

Good Word Schedule
Allusions, Images, Symbols
April, May, June, 2025

1. **Some Principles of Prophecy**—*March 29-April 4*
2. **The Genesis Foundation**—*April 5-11*
3. **Images from Marriage**—*April 12-18*
4. **The Nations: Part 1**—*April 19-25*
5. **The Nations: Part 2**—*April 26-May 2*
6. **Understanding Sacrifice**—*May 3-9*
7. **Foundations for Prophecy**—*May 10-16*
8. **In the Psalms: Part 1**—*May 17-23*
9. **In the Psalms: Part 2**—*May 24-30*
10. **Upon Whom the Ends Have Come**—*May 31-June 6*
11. **Ruth and Esther**—*June 7-13*
12. **Precursors**—*June 14-20*
13. **Images of the End**—*June 21-27*

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Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy

General Introduction

This study guide is meant to accompany the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School lesson for the 2nd Quarter of 2025. The format of this guide follows a similar pattern for each week's lesson: an introduction to the topic, a short discussion on several verses or a bullet list of concepts for a passage, followed by questions in bold type. Please read through the Biblical passages, and then prayerfully consider the bolded questions. Perhaps you'll find better questions that should be asked, and answered!

From the inception of the Advent movement, disciples of Jesus Christ have found challenge and hope, warning and encouragement in the prophetic messages of Jewish and Christian scriptures. But we are not the first. Jews in Jesus' day looked for the prophesied Messiah. The early church heeded Jesus' prophetic warnings in Matthew 24 to leave Jerusalem. Centuries later, the Protestant Reformation, in its hermeneutical (interpretive) revolution, began mining Daniel and Revelation, yielding treasures that had not been understood before. And just because some prophecies—sealed up at the time of the writer and beyond—were only to be fully comprehended at a later time does not mean the first century apostles and disciples were without prophetic hope. They built their entire theological framework around Jesus as a fulfillment of their historical and literary forefathers, both functioning as foreshadows of salvation.

It could be argued that prophecy began with the very opening words of the Bible: “in the beginning.” If there is a beginning, perhaps there is to be an end. Just a few verses later in Genesis 3, after *the fall*, we read a foretaste of what God would do to defeat the deceiver, and its deathly effects in our new world: He would send an offspring of the woman to crush the serpent's head! The irony is that such violent imagery finds fulfillment in the actual work of atonement—Jesus' self-sacrifice—at the cross and beyond in His ongoing ministry for us today from a throne of grace, and in the future when He sits on His glorious throne, God having put all things under His feet. The terrible results of sin and death are always accompanied by the hope-filled strains of a gloriously renewed, eternal future.

In our chaotic, fragile world, properly understanding the role of prophecy, its various contexts and genres, and applying consistent principles of interpretation are vital. Adventists know well from our history the disappointment associated with incorrect conclusions. The Christian world is rife with teachers of prophecy, many looking at events in the tumultuous Middle East as a direct fulfillment of final events before the 2nd Coming of Jesus (or “the rapture”). Three times in Matthew 24 we're told to beware the deceptive power of false Christs and false teachers. It behooves us to study humbly, expectantly, and diligently that which God has revealed to us. Be prepared to learn new things, to relinquish any faulty views, and to strengthen those that comport with the Truth. With new insights come new responsibilities and obedience to our Creator.

I pray that your study this quarter will take you well beyond the Adventist Quarterly. Let us remember that whatever illumination it might provide is always derived from the source of life: Christ Himself, understood through Scripture and the Spirit's presence in study.

Brant Berglin
Date...

Week 1: Some Principles of Prophecy Good Word, 2025

For March 29-April 4

Prepared by Brant Berglin, WWU School of Theology

Opening Question

If you believe in a God who knows the future, is that comforting to you? Why or why not?

Introduction

The lesson this week introduces the idea of God's foreknowledge as the basis for prophetic messages. Christian doctrine often includes as part of *theology* proper (the study of "God,") a belief in God's omniscience. If God knows everything, then He knows the future as well. God's knowledge of the future is fairly standard orthodox belief in most Christian denominations. However, there are some scholars who believe the future is unknowable, and thus God cannot know it. Also, questions of free will are seen at times to conflict with a knowable (and thus determined?) future.

