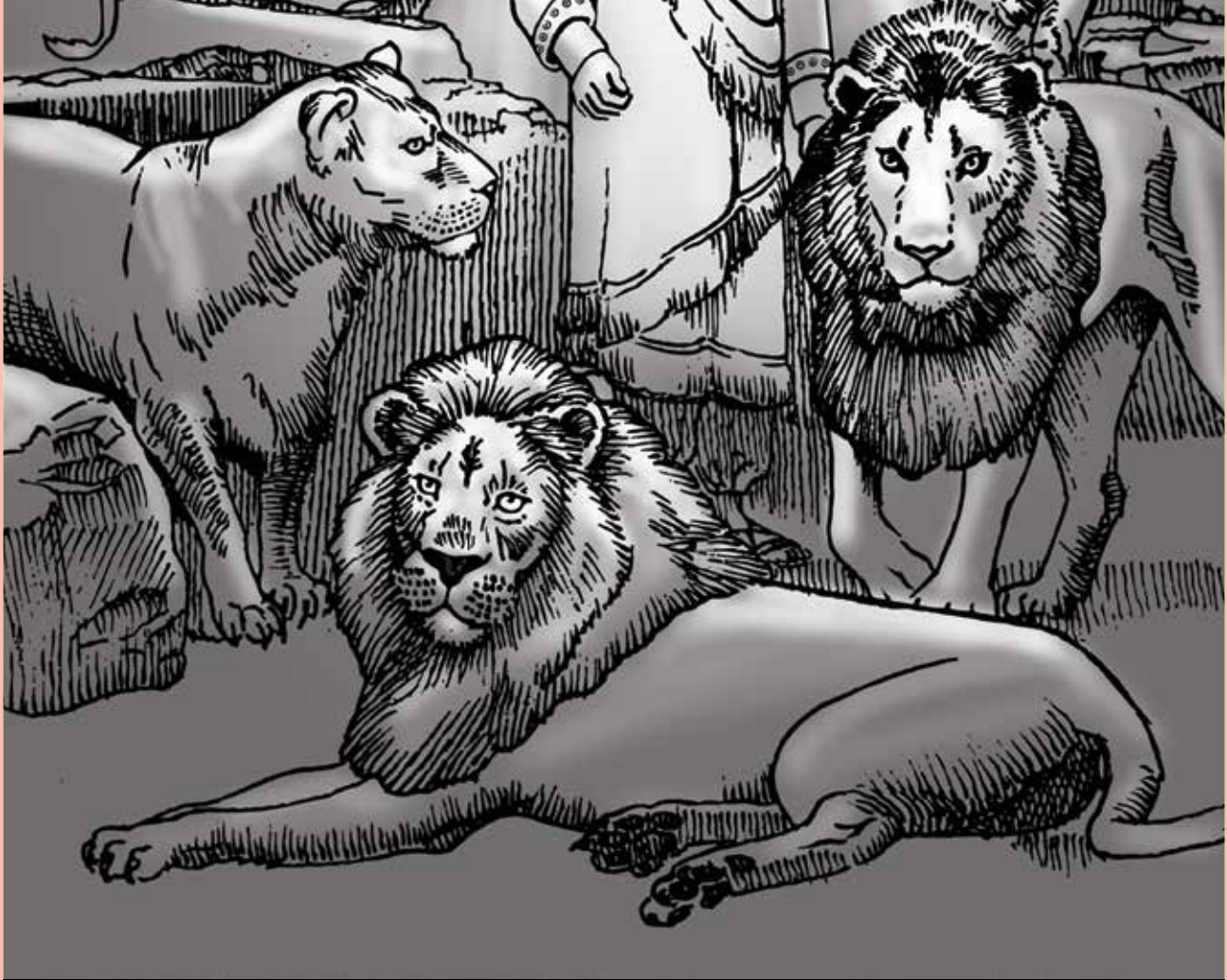
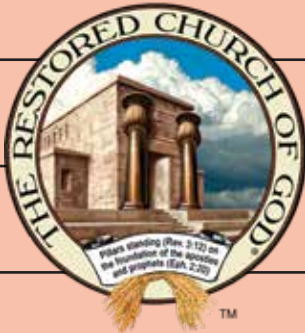


THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD®

CHILDREN'S BIBLE LESSONS



The Story of Young Daniel



LEVEL 6
LESSON 5

The Story of Young Daniel

To someone your age, many men and women of the Bible may, at times, seem distant and hard to imagine. Of course, the key to truly understanding what God’s servants went through is to be able to “ride in the saddle”—to try to read a story as if you are experiencing it along with them.

