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Study Questions for the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*

The Book of Daniel

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Study Questions

Chapter 1

For understanding

- 1:1. What are the two different systems of counting a king's reign that were used in the Near East, and for what disparity would they provide a plausible resolution? Why would Nebuchadnezzar wish to make a show of force in Jerusalem following his victory over Egypt in 605 B.C.? When did Jehoiakim and Nebuchadnezzar reign? What other incursions into Judea by Nebuchadnezzar does the Bible mention?
- 1:2. What does Nebuchadnezzar plunder from the Temple, and where was it taken? What theme does the transfer of vessels from one temple to another introduce?
- 1:7. What kinds of names do Daniel and his friends have? What kinds of names mark them as servants of Nebuchadnezzar?
- 1:8. Why did Daniel avoid the king's food? What are some possible factors behind his decision? Of what was abstinence from Gentile foods a hallmark in biblical times?

For application

- 1:7. What does your given name mean to you? Why does the Church encourage the taking of a saint's name at Confirmation? Why did you select your patron saint, and what does the name of that saint mean to you now?
- 1:8, 12. Why do some people choose to become vegetarians? How might their motives compare or contrast with Daniel's?
- 1:17. What is the difference between the learning and wisdom you acquire by your own efforts and the wisdom that God gives? What characterizes his wisdom? As you examine your own relationship with God, do you see any change in your learning and wisdom regarding him?
- 1:18–20. What kind of wisdom and understanding do you think Nebuchadnezzar was probably looking for in the young men? If someone were to examine you on your understanding of religious matters, what would he find?

Chapter 2

For understanding

- 2:1–49. How does historical evidence confirm the way Daniel begins his career as a renowned wise man and courtier? What story does his rise to the royal court in Babylon recall? What similarities exist in the two cases?
- 2:2. What is the original meaning of the term *Chaldeans*, and where in Daniel does it appear to be used that way? What is it used more narrowly to mean here? According to Herodotus, who were Chaldean sages?
- 2:18. **Word Study: Mystery.** What does the Persian loanword *raz* mean? In its nine appearances in the Book of Daniel, to what does the mystery refer? For what will the association forged between "mystery" and "kingdom" in Daniel become the backdrop? What suggests that Paul probably has this association in mind? Where does the Aramaic word *raz* appear outside the Bible, and to what does it refer?
- 2:31–45. As an allegory of political history in the ancient Near East, what do the four metals and their sequence in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represent? What will happen in the days of the fourth empire? Theologically, what does the dream reveal? To what might the smashing of the image refer?
- 2:35. What does the great mountain represent? What significance do mountains have in the biblical world? What implied contrast may one detect here? How does the expanding mountain in Daniel recall the exaltation of Mount Zion?

For application

- 2:1. Describe a dream that troubled you for some time afterward. What bothered you about it? In general, what importance do you attach to dreams, especially troubling or recurring dreams?
- 2:20–23. How does Daniel go about blessing God in this prayer? What is his focus of attention? How might this approach help you in your own prayer?
- 2:28. God sometimes reveals to us mysteries about our own behavior; for example, about why one's relationship with him seems to have stalled. Have you ever prayed for understanding about a problem and received insight as a result? How did the insight affect the resolution of the problem?
- 2:31–45. Read the note for these verses. What do you believe about God's control over human history at large? What about his control over the political, economic, and military issues of today? How does your belief affect your confidence in God's provision for you and your loved ones in times of stress?

Chapter 3

For understanding

- Topical Essay: The Four Kingdoms in Daniel.** If the rise and fall of foreign states would not normally have interested Daniel's readers, what did? How do modern exegetes identify the four kingdoms, and what problems does their interpretation encounter? Why is the traditional reading more convincing?
- 3:5. What does the presence of three musical instruments with Greek names have to do with the dating of the Book of Daniel? What does mandatory prostration before an image signify to the Babylonians?
- 3:1–68 (italics). What are the two poems that stand between 3:23 and 3:24 of the Hebrew-Aramaic text of Daniel? What does the Catholic Church consider these deuterocanonical portions of Daniel to be?
- 3:3–22 (italics). What kind of prayer is Azariah's prayer, and what does it acknowledge? Why are the three youths facing persecution and death in spite of their heroic faithfulness? Where do similar confessions appear in the Bible?

