

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

Podcast, Study Notes, and Teacher Helps

From the Stormy Sea to the Clouds of Heaven

Sabbath (February 15): Repetition and Enlargement

In Lesson 1 the pattern of repetition and enlargement in the prophecies of Daniel was mentioned. Today we will take a closer look at that principle and see how it is applied not only in the book of Daniel, but also in other Bible passages.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Isaiah 28:9,10. What is this verse saying about the way we should study the Bible? (In general, comparing scripture with scripture best reveals Bible truth.) Some Bible truths are relatively simple and can be grasped with a single verse. What examples come to mind? (Answers will vary.) Other Bible truths are more complex and require comparison of multiple Bible texts. What examples can you think of? (Answers will vary, and may include the investigative judgment, the mark of the beast, and the role of the United States in prophecy.) For what reasons do you think God has “hidden” some Bible truths more than others? (Again, answers will vary. A large part of our spiritual growth occurs as we exercise the “study muscle.” There are other truths that we may not be prepared to understand or accept immediately.)
- Read the following passages and discuss in what ways they demonstrate the principle of repetition and enlargement:
 - Isaiah 1:18
 - Proverbs 2:3,4
 - Psalm 51:7,10,17

Sunday (February 16): Four Animals

Daniel’s vision of the four animals emerging from the sea is highly symbolic—and it ranks as one of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible. The level of detail contained in this vision, and the sweeping panorama of history that it provides, is astonishing. When compared with the vision of the statue in Daniel 2, the meaning of its strange symbols becomes clear:

- The lion represents Babylon (the head of gold in Daniel 2);
- The bear represents Medo-Persia (the chest and arms of gold in Daniel 2);
- The leopard represents Greece (the belly and thighs of brass in Daniel 2);
- And the beast represents Rome (the legs of iron in Daniel 2).

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 7:1,2; Jeremiah 49:36,27; and Isaiah 57:20. What do the “wind” and the “sea” represent? (Strife among nations, more specifically war among the “wicked.”)
- Read Daniel 7:3,17,23. What emerges from this strife among the nations of earth? (Four beasts.) What do they represent? (Four kings, or, more specifically, four kingdoms.) The fact that these kingdoms emerge from the strife among nations suggests that this strife is the

source of the succession of empires and kings. How do we reconcile this with the statement in Daniel 2:21 that God sets up and removes kings? (God can use even those that do not recognize or serve Him to accomplish His purposes.) What examples can you think of that demonstrate this reality? (Answers will vary.)

- Read Daniel 7:4-7.

Monday (February 17): The Little Horn

The steady tread of ferocious animals in Daniel 7 culminates, ironically, in a “little horn” that emerges late on the fourth beast. Although its physical appearance might cause no alarm, the description of its activities and destructive power set the stage for understanding one of the Bible’s most important lines of prophecy.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 7:8. For hundreds of years, Protestants (and even some Roman Catholic scholars, as we will see in Friday’s lesson) have recognized the little horn as representing the papal system. What clues do you see in this verse that point to the legitimacy of that conclusion? (It is also a political power, as is referenced by its “horn” status. The timing of its emergence after the 10 horns that represent the nations of western Europe following the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD. It destroys three horns just as the papal power destroyed the Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths between 476 AD and 538 AD. It is led by a man with the “eyes of a man,” and it speaks “great things,” or blasphemies.)
- Read Daniel 7:19-20 and Revelation 17:6. These two verses describe the same basic power, though in different phases of its existence. What do you think made both Daniel and John so fascinated with this power? (Answers will vary. Certainly the success of its destructive power against the saints would have raised concerns for both of the prophets.)
- Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 1 John 2:22, and Revelation 13:1. Bible scholars generally recognize that these various names (main of sin, son of perdition, lawless one, antichrist, and beast) refer to the little horn. For what reason might the Bible refer to this power by so many names? (Jesus Christ also has many names in the Bible, and the antichrist power mimics the genuine in as many ways as possible, including the multitude of names. Each names also reveals an aspect of its character and activity.)