Well, the Bible also records events and lives of young people. Pretty soon, if you have not already, you will become a teenager. Did you know that there are teenagers in the Bible whose life stories have been recorded for all time?

In this lesson, we will study one young man, the tests and trials he went through, and the many lessons we can learn from his example.

Because of his age, you should be better able to relate to this young person. We will take time to consider some situations you may face that could be similar to what he experienced.

Young Men Chosen

Our story begins in Jerusalem, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. At this time, Jehoiakim was paying tribute to the king of Egypt.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and his army came to Jerusalem and surrounded it. God

allowed the city to be taken by Nebuchadnezzar, who also took some of the rare and special items of Jerusalem back to Shinar, where his god was located. Just like any other leader of the nations near Judah or Israel, he worshipped gods made from metal, stone or wood. We will come to learn that he, through the example of some young men, learned about the true God of the Bible—the God who made every star and galaxy that you can see in the night sky.

(Remember that God promised that Judah would be taken into captivity because of its idolatry and Sabbath breaking. As always, God’s words came true.)

Nebuchadnezzar had a group of men around him, who were ministers of state. Ashpenaz was the master of these men. One day, Nebuchadnezzar asked Ashpenaz to bring certain young Jews to his court to be trained. Ashpenaz had to pick young men who were well educated and had knowledge and wisdom. He was looking for men who had enough propriety and decorum to be able to live among royalty in the king’s palace. Ashpenaz had the task of finding exceptional young men (Daniel 1:3-4).

Among the Jews, Ashpenaz found Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. These young men continued to obey God, even though their nation was taken captive. Of course, in a foreign

country, these young men would be pressured into disobeying the one true God. We will learn that they did not give in—that they continued to worship the God of the Bible. In the same way, you will be pressured by people in the world to disobey God. Read the stories of these four young men when you have to deal with certain pressures or difficulties. They are inspiring examples of strength.

The four young men chosen were given Babylonian names to use while in King Nebuchadnezzar's service. Daniel was given the name Belteshazzar. Hananiah was given the name Shadrach. Mishael was named Meshach. And Azariah was given the name Abednego (Daniel 1:7).

King Nebuchadnezzar wanted these young men to be specially trained. He even gave them food from his own table. However, the king did not follow the dietary laws of God. Remember, he had his own god and did not live according



to the law of Almighty God. The king's diet would have included unclean meat, such as pork.

The young men knew the laws of clean and unclean meat, found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. And, of course, they knew that they must obey God rather than men—even if the man was a powerful king. Daniel determined that he, under any circumstances, would not eat the king's meat. Would you have the same determination to always obey God—even under the threat of possible severe and undeserved punishment?

Daniel requested Melzar, the man that Ashpenaz had put in charge of the four young men, to come to him. He said to him, "I cannot eat of the king's meat. I will prove to you that eating our diet will make us much healthier! For 10 days, we will eat nothing but garden produce and drink only water. Then, compare us to those who are eating the king's diet." Daniel understood that he and his three friends would be healthier than the other young men.

Because Daniel obeyed God, God brought favor to him. Melzar liked young Daniel. While Melzar didn't think the diet would work,

he agreed to this 10-day experiment. Of course, after these 10 days, the four young Jews were much healthier than those who had eaten the king's meat. Melzar was pleasantly surprised. He agreed to let them eat what they wanted, following the laws that God had set out for them.