Study Questions

5. **3:25.** What is burned off of the three young men in the furnace, and what remains unharmed? Who is the fourth figure sighted in the flames? According to St. Jerome, whom does this angel foreshadow?

For application

1. **3:16–18.** If the government were to pass a law requiring all citizens either to violate one of the Ten Commandments or to support that violation under pain of severe penalties (such as heavy fines or confiscation of property), what would you do? How important is your Christian witness in such circumstances?
2. **3:1–22** (italics). In these verses, Azariah expresses contrition, not for his own sins, but for the sins of the people to whom he belongs. If one is not personally responsible for the sins of his culture, why make such a prayer? What spiritual benefits might one realize from such a confession? Why is prayer for your country valuable?
3. **3:28–68** (italics). In their song, the three young men praise God for his goodness and then call on all creation (including themselves) to praise him; note the same pattern of prayer in Ps 148. Given their circumstances, what good is their praise? What effects might praise have on one's attitude toward prayer, regardless of the circumstances?
4. **3:26** (italics), **3:25** (normal font). Read CCC 334–36 on angels in the life of the Church. Do you share the Church's belief in guardian angels? Have you ever sought the intercession of your guardian angel? If not, what prevents you from doing so?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:8.** What does the name Belshazzar mean? Which Babylonian god had the title Bel? What do Nebuchadnezzar's words recall?
2. **4:10–18.** As a parable of judgment, about what does Nebuchadnezzar's dream warn him? What does the banded stump signify? What has archaeology discovered with respect to Nebuchadnezzar?
3. **4:25.** How does modern psychiatry define Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness? What can one make of the seven years (or months) of his insanity? What does Josephus, the Jewish historian, report in this connection?
4. **4:27.** What early Jewish belief does Daniel's advice express? How would the sinful Nebuchadnezzar pay down his debt to God? What are the benefits of almsgiving?

For application

1. **4:2.** What "signs and wonders" has God wrought in your life? With whom have you shared them? What is the difference between *boasting* about what has happened and *giving testimony* to it? According to 2 Cor 12:9, about what should you boast?
2. **4:3.** Read CCC 541–42. How do Christians understand the "everlasting kingdom" to which Nebuchadnezzar refers? How would you describe your own place in it?
3. **4:8–9.** What kind of person should you consult for spiritual advice? When a person such as a confessor or spiritual director gives you advice or an admonition, do you have a duty to follow it?
4. **4:33.** Have you ever had experience with mental illness, either in yourself or in a loved one? How have you dealt with it? Has it challenged your faith and your hope in God?
5. **4:34.** Although prayer may not result in a miraculous healing of mental or emotional problems, what benefit might prayer—especially prayer of praise—provide for problems such as depression, anxiety, or irrational fears?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:1.** What does the name Belshazzar mean? Strictly speaking, what position did Belshazzar occupy? Why did Belshazzar exercise royal authority? Why could he only offer to make the interpreter of the writing the "third ruler" in the kingdom?
2. **5:22–23.** Of what four things is Belshazzar guilty?
3. **5:25.** To what does the cryptic message on the wall relate? To what does the language of commercial transaction point? How does Daniel reinforce this message of judgment?
4. **5:28.** Who were the Medes and the Persians?
5. **5:31.** What does history know of Darius the Mede? What has modern scholarship often declared him to be? What three attempts have scholars who accept the historicity of Daniel made to identify Darius the Mede?

For application

1. **5:2–4.** What were you taught about handling vessels used to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? Why are such vessels not to be used as ordinary dinner vessels are used? Why does CCC 2120 describe sacrilege as a "grave sin"?
2. **5:10–12.** Read the note for verse 10. How does the role of the queen in this passage resemble that of the Mother of Jesus? What does Mary do for us in regard to her Son?
3. **5:20–22.** Why is the virtue of humility important in one's relationship with God? How can *humiliation* be considered a blessing? As illustrated by Belshazzar's attitude, what happens when one refuses to learn from humiliation?
4. **5:27.** This verse has become something of a proverb. On what "balances" is Belshazzar being weighed? Who weighs your own spiritual state, and how might knowing that be an incentive toward growth?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:1–28.** What story elements of chap. 3 does this court tale in chap. 6 (about Daniel's rescue from the lions' den) mirror?
2. **6:1.** What are satraps? What does the reference to 120 satraps probably include?

