniel 3:8-12; cf. Exodus 20:1-6, 32:7-10)?

5. Why would it have been a problem for the three Jews just to go along with the decree, objecting silently and repenting later (Revelation 2:10 and Matthew 10:32-37)?

6. The United States is filled with statuary–the Lincoln Memorial, the Statue of Liberty and in most city squares, county courthouses and state capitols. What is the difference between these modern statues and the one Nebuchadnezzar erected and the kind Moses forbade?

7. What challenge did Nebuchadnezzar issue as he interrogated the three Jews (Daniel 3:13-15)?

8. Were the three convinced they would survive the fiery furnace (3:16-18)? What would become of their faith if they should watch each other incinerated (Second Corinthians 1:8-11, Hebrews 3:12-15)?

9. How did the king stack the odds against their survival (Daniel 3:19-23)? Who died in the furnace that day?

10. What astonished Nebuchadnezzar (3:24-25)? Explain what he saw.

11. How thorough was their preservation (3:26-27)?

12. How is Christ likewise able to save us to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25-28)?

13. What did Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge they had done with their bodies (Daniel 3:28-30)? How were they rewarded? What does God ask of us (Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:20-24, First Peter 4:1-5)?

Lesson 10: Michael Arrives

Text: Daniel 10:1-21

1. When did the vision of this chapter come to Daniel (10:1-3)? What was going on with the Jews at that time?

2. How did Daniel react to the message? Why?

3. What did Daniel see on the twenty-fourth day of the first month by the Tigris River (10:4-6)? Compare to the visions of Ezekiel (1:26-28) and the apostle John (Revelation 1:13-16)?

4. Why did this encounter put Daniel to sleep (Daniel 10:7-9)? What New Testament character experienced something similar?

5. Why did the person come to Daniel in particular (10:10-12)?

6. Israel's happiness in the Promised Land was always conditional and God warned them, chastened them and suffered long with them for centuries as they tempted him to make the ultimate response. To what particular, very ancient, warning does Daniel refer (Daniel 9:8-15; cf. Deuteronomy 28:15-68)? What was God's ultimate response?

7. Why doesn't Daniel blame God for being a bad father, or blame society or some inherent disability or the serpent from the Garden of Eden?

8. Daniel goes even further in displaying his genuine understanding of God's grace (Daniel 9:16-19). To what does he ascribe this opportunity for redemption? What does he admit is not worthy of such credit (18)?

9. What modern works are necessary to earn one his salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 3:4-7)? How is individual redemption really accomplished (Romans 10:10-17)?

10. What did Gabriel identify as the purposes of the 70 weeks (Daniel 9:20-27)?

11. How did the Messiah's covenant become effective (Hebrews 9:11-17)?

Lesson 4: Nebuchadnezzar is Humbled

Text: Daniel 4:1-37

1. Is Nebuchadnezzar now a monotheistic worshiper of the one true God (Daniel 4:1-3)? Explain.

2. What was his condition as this new dream came upon him (4:4-9)? What might this foreshadow about the dream and its fulfillment (Proverbs 16:18-19; cf. Second Peter 3:4, Matthew 24:42)?

3. Why did Nebuchadnezzar figure that Daniel could interpret his dream (Daniel 4:10-18)?

4. Explain what it means for the Spirit of God to dwell in someone (Acts 2:17, 38; 6:3, 7:51; Romans 5:5, 8:1-11; First Corinthians 3:16, Galatians 5:18)?

5. Who decreed the tree's demise? Why? Who are the watchers?

6. What might God do today to reestablish this understanding about the affairs of men and governments?

7. What was to happen to the tree's heart? For how long?

8. Whom did the tree represent (Daniel 4:19-22)? How?

9. Essentially, what was about to happen to Nebuchadnezzar (4:23-25)?

10. What was Daniel's advice (4:26-27; see also James 1:27)?

11. How can otherwise moral people forget about sharing and helping the less fortunate (First John 3:16-19, Philippians 2:3, Hebrews 13:1-3, 16)?

12. What brought on Nebuchadnezzar's downfall (Daniel 4:28-33)?

13. What did Nebuchadnezzar learn from this experience (4:34-37)? What did you learn?

Lesson 9: Daniel's Prayer

Text: Daniel 9:1-27

1. Who is Darius (Daniel 9:1)? Can you find out when his first year was?

2. To which other prophet does Daniel make reference (Daniel 9:2)? What specific prophecy does he have in mind (cf. Second Chronicles 36:20-21, Jeremiah 29:10-14)?

3. How did Daniel go about setting his face toward God to make his request (Daniel 9:3-7)? How does James describe genuine prayer today (5:16)? What place has fasting in our requests of God today (Luke 18:9-14, Acts 13:2-3)?

4. What sin does Daniel confess?

5. Why do modern believers continue to depart from God's precepts and judgments today (Jude 16-25)?

6. The male goat went from one notable horn to four notable ones and then back to one little horn. What did the little horn do?

7. A similar prophetic character appears in the New Testament writings of the apostle Paul. Who is he (Second Thessalonians 2:1-12)? What is his power? Who might be his unholy allies (Second Corinthians 11:13-14, First John 2:18-19, Second Peter 2:1-3, 18-22)?

8. How long would this desecration that Daniel foresaw last (Daniel 8:13-14)?

9. What did Daniel do in the presence of Gabriel (8:15-17)? Why? When do we see Gabriel again?

10. Gabriel explains to Daniel the meaning of the vision, even naming the Medes, Persians and Greeks (8:18-22). What era of history is he describing?

