

11–14–15 End Times Bible Study #15, Lessons from Daniel & Revelation

Begin with prayer for the help of the Holy Spirit. Visions, dreams, messages with hidden meanings, all make it easier to be led astray. Use the Law–Gospel contrast to stay on the right track. How is sin showing itself in your appointed reading and how is God’s grace and mercy revealed to us.

The classic example in the Bible of apocalyptic writing is Revelation. The other book recognized as apocalyptic writing is Daniel. Daniel gives us some important lessons about proper interpretation of the dreams or visions which came from God. The name comes from the Greek word: *apokálypsis*, which means vision or hidden. It was primarily used from the time of the Babylonian Captivity and till 200 years after Jesus.

The closely related word, *apocraphal*, is the title given to works where there was doubt that the author was who they claimed to be. The Apocraphal Books which the Roman Catholics use were rejected by the Protestant Churches. There were a number of other writing which were rejected by all the Western Church, both Catholic and Protestant.

We begin with the lessons we can learn from Daniel. Daniel, chapter two, begins with a unique dilemma that Nebuchadnezzar presented to his wise men. He had a troubling dream and instead of telling them the dream and asking them what it meant, he said they had to tell him his dream and its interpretation or they would all be killed (2:5). When the wise men said that was impossible the king ordered all the wise men to be killed. When they came to carry off Daniel and his three friends off for the grand execution, Daniel asked the captain of why this was happening. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had a prayer meeting and God revealed both the dream and its meaning to Daniel. Daniel asked the for an opportunity to tell the king his dream and meaning.

Because Daniel knew the dream, the king believed his meaning was correct. Daniel ‘s God and Daniel were honored and he was placed as ruler over the whole province and the leader of the wise men. There are two lessons here. If someone claims God gave them a message, then I believe King Nebuchadnezzar was right to ask them, tell me the dream and its meaning. In the Bible God says if the person is a true prophet of God, 100% of his prophecies will be correct. Unless God reveals the meaning in the Scripture, be VERY WARY of the Bible teacher who says, “I can tell you what it all means.” Then they proceed to say this represents Russia, Israel, China or whatever. It is one thing to say, “This resembles ‘so and so’ now.” When they begin to say, “This proves, this or this proves that” when God has not identified its exact meeting, run from them.

Chapter 4 gives a second example of a dream from King Nebuchadnezzar which Daniel interprets by God’s help and it happens as he said. In chapter 5, Daniel interprets the handwriting on the wall and his interpretation is correct. God used Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to reveal his glory to two different world leaders: Darius and Nebuchadnezzar. That was the purpose God had in mind when he created a family out of a dried up old man and a barren old women. They were to show the glory of God to the world so that others would seek to follow Yahweh. That by the way is God’s plan for us a well. Don’t seek to make yourself great! Seek to make God great in the world. Go back and see how Daniel did it in 2:27–30. That is our model. Daniel did not rob God of his glory and neither should we.

If you have read the book of Revelation recently, you would note how much of Daniel it expresses. Unless God explicitly says, “This means that” do not listen to them. I remember seeing a paper that was titled “242 Mistaken Predictions About the End.” If you could peruse all the languages of the world, I think you could probably find that many false predictions every year. The last 6 chapter of Daniel are written in Aramaic, the native tongue or heart language of the Babylonians. God continues trying to reach the whole world and now it is our money, our voices and our feet which God is using.

Now I’d like to show you several examples from Revelation which you need to remember. Lesson # 1: Many get off base because they don’t read carefully Rev. 1:1–3. Many people refer to Revelations (plural)

rather than Revelation (singular). So don't let yourself get caught in the trap of looking for a multitude of different visions, which will show you exactly what is going to happen. In each vision you are to be looking for what is revealed about Jesus Christ. Remember my three word summary of Revelation: Jesus always wins.

We often underestimate the power of sin and the damage it has done to creation. That the various creatures we encounter look like a horror movie reminds us that sin is deadly and destructive. Good news: It cannot overcome the power of God and his grace to us.

Lesson # 2: God's view of time is radically different than ours. In v. 1 it says it is about "things that must soon take place," and v. 3 says "the time is near." I must admit that I think 80+ years is a long time, but here we are almost 2,000 years later and the world is still in orbit around the sun.

Now read 1:4-8 noting the following: Communicating with us is the one who is, who was, and who is to come. This is easy to understand. Jesus IS. He is a real person who is really alive today, and who will return to earth for the day of judgment. He is not an imaginary person. He was a genuine human being and we will see him when he returns as did the people during his time on earth. In v. 4 it tells us that this grace and peace we receive from God is not only from him, but also from the seven spirits before the throne. Who are the seven spirits?

Notice the repetition of the number 7. Do not get hyped up on numerology, but 7 is considered a perfect number. It is the number of the earth, 4, and the number of God, 3, which totals 7: 7 churches (v. 4), 7 spirits (v.4), 7 golden lampstands (v. 12) , 7 stars (v. 16). In v. 11 we even find the names of the 7 churches. In v. 20 we learn the stars represent the churches angels and the lampstands represent the churches. Which one of the 7's is not clearly identified: the seven spirits? I know of at least 3 suggested interpretation: 1. Angels are spirit beings so it is just another way of referring to the 7 angels. 2. It is an unusual way of referring to the Holy Spirit. 3. God uses angels to care for his children and his churches, so God has several angels working for each church, one on earth and another before the throne. Remember this simple rule: If God does not make a positive identity of something in his word pictures of horrible beasts, do not say you know what the answer is. Nor do you let someone else convince you that they have correctly and positively made the right choice with their suggestion.

Close with prayer. On Monday I will try to give you a summary of what I consider the most important things for you to remember on the topic of the End Times. And then on Tuesday we start our journey thru John's Gospel. I believe John was the closest personal friend Jesus had among the disciples. After all, he entrusted the care of Mary to him. Your concerns and questions are welcomed at StrongInChrist@CFL.rr.com