3. **6:7.** What was the layout of the den of lions? Why did the Persians not use fire to execute criminals, as the Babylonians did? What may the change in methods of capital punishment from Babylonian to Persian times indicate?
4. **6:10.** Why did Daniel go to pray in his house? According to St. Jerome, what do we learn from this passage? What inspired the practice of praying toward Jerusalem?

For application

1. **6:3–4a.** According to CCC 2539–40, why is envy a capital—and, in some cases, a mortal—sin? Why does St. Augustine call envy diabolical? Have you ever struggled with envy?
2. **6:10.** What kind of prayer does Daniel make in his room, even though he knows his life is in danger? What lesson about our own prayer can we derive from Daniel's approach to prayer?
3. **6:10.** What is the significance of the fact that Daniel prays facing Jerusalem? Why does Catholic liturgical tradition recommend celebrating certain sacraments, such as the Eucharist, facing east?
4. **6:14–18.** In these verses, the king realizes that he has done something that cannot be undone, the lethal consequences of which he did not intend and could not avert. Does his mistake resemble incidents from your own life? How can mistakes like these assist your growth in both wisdom and charity?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:2–8.** What do the four beasts in Daniel's dream parallel? What do both sets of images represent? What does each beast represent? What do the zoological images symbolize?
2. **7:8.** How has the "little horn" in this verse been identified by different interpreters? Where else in Scripture have clues been found to link him with a historical figure?
3. **7:13.** With what are the "clouds of heaven" associated in the biblical world? Although the expression "son of man" normally refers to a mortal human being, what function does the term serve here? With whom do some identify the Danielic "son of man"? More likely, what is he? In the Gospels, when does Jesus adopt the messianic interpretation? According to Justin Martyr, what do the words "like a son of man" show? How does St. Jerome interpret this figure in his *Commentary on Daniel*?
4. **7:25.** How long a period is the "time, two times, and half a time" in this passage? In the Book of Revelation, what happens in this period of time? How does that match what happened historically in the Jewish revolt that sparked the Roman conquest of Jerusalem?

For application

1. **7:9–10.** Why do many of the visions of God in Scripture include images of fire? Aside from fire as an image of punishment, what other things does fire do or stand for that might be associated with God and his work? (Hint: How is fire associated with emotions, metallurgy, and even medicine?)
2. **7:13.** Read the part of the note for this verse about the association of clouds with divinity. What do clouds represent in that context? Why, as at the Transfiguration, would the apostles be afraid when a cloud surrounds them?
3. **7:15–16.** Daniel wants to understand his visions of the future. How much of the future do you think it advisable to know? For what purpose? If these visions are not merely to satisfy curiosity, what purpose do they serve?
4. **7:21–22.** In Scripture, the *horn* is often a symbol of strength and sometimes refers to forces of persecution. How are such forces arrayed against the Church in our day? What does Scripture, both here and in the Book of Revelation, indicate will happen to these horns? How might that apply to modern forces of persecution?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:2–14.** With what is Daniel's second vision concerned? To whom do the goat's "conspicuous horn" and the "four conspicuous horns" refer? Who is the "little horn"?
2. **8:11.** Who is the "Prince of the host"? To what does the "continual burnt offering" refer? What did Antiochus IV do to the Jerusalem Temple?
3. **8:14.** How long a time is 2,300 evenings and mornings, and to what does the sum possibly refer? Who restored the Temple after that time?
4. **8:25.** What title did the Seleucid king Antiochus IV give himself? How was he brought low "by no human hand"?

For application

1. **8:10.** Read the commentary on this verse. What is the strategy behind a persecutor eliminating the "wise among God's people" when he first takes power? In modern history, can you think of examples where that has happened? What happened to God's people as a result?
2. **8:17.** Why do you think the appearance of an angel inspires such fear in humans? How does the priest Zachariah's response to Gabriel's appearance in Luke 1:12 contrast with Mary's in 1:29?
3. **8:23.** What character trait is the expression "a king of bold countenance" intended to describe? What might a "bold countenance" look like in people you know? What attitude does it suggest toward God?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:2.** To what prophecy of Jeremiah does Daniel refer regarding Judah? How many years actually elapsed before the captives were allowed to return to their homeland?