The training program lasted three years for these four young men. During that time, God continued to give them much knowledge and wisdom. God also gave Daniel the ability to understand all types of visions and dreams. By the end of the training program, the king talked with them and felt that they were wiser than all the other advisors and ministers of state that he had in his court. In fact, he felt they were 10 times better than all the other so-called wise men—the magicians and astrologers. These were the type of men that kings of other nations relied upon. Remember that Pharaoh had magicians as well.

The young Jews had God on their side, and He greatly blessed them. Because the king understood that the young men were wise, he gave them important positions in the Babylonian government.

The King Dreams

One night, many months later, King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream. He was so disturbed by the dream that he could no longer sleep that night. But, he also forgot the dream!

Immediately, he commanded that all the magicians, astrologers and sorcerers be summoned to come before him. When they were gathered, he told them, "I have dreamed a dream that has greatly troubled me, but I cannot remember it. Tell me what the dream is and what

it means!" The king knew that if they were able to tell him the dream, they would also be able to give him the correct meaning of it.

But these men were not led by God. They did not have the power to discern what the king had dreamed. They knew they could not do it, so they protested, "O great king, please tell us the dream, and we will show you the interpretation!"

"I have forgotten it," he retorted. "You must tell me the dream and what it means. If you cannot, you will be cut to pieces, and I will destroy your homes!"

Again, the supposed wise men begged to be told the dream. They told the king, "No man on earth can tell you this. It is impossible!"

The king was so furious with the wise men that he commanded them all to be killed. This decree went forth throughout the kingdom. As advisors to the king, it also included that Daniel and his friends be killed. When Daniel heard what had happened, he asked the king's guard, Arioch, "Why has the king been so hasty in his decision?"

Daniel immediately requested to come before the king. He asked the king to give him some time. He knew that with the power of God behind him, he would be able to show the king his dream and give him the correct interpretation. He also went to his three friends and asked them to pray that God intervene on their behalf and reveal the dream to Daniel.

These four young men prayed to God, asking Him to show them the dream so that they would not perish. God heard them and revealed the dream to Daniel in a night vision.

Turn to Daniel 2:20-23 to find out Daniel's response, and fill in the blanks: "Daniel answered and said: '_____ be the name of God

forever and ever, for _____ and _____ are His. And He _____ the _____ and the _____; He _____ and _____ up _____; He gives _____ to the _____ and _____ to those who have _____. He _____ and _____ things; He _____ what is in the _____, And _____ dwells with Him. I _____ You and _____ You, O God of my fathers; You have given me _____ and _____, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king's demand.”

What is the lesson from this passage? (Hint: It still very much applies to you today.) _____

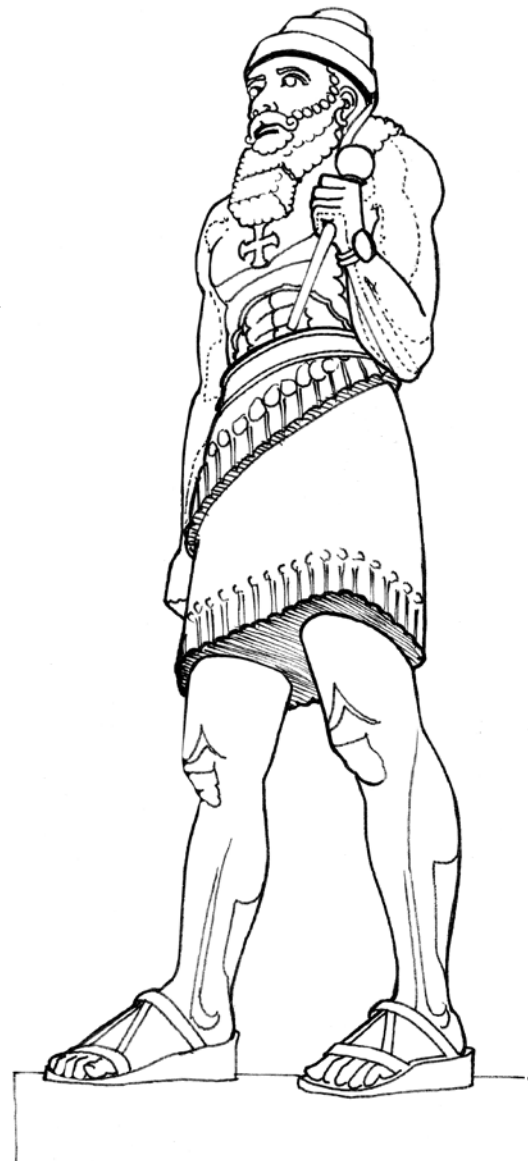
Daniel went to Arioch and said, “I have the answer that the king is looking for. Please bring me before the king and I will tell him the interpretation.” Arioch quickly brought Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar.