Tuesday (February 18): The Court Was Seated

After witnessing the destructive activities of the little horn, Daniel’s attention is directed upward to a much more peaceful, though solemn scene—a courtroom and judgment in heaven. Although the idea of judgment might evoke fear for many readers, this judgment brings salvation and redemption for God’s people.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 7:9,10,21-26. What do these verses reveal about the impact of events on earth with what takes place in heaven? (There is a direct connection between what happens on earth and what happens in heaven.) What does this tell you about God’s character? (He is

concerned with what happens on earth, and with what happens to people. He is personal and involved in the affairs of earth, and works for the good of those that serve Him. Therefore, He is a God that can be trusted.) What does the fact that “ten thousand times ten thousand” angels stand around God’s throne in the judgment suggest to you? (Heavenly beings are also interested in what takes place on earth. Even more, they are interested in how God is addressing the problem of sin.)

- Read Daniel 7:10. Heaven’s judgment involves the opening of “books.” What does this suggest to you? (Answers will vary. God is doing everything possible to demonstrate that His judgment, and His response to sin, is fair, just, and transparent. Everything is documented so that every intelligent being can be assured of His justice.)
- Read Acts 17:31. What does the fact that God’s judgment is “scheduled” to occur at a specific time in earth’s history mean to you? (Just as the prophecies in Daniel reveal that God is in control of the rise and fall of nations, they also reveal that history is moving forward to a grand climax, and God is in charge of this too.) Although we may not understand why God’s timetable often seems so long, what reassurance can we gain by realizing and remembering that He is in control? (Answers will vary.)

Wednesday (February 19): The Coming of the Son of Man

The “coming of the Son of Man” in Daniel 7 depicts one of the most important events in salvation history—the culmination of the heavenly judgment and Christ’s receiving of His kingdom. In today’s lesson we will compare a fascinating parable that Jesus told shortly before His death about a nobleman that goes to a “far country” to receive His kingdom.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 7:13,14. The “coming” pictured here is not the second coming, but the approach of Jesus Christ in heaven towards God’s throne. What does this suggest about the importance of what is happening here? (It’s very important!)
- Read Luke 19:11-15 and discuss its application to the prophecy in Daniel 7:13-14 and its historical fulfillment beginning in 1844:
 - Vs. 11. (In this parable, Jesus is going to explain why He won’t immediately set up God’s kingdom on earth when He arrives in Jerusalem. The advent believers were expecting something similar leading up to 1844 as they awaited the second coming and the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth.)
 - Vs. 12. (Here Jesus compares Himself to a nobleman that travels to a far country—heaven—where He will receive a kingdom, and then return. In a similar way, Daniel 7:13-14 reveals that in 1844 [more on this date in the next lesson] Jesus began receiving His kingdom in heaven. When this process is complete, He will return. Daniel 7:14 also reveals that Christ’s kingdom is comprised of people that serve Him.)
 - Vs. 15. (When Jesus returns at the second coming, He will have already “received” His kingdom of people. That is, final decisions will have already been made and it

will be too late at that point to reverse the course of our lives. Today is the day to surrender your life to Christ!)

Every eye in that vast multitude is turned to behold the glory of the Son of God. With one voice the wicked hosts exclaim: “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!” It is not love to Jesus that inspires this utterance. The force of truth urges the words from unwilling lips. As the wicked went into their graves, so they come forth with the same enmity to Christ and the same spirit of rebellion. They are to have no new probation in which to remedy the defects of their past lives. Nothing would be gained by this. A lifetime of transgression has not softened their hearts. A second probation, were it given them, would be occupied as was the first in evading the requirements of God and exciting rebellion against Him. {GC 662.2}

Thursday (February 20): The Holy Ones of the Most High

Daniel refers to the joyful recipients of God’s favorable judgment are the “holy ones of the Most High,” the same group as Revelation’s “saints.” In today’s lesson we will discover what God does for this group of people. More importantly, we will see how we can be part of this privileged group.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 7:18,21,22,25,27. What about this group of people stands out to you? (Answers will vary. They appear powerless against the little horn power, but are given what appears to be nearly instant victory at the time of the judgment. They also must possess great endurance and patience and faith in God when for so long it appears that He has left them to be destroyed.)
- Read Daniel 8:24 and 12:7. What other name is this group given in these verses? (The “holy people.”) What does this title suggest to you? (Answers will vary. In the face of great injustice toward them, they have lived with true religion—with just lives lived toward others and with victory over sin [compare James 1:27]. Most importantly, they have experienced God’s promise of righteousness by faith and it has made a practical difference in their lives.)
- Read Exodus 19:6. What other group of people did God call to be holy? (The Israelite nation.) What additional title did God give them? (A nation of priests.) What does Leviticus 10:8-11 suggest about this title as it applies to all of God’s people? (Every Christian is to live in a way that glorifies God. They are to recognize sin and avoid it. They are to live and teach the law of God to the people around them.)