Study Questions

2. **9:21.** Who is “the man Gabriel”? What is the time of the evening sacrifice, and why does the prophet allude to it at a time when no sacrifices would have been offered in the Temple? How does the appearance of Gabriel to Daniel parallel his appearance to Zechariah, father of John the Baptist?
3. **9:24–27.** What is the meaning of Daniel’s prophecy of the 70 weeks? Into what three categories can most interpretations of this oracle be fitted?
4. **9:24.** What are the “seventy weeks of years”, and what do they have to do with the penitential period that Israel must undergo? For what was this new revelation to Daniel designed to prepare the Jewish exiles? How does multiplying the time of exile by seven have its explanation in Leviticus and the Jubilee cycles? What parallels are noticeable between Daniel 9 and Isaiah 53?
5. **9:24. Word Study: Weeks.** How is *shabua’* used in Daniel 9:24, and to what does it refer? How long a time does the prophecy cover? What biblical precedents are there for equating one day with one year?
6. **9:25.** To what do the terms “restore” and “build” refer? Historically, how are they related to the joint mission of Ezra and Nehemiah? In light of this, with what is the “going forth of the word” best identified? Over what period, then, does the 70th week of the prophecy extend? To whom does the “anointed one” refer?
7. **9:27.** To what does the “strong covenant” seemingly refer? How is the cessation of sacrifice and offerings best understood in connection with the sacrifice of Christ? What is the “wing of abominations”?

For application

1. **9:3.** Christians are encouraged to seek God through fasting and acts of mortification, as Daniel does in this verse. How do these activities contribute to a healthy prayer life? What part do they play in your own prayer life?
2. **9:8.** How many meanings for the word “face” can you think of? What does the expression “confusion of face” mean? If you are a parent, how might it describe the appearance of a child whom you catch in the act of wrongdoing?
3. **9:17.** Why does Daniel pray for the restoration of the sanctuary in Jerusalem “for your own sake, O Lord”? In other words, how is God’s reputation related to the restoration of the Temple? How might such a motive (i.e., for God’s own sake) apply to your prayer as you pray for the Church?
4. **9:24.** Read CCC 1472 on the consequences of sin and CCC 1030–32 on Purgatory. How does Gabriel’s announcement of the “seventy weeks of years” remind you of the doctrine of Purgatory? Why is Purgatory necessary for some people? How should one live so as to avoid the need for Purgatory?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:1–12:13.** What is the focus of Daniel’s fourth and final vision?
2. **10:13.** What does the term “prince” designate in this passage? What is the Jewish belief behind this, and from where does it come? How does St. Thomas Aquinas explain the “opposition” between angels? Who is Michael, and what does he do? What other angels are identified by name in the Bible?
3. **10:20.** What is the significance of Persia and Greece in this passage? How long did their domination last?

For application

1. **10:2–3.** Given the context of the previous chapter, why is Daniel mourning for three weeks? Why is it proper to call at least the first three weeks of Lent a period of mourning—and for what? What penitential practices do you observe during Lent?
2. **10:12.** What does it mean to humble oneself in prayer? According to CCC 2559, how does one practice humility in prayer? Does your own prayer reflect that humility?
3. **10:16–17.** Have you ever questioned whether your prayers of intercession are effective? Since intercession “is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did” (CCC 2634), what examples can you find in Scripture where Jesus prays for others? What can you learn from these examples? Why is it *necessary* for you to pray for others?
4. **10:18.** Why would strength and courage be necessary for one who intercedes in prayer? What is there about prayer that might call for courage?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:5–20.** What long-standing conflict do these verses envision? Since Israel is the geographical center of the prophecy, which monarchs are the “king of the north” and the “king of the south”?
2. **11:21–45.** Whose reign do these verses describe? How does history remember him? How has Christian tradition often viewed him, and why?
3. **11:30.** To whom does the Hebrew name Kittim normally refer, and to whom does it refer here and in the Dead Sea Scrolls? What was Antiochus IV’s response to the arrival of the “ships of Kittim”? With whom did he then make alliances?
4. **11:31.** What is the “abomination that makes desolate” (sometimes called the “abomination of desolation”)? How long did this abomination last, and who ended it? What recurring pattern does Daniel seem to detect in his typological vision of history? To what did Jesus apply the same language?