The king asked, “Can you tell me the dream and what it means?”

Daniel responded, “No man on Earth can reveal secrets such as you are asking. No wise man, astrologer or magician can give you the answer. But,” Daniel exclaimed, “God in heaven reveals secrets, and He has made it known to you, King Nebuchadnezzar. God has made known to me your dream and its interpretation.”

Daniel now had the king's full attention. “Please continue,” he said.

Daniel described the dream to the king, “You saw a great image. This image had a head of gold, and its breast and arms were silver. His belly and thighs were made of brass. The legs were iron, and his feet were part iron and part clay. Then,” Daniel continued, “you saw a stone hit the feet of the image and the stone broke it to



pieces. These pieces blew to the wind. The stone that hit the image became a great mountain and filled the whole Earth.”

Then, Daniel revealed the meaning of the dream, “You, king, are the head of gold. God has given you a kingdom with power, strength and glory. Another kingdom will rise after you. That kingdom is pictured by the silver. The other parts of the image are other kingdoms that will rise after the silver. The stone that crushed the other kingdoms is God’s Kingdom. The great God of the universe has told you, Nebuchadnezzar, what will happen in the future. The dream will come true!”

Nebuchadnezzar then fell on his face before Daniel and said, “Your God is God of gods and the Lord of kings.” The king then gave Daniel an important position in Babylon—he made him one of his chief officials. He also gave Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego important positions.

The Fiery Furnace

While the king was impressed with what Daniel had told him, he did not stop worshipping his own gods. He formed a very large image made of gold and was most proud of this idol. He wanted all the officials of his kingdom to bow down to it.

Nebuchadnezzar called all the governors, captains, judges, treasurers and all the important people of the land. He wanted a special ceremony for worship of this image. He commanded that everyone must bow down to this idol when music is heard. Those who did not bow down would be cast into a fiery furnace.

Some officials knew that the Jews would not bow down to such an image. They went to the king and told him that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not bow down. The king was furious upon hearing the news. He called for the three young men.

He asked in a near rage, “It is true that you three will not bow down to the image? Will you not serve my gods? Know you not that I said that any who disobeyed my command would be thrown into a fiery furnace?”

They respectfully answered the king, saying, “Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from this fiery furnace. But even if He decides not to, you must know, king, that we will *not* serve your gods. We will *not* worship your golden images!”

This response angered Nebuchadnezzar beyond words! He yelled, “Heat the furnace seven times more and throw these men into it!”

The king had some of the mighty men in his army bind the three young men and cast them into the fiery furnace. However, the furnace was so hot that the fire actually killed the men who brought Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to the furnace!

But then an amazing thing happened. Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace and saw *four* men standing amidst the flames! “Didn’t we cast only three in the fire?” he asked his counselors. They responded that that was indeed the case.

The fourth figure in the furnace was the Son of God, later known as Jesus Christ, sent by God to deliver the three young men. Because they obeyed God and would not bow their knee to a false god, God protected them and delivered them. While God does not necessarily intervene as a physical being like this very often (especially in modern times), He is watching over you and making sure that you are safe. He will also help and deliver you in various ways *if* you set your heart to obey Him. God may also have delivered you in the past in ways you might not be aware.

