

# DEEPER

## Daily Bible Study

Podcast, Study Notes, and Teacher Helps

### From Reading to Understanding

2020, Quarter 1, Lesson 1

#### Sabbath (December 28): From Reading to Understanding

The book of Daniel has fascinated, intrigued, and inspired people for centuries. Some of the Bible's greatest stories of faith and courage—such as the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lion's den—are found here. Likewise, some of the Bible's most mysterious and powerful prophetic images emerge from its pages. As is true with the entire Bible, a careful and prayerful study of Daniel will bring many rewards to the Bible student. This book is also one that we should study with diligence today:

There is need of a much closer study of the word of God; especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work... The light that Daniel received from God was given especially for these last days. The visions he saw by the banks of the Ulai and the Hiddekel, the great rivers of Shinar, are now in process of fulfillment, and all the events foretold will soon come to pass. {TM 112.3}

#### Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 8:22,23. Why is it so important to understand, rather than simply read, the words of Scripture? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Daniel 9:21-23 and 12:10. Based on these verses, do you think that God wants us to understand the things contained in the book of Daniel? (Yes!) What does this tell you about the kind of God we serve? (Answers will vary.)
- Read John 14:29. What connection is there between understanding what we read in the Bible and experiencing the growth in faith that Jesus said fulfilled prophecy should result in? (If we don't understand what we have read or heard, then naturally we can't respond with the faith that God wants us to have.)
- Read John 7:17. What principle to understanding God's Word does Jesus reveal in this verse? (We must commit to doing what we read and hear from the Bible if we are going to truly understand it.) Why do you think this is so true? In what ways have you experienced the reality of Christ's statement in your own life? (Answers will vary.) Are there times when, even though we are committed to doing God's will, we still are not given full understanding? (Yes, just look at Daniel's experience in Daniel 8.) How do we respond in times like these? (Perhaps this is one meaning of the "patience of the saints" in Revelation 14:12.)

#### Sunday (December 29): Christ: The Center of Daniel

In John 5:39 Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." This is true of the whole Bible, and, in a special way, of the book of Daniel. Looking for and finding Christ in its pages will be a recurring theme in our study of Daniel.

### Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 7:13,14. By what name is Christ referred to in these verses? (“Son of man.”) What does this name suggest? (The close relation by which the Son of God has associated Himself with humanity.) What does the “Son of man” do in the plan of salvation in these verses? (He receives a kingdom and dominion that will never pass away.) What do you think this promise meant to Daniel? What does it mean to you? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Daniel 9:24-27. By what name is Christ referred to in these verses? (“Messiah.”) What does this name suggest? (One primary purpose of the book of Daniel is to direct our attention and faith toward Jesus Christ as the Messiah.) What does this prophecy predict that the Messiah will do in the work of salvation? (He will put an end to sins, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, die for us, and confirm God’s covenant of salvation.)
- Read Daniel 10:13 and 12:1. By what name is Christ referred to in these verses? (“Michael.”) What does this name or title suggest? (Michael literally means “who is like God.” This is yet another name or title of Jesus Christ in the Bible.) What does the Bible’s use of this title for Christ, in these passages, reveal about His work for us? (In both passages, Michael stands in time of conflict for God’s people and delivers them.)

### **Monday (December 30): The Structure of Daniel**

Much as the structure and design evident in nature points to the existence and even the character of a Creator, the structure of the book of Daniel not only provides organization, but also reveals the message of that book. For example, the book may be divided into two sections based on the language they were written in. As the lesson points out, the arrangement of the Aramaic section (chapters 2-7) forms a chiasmic structure with the central focal point being God’s judgment on Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and the prospect and promise of deliverance through judgment. This shouldn’t be surprising, since judgment is a recurring theme in Daniel, and Daniel’s name literally means “God is my judge.”

Another way of viewing the structure of Daniel is that of stories vs. prophecies. (Of course, even the stories in Daniel contain prophetic overtones, and many of the prophecies are likewise set in narrative form.) The stories in Daniel reveal the importance of character and remaining faithful in times of judgment and trial, while the four parallel prophetic passages (chapters 2, 7, 8, and 10-12) use the principle of repetition and enlargement to focus on what will happen at the end of time, following the period of Rome’s power, when God establishes His kingdom. Those four parallel prophetic structures reveal four aspects of God’s work at the end of time:

1. He will set up His kingdom (chapter 2)
2. through a process of judgment (chapter 7)
3. that includes purification of His people (chapter 8)
4. so that they can stand in the sight of a holy God when probation closes and Michael stands up (chapter 12).