For application

1. **11:5–20.** Read the note for these verses. How long has conflict in this area of the world been going on? What are some of the reasons for conflict in this region today? Assuming that some motives for conflict surround a desire for revenge over past misdeeds, what would be necessary in order to bring about peace?
2. **11:31–33.** Reports of the desecration of churches and the martyrdom of Christians surface often in the news these days. Since Jesus promised that persecution would never be far from those who profess his name (e.g., Mt 24:9–22), what should you do to prepare yourself for it?

3. **11:34** The note for this verse refers to the rebellion of the Maccabees against Antiochus IV Epiphanes. According to CCC 2307–9, what conditions are necessary in order for recourse to military force against an oppressor to be morally legitimate?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:1**. What “time” is referred to here? What is the “book” mentioned in this verse?
2. **12:2**. For what is sleep a euphemism? How will those who are asleep awake? What is the significance of this passage in the Bible?
3. **12:4**. What function did wax seals serve on rolled-up scrolls? Why is Daniel supposed to seal up the written account of his visions?
4. **12:7**. What is the significance of the man clothed in linen raising his right hand? What is the purpose of the oath? To what do the time, two times, and half a time refer in this context?

For application

1. **12:1**. Like Daniel, the Church regards St. Michael as the archangel who protects God’s people from the “wickedness and snares of the devil”. What kind of protection do you think God’s people most need today? According to Paul’s advice in Ephesians 6, how should you prepare yourself for spiritual battle?
2. **12:2**. According to Hebrews 9:27, what happens when you die? What judgment do you expect for yourself, and why? How important is the resurrection of the dead to your faith?
3. **12:8–9**. Recall a time when you prayed for the answer to a problem and were not answered (at least, not directly). What effect did that lack of apparent response have on your faith? How can we learn to grow in trust and hope during difficult times?
4. **12:10**. According to the note for this verse, purification is a spiritual effect of physical martyrdom. How can purification and refinement take place in one’s life apart from martyrdom? If Purgatory is a purification after death from the effects of sin (CCC 1031, 1472), is it inevitable?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:1–14:42**. In what language do chaps. 13 and 14 survive, and in what language were they probably written? What religious traditions exclude these chapters, and what tradition considers them to be fully inspired and canonical Scripture?
2. **13:23**. According to St. John Chrysostom, why did God permit Susanna’s dispute with the elders? How was her struggle more intense than that of the patriarch Joseph?
3. **13:45**. How does Daniel, as a legal advocate for Susanna, proceed in her defense?
4. **13:52–59**. What Greek wordplay does Daniel use in his interrogation of the elders? How does St. Hippolytus of Rome interpret this story typologically?

For application

1. **13:7–11**. According to these verses, are the elders engaged in stifling their consciences? What does it take for a person to muffle the voice of his conscience? What obligations does a Christian have regarding his conscience?
2. **13:23**. Which is more valuable to you: your life or the desire to avoid sin? In what sense might death be a better alternative than committing sin (even if one feels forced into it)?
3. **13:27**. According to CCC 2477–79, the elders are guilty of the sin of calumny (among others); but of the sins listed, of which might the servants be guilty in Susanna’s regard? How does the Catechism recommend avoiding this sin?
4. **13:44–62**. How does Daniel’s defense of Susanna compare with Jesus’ defense of the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8:3–11)? In the latter case, how does Jesus’ implicit judgment of the elders compare with his judgment of the guilty woman?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:2**. To whom is the title “friend” given? What type of family name is *Daniel*? While some ancient traditions describe Daniel as a Levite, how do other traditions describe him?
2. **14:3**. For which Babylonian god is Bel another name? What practice do reports from non-biblical sources confirm about Marduk?
3. **14:23**. What kind of reptile is the “great dragon”? What do ancient sources say about the veneration of such a reptile in Babylon?
4. **14:41**. What causes the king to confess the greatness of the one true God? Who else in Daniel make similar responses? What does the king’s confession assert?

For application

1. **14:5–7**. How can Christians respect non-Christian religions while holding to the obligation to proclaim the truths of the gospel?
2. **14:10–13**. Read CCC 1584. What happens if a minister does not believe in the effectiveness of the sacrament he is administering but proceeds with the liturgy anyway? If a Christian is baptized, renounces his faith, and later returns to it, why does he not need to be rebaptized?
3. **14:41**. Apart from miracles associated with a person like Daniel, how might one recognize God’s power at work in another person’s life? What are the fruits of the Spirit, and how do they demonstrate that power? Can your own experience attest to this power in you?