The king then told the three young men to come out of the furnace. He was again reminded that the Jews served a God that is alive—the true God of the universe. The three men’s coats were not harmed, none had a single hair singed, and they did not even smell like smoke. What a miracle for all the supposed wise men of Babylon to see with their very own eyes!

The king made a decree: “Every people, nation and language, which speak anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be cut in pieces and their homes shall be destroyed.”

The Second Dream

Even though Nebuchadnezzar experienced several events in which he was shown the true God and admitted His existence, he still was a very proud person. He thought that he was great and that he had much power. He did not realize how truly small he was compared to the God of the universe. This pride was going to cause much trouble in his life.

One day, the king had another dream. He told the dream to the magicians, astrologers and other “wise men,” and none of them were able to tell him what the dream meant.

Then, Daniel came to the king and the king told Daniel his dream. The king, in his dream, saw a large tree. It was a tree so big that it reached far into the sky and provided food and shelter for many animals. But then a being from heaven came down and had the tree chopped down, leaving only a stump. The being from heaven said, “Let him graze with the beasts on the grass...Let his heart be changed from a man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.” The being

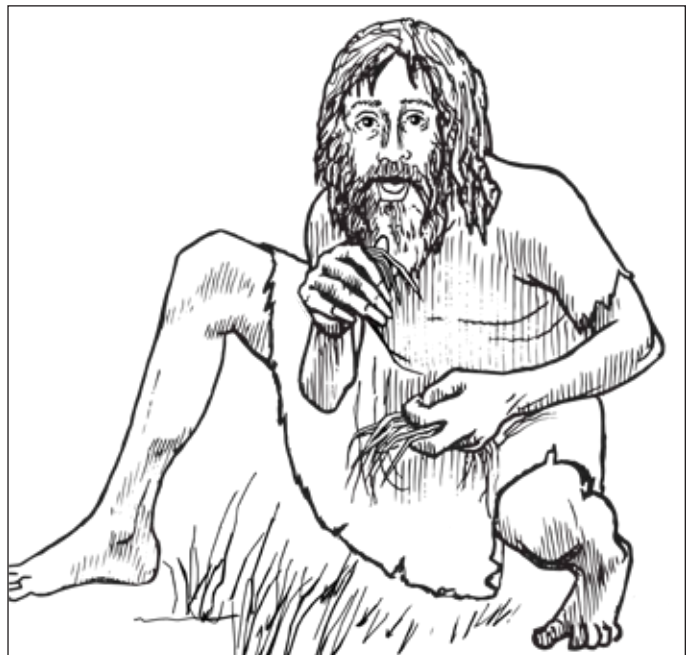
continued, “This will be done so that everyone will know who is God—who truly rules in the kingdoms of men and gives power to whomever He wants” (Daniel 4:13-17).

Daniel heard the explanation, and he knew immediately what the dream meant. He was troubled and did not tell the meaning to the king right away. But the king insisted that Daniel tell him what it meant.

Daniel interpreted the dream: “The giant tree that you saw is you, king! You and your kingdom have grown very strong. However, God has ordered that your tree be cut down. This means that God will take away your power and authority; for seven years, you will live like a wild man, eating the grass of the fields like an ox.” “But,” Daniel continued, “if you stop sinning and show mercy to the poor, you may lengthen the time before God takes your position away.”

Sadly, the king did not change his ways. He did not humble himself and admit that it was God who put him in authority.

One day, he was walking in his palace and exclaimed, “Is not this great Babylon that I have



built for the house of the kingdom by the might of *my* power and for the honor of *my* majesty?"

At that very moment, a voice from heaven said, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken. The kingdom is departed from you. You will learn that it is God who is in charge of who rules the kingdoms of men" (Daniel 4:31-32).

Within one hour, God's words came true. Nebuchadnezzar was taken away from men and lived like an animal, eating grass. His hair grew long, and his nails became so long that they looked like claws.