Friday (February 21): Preterism and Futurism

Historicism views the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation as being fulfilled continuously through history from the time of the prophet (at least usually) until Christ’s second coming. However, two other primary methods of prophetic interpretation—preterism and futurism—have also found their way into Christianity. In this lesson we will take a brief look at these interpretive systems, their origins, and the impact that they have had on Christianity.

Futurism places the Bible’s predictions of the antichrist power far into the future, to be fulfilled immediately before the second coming. Today, millions of Christians believe in this end-time scenario that places the danger of the antichrist in the future. Where did this idea come from?

In the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church developed several strategies to counteract the Protestant reformation and its identification of the little horn power with the Papacy. One of these

strategies, first proposed by the Jesuit priest Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) and Cardinal Robert Ballarmino (1542-1621), was to create the alternate method of prophetic interpretation called futurism. It nicely removed the papacy from the spotlight as the Protestant Reformers claimed that it fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel's little horn.

Two men named Nelson Darby and Cyrus Scofield eventually picked up their ideas. Darby and Scofield adopted the principles of futurism in their prediction of the Antichrist's rise during a seven-year tribulation at the end of time. An interesting article in *Time* magazine sheds light on the origins of the pre-tribulation rapture theory.

The man with the plan was an Anglican priest turned traveling evangelical preacher named John Nelson Darby, who arrived in the U.S. in 1862 for the first of seven visits, bearing a radical new eschatology. Darby and minister Cyrus Scofield, who would expand the evangelist's ideas in the vastly influential Scofield Reference Bible, divided God's relationship with man into seven ages (the current sixth began with the death of Christ). Their vision grimly upended the previous wisdom. Far from getting ever better, things on earth would progressively worsen, until the Antichrist, also known as the Beast, arose. A seven-year, hell-like Tribulation would begin, survived by only a small human remnant. Not until then would Christ return, defeat the Antichrist and commence his Millennium. Much of Darby's scriptural synthesis had been suggested piecemeal by earlier thinkers.

His most striking innovation was the timing of a concept called the Rapture, drawn from the Apostle Paul's prediction that believers would fly up to meet Christ in heaven. Most theologians understood it as part of the Resurrection at time's very end. Darby repositioned it at the Apocalypse's very beginning, a small shift with large implications. It spared true believers the Tribulation, leaving the horror to nonbelievers and the doctrinally misled, thus moving Christianity's us-vs.-them concept of heaven and hell into a new and exciting theater.¹

Many Christians have unwittingly accepted this unbiblical method of prophetic interpretation and are waiting for a silent, secret rapture that the Bible never says will occur. Through the lie of a pre-tribulation rapture, the spirit of antichrist has convinced millions that they need not be prepared to suffer as Christ did because they will (supposedly) already be in Heaven when the tribulation begins. Yet the Bible cautions us to put on the "whole armor of God" so that we can "withstand in the evil day" (Eph. 6:13). Christ's promise is that if we do this, we will "stand against the wiles of the devil" (verse 11) and overcome. Jesus suffered in the flesh, and we must be prepared to do the same.

Preterism, while opposite from futurism in its prophetic trajectory, has a similar origin and has accomplished a similar purpose. As Wikipedia explains,

Preterism, a Christian eschatological view, interprets some (partial preterism) or all (full preterism) prophecies of the Bible as events which have already happened. This school of thought interprets the Book of Daniel as referring to events that happened from the 7th century BC until the first century AD, while seeing the prophecies of Revelation as events that happened in the first century AD. Preterism holds that Ancient Israel finds its continuation or fulfillment in the Christian church at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Historically, preterists and non-preterists have generally agreed that the Jesuit Luis de Alcasar (1554–1613) wrote the first systematic preterist exposition of prophecy—*Vestigatio arcani sensus in Apocalypsi* (published in 1614)—during the Counter-Reformation.

¹ David Van Biema and Amanda Bower, "The End: How It Got That Way." *Time*, 160/1 (July 1, 2002).