There are indications in both Old and New Testaments that God knows the future, at least what He will do in reaction to human choices. Then, the lesson moves into some basic rules or principles of prophetic interpretation.

Understood or "Known"

The lesson asks us to read verses like Matthew 24:15, Revelation 1:3, Matthew 11:29, and Jeremiah 9:23, 24 and implies they're all speaking about God wishing to be understood by what He says in the Bible. These verses do not exactly say what the author supposes; perhaps the very warnings he gives in this lesson might be better heeded throughout the quarterly!

To what degree does God make Himself known throughout scripture? Through the stories? Through the laws given to Israel in Leviticus and Deuteronomy? How does Deut. 29:29 contribute to our understanding of God's revelation?

Reading the "Whole Bible" on a Topic

The Lesson invites us to compare scripture with scripture. Instead of just taking a Bible verse out of context, we should see what the whole Bible has to say about a given topic. This is an important part of Biblical interpretation, but it skips several vital steps that safeguard the verse's meaning in the first place.

1. Immediate Context: Reading the whole book and section around our verse is essential. A Bible verse does not have meaning outside its original context. If, for instance, one reads Revelation 13:2-3 and sees an amalgamated beast made up of lion, bear, leopard and other components such as horns and crowns, we may be immediately drawn back to Daniel 7. And while the beast-allusion is certainly from there, Revelation is also telling a story, too. How is this beast in ch. 13 related to the Dragon's work in ch. 12? How is this beast going to be mimicked by the 2nd beast in ch. 13? What is the beast's role in Revelation's narrative? This is the first step—the immediate context!

2. Genre: know the style of literature of the passage we're investigating. Is it apocalyptic prophecy? Classic prophecy? Is it poetry? Law? Narrative? This may have an impact on meaning. When Abraham offered his son Isaac in Genesis 22, the narrative gives no obvious evidence that the story would be prophetic or typological in nature. Instead, it teaches us about Abraham's faithfulness and God's willingness to provide what Abraham needed most. But as time goes on, and God reveals more of Himself and His plan of Salvation, the narrative takes on extended meaning such that Jesus "fulfills" the historical narrative of Isaac's "binding." Also, interpretations that align within a given genre should be considered first. Revelation's ties to Daniel provide stronger links than would the writings of Paul.
3. *Toto Scriptura*: we read the rest of the Bible. The whole Bible does indeed give us clues, and should be used to interpret ideas, but only after the first two steps are done.

What are the dangers of ignoring these steps? What can happen if we jump too quickly from one verse or symbol to a different book without considering the immediate context? On the other hand, what happens if readers never consider the rest of the Biblical material?

Why Symbols?

Without question, God uses symbols. There are many reasons for this. First, symbols are like pictures, and as such, they are easily remembered and paint 1,000 words. Second, symbols require both sides of the brain to work, and like parables (extended symbolism), require thought and consideration. Also, as the lesson notes, the material in Daniel and Revelation addresses the rise and fall of kingdoms, powers, and nations, making it possibly politically seditious to leaders protective of their power. Again, like the parables of Jesus, they are intended to be understood by "insiders," but a mystery to those on the outside.

Identifying Symbols

While many symbols are obvious in prophetic material, not all readers are agreed. Many evangelicals attempt to read apocalyptic as literally as possible, and often require symbols to be interpreted as *physically* as possible. The locusts in Rev. 9 are seen as helicopters, the horses are tanks, and the beast in ch. 13 is a single literal person, the antichrist himself, rather than a system, power, kingdom or principality.

But Adventists have frequently interpreted the Holy City in Rev. 21-22 as a literal city as described with gold and gems. But what if it is also symbolic, or at the least has symbolic features? Why would a modern city with no evil need a city wall? And why the specific dimensions related to the 144,000 from ch. 7, just larger? And a city as tall as it is wide? This seems more symbolic than literal, yet many Christians still hope for streets of gold.

What is the danger of misidentifying the symbols in prophetic material? Which is more detrimental, to miss a symbol or to symbolize what should be literal?