After seven years, as God had said, the king regained his sanity. The king was humbled and learned a great lesson. Turn to Daniel 4:34-37 to learn what he found out: "And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and _____ and _____ Him who lives _____: for His dominion is an _____, and His Kingdom is from generation to generation. All the _____ of the Earth are _____ as _____; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the Earth. No one can _____ His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'...Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, _____ and _____ and _____ the King of heaven, all of whose works are _____, and His ways justice. And those who walk in _____ He is able to _____."

Remember the lesson of this king who was great by human standards. There are many people in society today, such as famous athletes and movie stars, who think highly of themselves and their accomplishments. Never forget

Nebuchadnezzar's words: "Those who walk in pride God is able to abase."

A New King

After Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Babylon was led by a man named Belshazzar. This man was very evil.

One day, King Belshazzar made a great feast and invited many of his state officials. The king commanded that the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem be used at his feast. The king, the princes, and their wives and concubines used these very precious items to drink their wine. As they drank, they praised their false gods made of metal, wood and stone.

Within an hour, the fingers of a man's hand suddenly appeared and began writing on a wall in the hall where they were feasting. The king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Immediately, he became troubled and frightened. He had never seen such a thing. The finger wrote, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin."

The king called for all the wise men to be brought forth to interpret the writing. He promised that whoever revealed the meaning would be given many possessions. However, no one could figure it out. But the queen remembered Daniel, who had since lost his high position after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. She told the king that he was able to interpret dreams.

Daniel was brought before the king and was asked what the writing meant. The king also offered him gifts, but Daniel refused. Daniel then explained to the king the writing on the wall: "The king before, Nebuchadnezzar, was given a very powerful kingdom, full of glory. But his heart was lifted up with pride, and God abased

him until the king knew who ruled the kingdoms of men. You, Belshazzar, have also not humbled your heart, even when you knew what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. You have lifted yourself up so much that you have taken the vessels of God's temple, drunk out of them, and praised your false gods. Therefore, the writing means that your kingdom will end soon. Your enemies are at the gates of the city as I speak. Your kingdom will be given to the Medes and the Persians." The king and his guests were shocked!

That very night, the writing came true. The Medes and the Persians took over Babylon and Belshazzar was killed.

The Lion's Den

Darius the Mede took control of the Babylonian kingdom. He put 120 men in high positions to help govern the kingdom. Then, he put men in charge of the 120, and Daniel was one of them. Darius liked Daniel very much. He noticed that Daniel was different from the others.

Of course, the other princes and rulers were jealous of the attention that Daniel received. They tried to find fault

with him, to accuse him, but they could find nothing because Daniel was an outstanding citizen. The same must be true for us today. We should be a good example to those in the world.

The men who were trying to accuse Daniel knew that the only way they could get him into trouble was if he was commanded to do something that went against God's laws. Remember, Daniel knew—and these men knew—that he must obey God rather than men.



Full of flattery, these men went to King Darius. They said, “All your wise men have consulted together, and we feel that you should make a decree that no one, in the next 30 days, shall ask a petition of anyone but you, king. Sign this decree in writing, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which changes not.”

The king agreed to this counsel that he received.

The men knew that Daniel would pray (ask a petition) of God many times daily throughout the next 30 days. Daniel heard of the decree, but it did not stop him from praying to God three times a day. He prayed to God, giving thanks for all that had been done for him and given to him.

Through a window, the men saw Daniel praying in his dwelling. They immediately went to the king and said, “Have you not signed a decree that no one can ask a petition of any god or man in the next 30 days, with the exception of you?” Of course, the king agreed that this was true. “Well,” the men said, “we have found Daniel praying to his God. He has no regard for your decree and your laws.”

Darius was greatly troubled when he heard this, for he liked Daniel very much. He knew that the law could not be changed and that Daniel would have to be punished. However, from that moment, he began to think how he could help his friend.

The men brought Daniel forth and cast him into a den of lions. The king was there and called out to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you, Daniel!” A boulder was brought to cover the den.

That evening, the king was in his palace and was greatly upset for what had happened. He was so distraught that he did not eat or sleep the entire night. The next morning, he rose early and

went to the den of lions. He cried out, “Daniel, has your God delivered you?”