### Discussion Questions:

- For what reasons might God have repeated the apocalyptic prophesies of Daniel four times? (Answers will vary. It is interesting to note that, according to Genesis 1:1-19, God created the material universe, and its ability to sustain physical life, in four days. Similarly, the four parallel lines of prophecy in Daniel reveal God’s end-time power to redeem people and re-create this earth.)
- Read Daniel 2:44; 7:9,10,13,14; 8:13,14; and 12:1. How is Jesus Christ presented or described in each of these passages that conclude Daniel’s four parallel lines of prophecy? (In Daniel 2 Christ is presented as King, in Daniel 7 as Judge, in Daniel 8 as High Priest, and in Daniel 12 as Redeemer.)
- For what reasons do you think we are given these four views of Christ? (Answers will vary. Just as the lines of prophecy use repetition and enlargement to explain Daniel 2 in more detail, the four “pictures” of Jesus Christ also repeat and expand on what it means that Christ becomes King. He takes His kingdom through a process of judgment that completes His work of purification of sin as High Priest. When this is completed Christ will have a people completely redeemed—forgiven and cleansed from sin.)

### **Tuesday (December 31): Apocalyptic Prophecies in Daniel**

The “end” is mentioned many times in the book of Daniel, usually in the form of one of two phrases:

- the “time of the end” in Daniel 8:17; 11:35,40; 12:4,9;
- and the “time appointed” in Dan. 8:19; 11:27,29,35.

Repeatedly the message is given that God is in charge of history, that He is working through history to accomplish His purposes, and that specific events in history have occurred, and will occur, when God ordains them to.

Historicism—recognizing the fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy from the time of the prophet to the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth—is central to a correct understanding of “the end” and the events that lead up to it. As the lesson points out, a number of reasons support this method of prophetic interpretation:

- It flows naturally from the sequence of world empires repeatedly laid out in Daniel’s prophecies.
- The large time spans contained in these prophecies best fit into a historicist framework.
- Both Jesus and Paul interpreted Daniel’s prophecies as applying to successive specific events occurring before Christ’s second coming (Matt. 24:15-20, Luke 21:20-22; 2 Thess. 2:1-12).
- Early Christians and the Reformers used the historicist approach.
- The historicist approach views God as interested in all of human history.
- The historicist approach asserts that the Bible has always had a message for people in every age.

## Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 7:26; 8:17,19; 11:27,35,40; 12:4,9,13. On what period of time are all of these verses focused? (The “end.”) For what reasons do you think God repeats this phrase so many times throughout the book? (Answers will vary. Clearly, He wants us to recognize the importance of this book for our lives today. Also, He wanted to assure Daniel, and us as well, that He is ultimately in control of our salvation and what is happening in this world.)
- Read John 5:17. In the NLT this verse reads, “My Father is always working, and so am I.” What does this verse suggest about the legitimacy of historicism, the interpreting apocalyptic prophecies as extending from the time of the prophet to the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth? (Just as God is always working for our salvation, the Bible’s lines of apocalyptic prophecy reveal that God is involved with and aware of human history through all of time. The Bible’s message is given to, and applies to, all people at all times, not just to a few people at the very end of time, as futurism would suggest.)
- Read Isaiah 46:9,10. While this passage certainly is not a proof text for the validity of historicism, what general principle(s) does it reveal about how God interacts with human history? (First, one way that God reveals Himself is through His interactions throughout history. Second, God states that one evidence of His divinity is the fact that He can predict events in human history from “the end [to] the beginning.” Historicism matches very well these two aspects of God’s power.)

## **Wednesday (January 1): God’s Timescale**

The year-day principle of interpreting prophetic time is used frequently in the Bible. The general validity of corresponding years and days can be seen in passages such as Genesis 5:4,8,11; 6:3; 1 Sam. 1:21; and Job 10:5. The Bible’s apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation often use a prophetic day to represent a literal year, and God used 40 literal days to represent 40 literal years in Numbers 14:34, and 390 literal years to represent 390 literal days in Ezekiel 4:4-6.