Closing Comments

Throughout the quarter, we'll continue to examine tools and steps of interpretation.

Opening Question

How might the beginning of God’s story in the Genesis hint at how the Bible ends with Revelation?

Introduction

Commentators have frequently noted Revelation’s allusions to Genesis and the rest of the Torah (books of Moses). But provides much more than simply ideas for John to use in the apocalypse; it provides the context and origin from which the rest of the Bible’s farthest reaching and deepest issues are developed and concluded. Every major topic in theology has it’s roots here. Themes (systematic categories) such as God, Man, Creation, Marriage, Sabbath, the Fall, Sin, Death, Judgment, Destruction of Wicked, Prophecy, Covenant, Atonement, Salvation, Mission, Great Controversy, and others all start here. For this reason, much of the Genesis naturally finds conclusion in Revelation. They two books function as book-ends on the story of God’s dealing with human sin and frailty.

Genesis

The Quarterly points out the principle of “first mention.” Based on the idea that inspiration builds on previous material, and thus is progressive, this may at first seem like a false premise or overstated approach to scripture. Later revelation unveils new ideas, and the fullest revelation comes later, not first.

However, later revelation was always to *be tested* by the first, later prophets were to be judged by what was *previously* revealed. Isaiah 8:20 conforms this principle when addressing the potential of false prophets and spiritual mediums: “¹⁹ When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? *Should they consult* the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” (NASB) There had to be a standard to gauge or authenticate prophetic pronouncements because false prophets would (and did) arise; inspiration’s foundation cannot just be “because I say it is inspired.”

What is the value of a standard (such as units of measure) when accounting, cooking, doing chemistry experiments, or driving on the highway? How can we use the earlier stories as foundations for the later ones in the Bible?

Genesis Doctrines and Teachings

As noted above, it has been noted by Biblical scholars that there is no significant Christian doctrine that is not introduced in Gen 1-11, with many outlined in chs. 1-3 alone. This week’s lesson highlights several of them, especially some that influence Revelation directly.

God – Genesis assumes the existence of the divine before any humans appear or any of the material universe we apprehend with our senses. This God exists in “the beginning.”

Creation – Genesis 1-3 demonstrates the fundamental act of God – creation out of nothing, and the pinnacle of creation, humans. Made in His image (with ability for male-female

to create new individual life as well), Genesis indicates all was “very good.” Humankind’s origins are in the mind of a benevolent, creative, caring maker; any hint of long ages of predation and cycles of death and life are absent from Genesis 1-3, and the rest of the Biblical account for that matter. And the God who creates wants a *relationship* with His creatures—very cool!

Evil – The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is not simply an attempt by God to keep humans from good knowledge, but a lesson that not all knowledge is worth knowing, and some brings the worst kind of pain. Behind that evil is also a face, multiple faces, in an *accuser* and his fallen comrades. He is depicted in Genesis as the “serpent” but identified in later Revelation 12 as also the Devil (*diabolos*) and Satan.

The Fall – The *fall* quickly reveals the reason for human misery and woe—a curse, mentioned again in Revelation 22:3 that comes as a result of human faithlessness. Curses on nature is reversed in Revelation and the curse on the serpent ends with his demise. Revelation reverses the fall, where humans were removed from the garden, they are now admitted freely to the holy city.

Death – The first death (Abel), as the quarterly notes, parallels that of Jesus Christ, and later the saints in Revelation. All of these die at the hands of their own family; those who “were their own,” but like Judas, betray them to death. Revelation 21 says that the former things such as death, pain, mourning, and weeping all find their end in the world made new.

What parts of the human knowledge-void does the creation account seek to fill? How does it compare with secular or naturalistic accounts of origins? Do you find the Genesis 1-3 stories convincing as a means of explaining human origins and evil? How do naturalistic explanations of *evil* stack up?

Other Doctrines Originating in Genesis

Other spiritual, social, physical and great-controversy worldview issues that arise include: sin, judgment, final state of man, covenant, salvation (atonement and sacrifice), eschatology (final or last-day events), Sabbath, family/marriage, re-creation/restoration, etc.