Daniel responded, “Yes, king, God has delivered me. He sent an angel and has shut the mouths of the lions, and they have not hurt me.”

The king was delighted! His friend had survived. Therefore, Daniel was brought out of the lion’s den. There was not a scratch on him because he believed and obeyed God.

The king commanded that those who had framed Daniel be thrown into the lion’s den themselves. He then sent a decree throughout the entire kingdom saying (turn to Daniel 6:26) “...that in every dominion of my kingdom men must _____ and _____ before the _____ of _____. For He is the _____ God, and _____ forever; His kingdom is the one which _____ be _____, and His dominion shall _____ to the _____.”

Daniel Receives Visions

There were occasions when God showed Daniel visions, which were prophecies for the future (Daniel 7:1; 8:1-2). God had Daniel record these visions in the Bible so that His servants could understand how prophecy would unfold.

God’s prophetic messages in the Bible are often given in symbols. A symbol is simply something that represents something else. For example, a lion is a symbol of courage. Because these prophetic messages are in symbols, we must be careful not to misunderstand what they mean. God reveals the meaning of these symbols through His Word—the Bible.

During the reign of Belshazzar, Daniel received a vision. He saw four great beasts. The first was like a lion and had eagle’s wings. The

second was like a bear. The third was like a leopard, but had four wings on its back. The fourth was a very dreadful and terrible beast; it had great iron teeth and 10 horns. There was also another little horn that came up among the 10 horns.

Of course, these beasts troubled Daniel. But God told him what his dreams meant. The beasts represent four kingdoms that would arise at different times in the centuries after Daniel's life. God also added that eventually His saints would rule with Him in His Kingdom, which will last forever. That time is still ahead of us.

We know that these four kingdoms were also mentioned in Daniel 2, where the Bible describes the statue of a man made of different metals. The first kingdom, or beast, was the Babylonian Empire. The second beast was the Persian Empire, the third was the Greco-Macedonian Empire, and the fourth was the Roman Empire. These were successive world-ruling empires. The 10 horns of the fourth beast represent 10 successive kings that would arise from the Roman Empire.

But what does the "little horn" symbolize? God explained that this horn would rise up and trouble His people throughout the centuries. When looking back at history, we understand this to be the universal false church that has persecuted God's people for thousands of years.

The end of the explanation was that God's Kingdom is going to come to the Earth. This is the good news, or "gospel," that God's Church announces to the world. The job that the Church has—announcing this good news—is called the "Work of God." God's Kingdom will come soon, and Jesus Christ will lead a world-ruling government. People on Earth will finally find true happiness, peace and success in life.

Being in God's Church, you are part of a small group of people that will help lead that wonderful Kingdom of God!

In Daniel 8, Daniel recorded another vision. It is a prophecy some of which has taken place but much of which will come to pass in the future. Daniel 11 records the longest prophecy in the Bible. It is a very long chapter and records many events that will happen in mankind's history. At the time Daniel wrote them down, they had not yet occurred.

They have now occurred in "anti-type," but will be fulfilled in the very near future. Ask your parents to explain to you what an "anti-type" is and what is going to happen soon.

Time of the End

We now come to the last chapter in the book of Daniel. Turn to Daniel 12:4 and write out the scripture: _____

We are now living just before the "time of the end." God said that the prophecies mentioned in Daniel would not be understood until our time.

The Restored Church of God is the only Church that has a proper understanding of prophecy (II Peter 1:19). Talk to your parents and your local minister if you are interested in understanding what is coming.

BIBLE MEMORY: Daniel 2:20-23

The life of Daniel is a great example for every young person—including you. Turn to the following scriptures and write them out. Then, try to determine what character trait this verse portrays. Never forget the lessons of Daniel, and always be sure to follow the example he set.

Daniel 2:23: _____

Character Trait: _____

Daniel 2:30: _____

Character Trait: _____

Daniel 6:4: _____

Character Trait: _____

Daniel 6:10: _____

Character Trait: _____