It is interesting to note that the day-year principle is employed when God is responding to sin, and that the length of time given in the prophecy reflects the sin or the solution to that sin. For instance:

- In Numbers 14:34, Israel was given 40 years to wander in the wilderness as a consequence of rebellion following the spies’ 40 days in Canaan. Forty years was also long enough for that generation of adults to pass away in the wilderness.
- In Ezekiel 4:4-6, the prophet was told to lie on his side for 390 days as a symbol of Israel’s iniquity over 390 years.
- In Daniel 9:24-27, the Jews were given 70 weeks, or 490 years, to “put away sin” and prepare for the Messiah. While the day-year principle applies in this prophecy, it was given in terms of weeks. The week refers back to God’s complete and perfect work of creation and connects God’s work of creation and redemption.
- In Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12:14, the little horn/beast power is predicted to rule and persecute the saints for 3.5 prophetic years (1,260 literal years), and then to receive a “deadly wound” (Revelation 13:3). The 3.5 prophetic years of power by this anti-christ power corresponds to Christ’s 3.5 literal years of prophetic ministry.

- Daniel 8:14 predicts a period of 2,300 days, or years, leading up to the start of the judgment and the purification of the sanctuary. Daniel 8:26 refers to this time period as “the vision of the evening and morning,” and this terminology refers to the morning and evening sacrifices that were to take place continually in the sanctuary and the temple. These sacrifices provided for continual or ongoing atonement for sin, and represent Christ’s unceasing intercession for us in heaven leading up to, and including, the antitypical Day of Atonement (see Hebrews 7:25).

### Discussion Questions:

- Read Galatians 4:4,5. What does this verse reveal about God’s timescale? (Important events in salvation history happen exactly when God knows they need to happen.) What prophetic events are we waiting for right now that we need to trust God to bring about at the right time? (Answers will vary.)
- Read 2 Peter 3:8. What does this verse suggest about our need for patience in waiting for God to work? (It’s important!)
- Read Genesis 6:3 and Revelation 20:1-4. For what reasons do you think that the Bible’s first and last time prophecies employ literal time, not the day-year principle? (Answers will vary. Perhaps this is because the events at the end of these prophecies—the destruction of the earth with water and with fire—are explained in literal, not symbolic terms, and therefore the time periods are also literal.)

## **Thursday (January 2): Contemporary Relevance of Daniel**

The entire Bible, of course, contains God’s message for people today. Writing to the early Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul said, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). In another letter to the believers in Corinth, he wrote, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). Clearly, God intends that we understand the significance of the things we read in the Bible for our lives today.

### Discussion Questions:

- Read Matthew 24:15-20. What practical lesson or lessons do you think Jesus wants us to take from the prophecies in Daniel? (Answers will vary. We should take action in our lives based on Bible prophecy. Our prayers should also be informed and guided by Bible prophecy and what we see happening in the world around us.)
- Read Ezekiel 14:14. What does this verse suggest about the importance of studying and understanding how Daniel lived? (Daniel had a close personal relationship with God, and as a result his character reflected Christ’s character. In Daniel we see a role model for God’s end-time people.) Daniel wasn’t perfect, of course, yet the Bible records no sins or errors of Daniel, as it does with so many other people. For what reasons do you think this may be the case? (Answers will vary. Daniel is a type of those who will stand in and through the final judgment, whose sins are blotted out in the heavenly records. The fact that none of his faults are recorded is a promise that we may have the same experience, and one day be among those described in Revelation 14:5 as being “without fault before the throne of God.”)

- Read Daniel 12:13. What do you think this verse means? (It is a personal promise to Daniel that he will be resurrected at Christ's second coming. Prophetically and typologically speaking, it also reveals that Daniel's prophecies will be studied and understood at the end of time, and that God will reproduce his righteous character in many other people at the end.)
- Read the following statement from the book *Education* and discuss its application to the world we live in today:

In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. {Ed 173.2}

### Friday (January 3): God is My Judge

Daniel's name means "God is my Judge," and the stories of God's protection over Daniel and his friends while in Babylon assures us that God being our Judge is good news! In today's lesson we will look a little more closely at the good news contained in God's judgment.

#### Discussion Questions:

- Read Daniel 7:9,10. For what reasons should it be good news for us that God's judgment is based on "books"? (Answers will vary. God is trying to assure us that His judgment is fair, open, and based on fact. This is very different from the capricious and emotional "judgments" attributed to many pagan deities.)
- Read Daniel 7:21,22,25,26. Is judgment a good thing for God's people in these passages? (Yes!) Why? (They are saved from persecution, their faith is vindicated, and God's kingdom is established through His salvation on their behalf.)
- Read Isaiah 1:27. In what ways are God's redemption and judgment linked together? (In Daniel's stories, God's people are saved or redeemed from persecution when God enacts His judgments.) What connection does God's judgment have with righteousness? (We will study this in depth in later lessons, but for now it is reassuring that God's judgment is both based on His righteousness, and on the promise of His righteousness being given to His redeemed people.)