11. What nation stopped the terror campaign of the Greek Antiochus (8:23-27)?

Lesson 5: Handwriting on the Wall

Text: Daniel 5:1-31

1. Some time elapses in between chapters four and five, which introduces the character, Belshazzar, who was regent for his father, Nabonidus, king of Babylon from 556 to 539 B.C. Nabonidus preferred to reside in Tema, leaving Belshazzar in charge in Babylon. What did Belshazzar do while Nabonidus was away (Daniel 5:1-4)?

2. What happens to the cups that had been stolen from Solomon's temple (see also Revelation 9:20)?

3. How did God respond to this blasphemy (Daniel 5:5-9)? What effect did this have on Belshazzar?

4. What promotion did he promise to the interpreter?

5. Whom did his mother recommend for the job (5:10-12)? Why?

6. What did Daniel say about the rewards and promotion (5:13-17)?

7. To what event does Daniel make reference as he interprets the dream (5:18-21)?

8. With what grave sin does Daniel charge Belshazzar (5:22-23)?

9. What do these passages say about self-exaltation?

- Proverbs 27:2:
- First Peter 5:5-6:
- James 4:7-10:

10. What might Belshazzar have learned from the Lord's parable of the wedding feast (Luke 14:7-14)?

11. What was the interpretation of the inscription (Daniel 5:24-28):

- MENE:
- TEKEL:
- PERES:

12. In spite of the ugly report, the king still rewarded Daniel (Daniel 5:29-31). What did Belshazzar have for breakfast the next morning?

Lesson 8: Ram and Male Goat

Text: Daniel 8:1-27

1. Who is Belshazzar (Daniel 8:1)? When did Daniel receive this particular vision?

2. Where was the vision set (8:2-4)? What did Daniel see at first? What does the prophecy mean?

3. What followed the first animal in Daniel's vision (8:5-7)? What was notable about it? What empire and conqueror followed Persia in world history?

4. What replaced the notable horn when it was broken (8:8-12)? What does this signify? See if you can find the historical names that correspond to the four new notable horns.

5. To what might the "Glorious Land" have reference?

6. Who established the Greek empire that followed Medo-Persia? What has the number four to do with that empire?

7. The fourth beast corresponds to the Roman empire, into which Jesus was born. How does Daniel's prophecy harmonize with what we learn about Rome from the New Testament? What were its pompous words (Revelation 13:1-6)?

8. How is God depicted (Daniel 7:9-10; cf. Ezekiel 1:26-28, Revelation 4:2)?

9. What became of the fourth empire (Daniel 7:11-12; cf. Revelation 19:20, 20:10)?

10. What kingdom follows the fourth beast as worldwide empire (Daniel 7:13-18; cf. Mark 9:1, Colossians 1:13, Galatians 3:28-29)?

11. What first-century condition is prophesied by Daniel (7:19-22; Revelation 1:7, 2:10)?

12. When did Roman persecution of the church cease (Daniel 7:23-28)?

Lesson 6: The Lion's Den

Text: Daniel 6:1-28

1. What position did Daniel attain under Darius? What emotions are stirred when someone else is promoted (Daniel 6:1-2; cf. Genesis 37:2-11)?

2. Consider Philippians 1:12-20. What attitude motivated some of Paul's fellow preachers? What did he identify as a better attitude (2:1-3)?

3. How did Daniel distinguish himself even among the three governors (Daniel 6:3-5)?

4. The New Testament addresses stewards and slaves, roughly analogous to what we call employees today. Daniel is very much typical of the kind of employee that a believer should prove to be. What do we learn about that position in these passages?

a. Ephesians 6:5-8:

b. Colossians 3:22-25:

c. First Peter 2:18-20:

5. Where did Daniel's enemies propose to find an accusation against him that would stick?

6. Why would Darius sign the decree the governors and satraps brought to him (Daniel 6:6-9)? What happened to Herod when he responded in a similar way to this kind of flattery (Acts 12:20-23)?

7. What did Daniel do in response to a decree to stop praying to God (Daniel 6:10)? On what enduring principle (Acts 4:19-20, 5:29)?

8. Where should Christians pray (John 4:21-23, First Timothy 2:8)? When (First Thessalonians 5:17)? What kind of setting (Matthew 6:5-6)?

9. Why couldn't Darius deliver Daniel from the edict (Daniel 6:11-15)?

10. How did Daniel survive his night with the lions (6:16-23)?

11. What became of Daniel's accusers (6:24-28)?

Lesson 7: Dreaming of Beasts

Text: Daniel 7:1-28

1. The first half of the book transitions into the second half as chapter seven commences a series of visions that augment the experiences of the book thus far. Where did we meet Belshazzar already (Daniel 7:1)?

2. To what chapter is this vision similar (Daniel 7:2-3)? What is meant by the Great Sea?

3. Describe the four beasts that came out of the sea (Daniel 7:4-8).

	Appearance	Kingdom
1	Lion with eagle's wings and man's heart	
2	Bear with three ribs between its teeth	Medo-Persia
3	Leopard with four wings and heads	
4	Dreadful, terrible, strong beast with iron teeth	Rome

4. What modern nation is usually associated with the bear? Does the second beast correspond to that modern nation? Why or why not?

5. What might the three ribs in the bear's mouth represent?