Genesis lays out through the stories of the death of Abel, the lineages before the flood, the Noahic Covenant, the tower of Babel, and the call of Abraham the broad plan of God to redeem His faithful ones in the face of evil.

Why are these stories so moving for us? Some argue against their historicity and seek only a *meta-narrative* behind them. Can these stories be both arch-typal stories while also being anchored in history? What value might they lose if they are not historical events, especially when later Biblical narratives assume their authenticity via historical event?

Closing Comments

The Old Testament, far from being primitive or merely arch-typal myth, roots itself in time and place as an anchor for later stories. It becomes hard to believe in God at all if one takes Genesis as primitive myth. Who would be to say if the “god” figure there wasn’t just a symbol of something else, like “reality” or other abstract concept. Rather, the personal, approachable God of creation who can both speak into existence but also gets hands dirty making people is the God we want and need!

Opening Question

What use is there for “marriage” outside of a Judeo-Christian worldview? Why would anyone want such a commitment in our western world?

Introduction

Genesis 1-2 introduces God making humankind according to His own image. Reading Genesis 1:26-31 we find that image is contained in a male-female relationship with the possibility of producing offspring to fulfill God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply. Thus, the image of God is found in this special bond. Not surprisingly, it is also one of the most parodied, mocked and attacked social institutions of our society. But just what is being attacked? It’s not just humanity...

Marriage as Covenant

Hook-up culture is prevalent in western society (with some irony, some argue it is a “developed” or “advanced” society) where casual sexual relationships rarely lead to lasting covenantal commitment. And the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are replete with examples of people wanting the same—sexual experience or gratification outside of a “man leaving his father and mother and being joined to his wife.”

Our modern culture assigns marriage legality or legitimacy to the state. This creates the awkward condition for Christians in that their bond is now defined, recognized, and given certain privileges by the secular governing bodies rather than by God who originate it. No-fault divorce has not always been possible but is now more the rule than the exception.

Read Mark 10:1-12 and compare it with Matthew 19:1-12.

How are these passages similar and where are they different? How does Matthew provide a caveat to “no divorce”? How do the disciples feel about Jesus’ teaching on marriage being a life-long covenant?

God’s Marriage and Divorce

Throughout the Bible, the very visible and experiential marriage relationship is used as a metaphor or symbol for a spiritual relationship—hard to see physically—between God and His people. We see pictures of God’s own “marriage experience” with Israel in Ezekiel 16. Because of Israel’s spiritual idolatry (see also the book of Hosea), God describes His pain as would a jealous lover whose bride sleeps around. We also see, graphically portrayed, the sexual harlotry of Israel and Judah, both Samaria in the North and Jerusalem in the South, in Ezekiel 23:1.

Read Malachi 2:13-17 further describes God's feelings about faithless marriages and divorce.

Why does God portray His relationship with His people using covenant, marriage and sexual terms? What do Ezekiel and Malachi tell us about God's own pain and experience with a broken marriage? How does God's story bring comfort to those who have experienced a divorce because of an unfaithful spouse or just rejection?

Christ and His Church

The imagery of marriage and sexual immorality is applied in Revelation to the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira (Rev. 2), to "those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 9:21), and to Babylon the Great (Rev. 14:8, 17:1-4, 18:1-9 and 19:1-2). The idea of sexual immorality (Greek: *porneia*) throughout the Biblical texts always means sexual acts outside of marriage. Revelation uses the word adultery in 2:22 for the church of Thyatira as well. Throughout ch. 17, the woman (God's people, typically) and the beast (like the sea-beast in ch. 13, like the apostate church-state power of Rom) have an illicit relationship. The Kings of the earth are also involved.

It is in this context that the New Testament people of God are also to be considered Christ's bride. Ephesians 5 is clear that husband-wife relationships in Christian homes are to exemplify Christ and His church.

Read Revelation 19:6-9. There are two suppers in Revelation 19: the first is the marriage supper of the Lamb, who is a symbol for Christ in Revelation; the second is the great supper of God where the wicked are pictured as being destroyed and fed as carrion to the birds of heaven.

Throughout Revelation, God's people reminded to have faith and trust in God's goodness and justice, even when they cannot always see evidence for it. How does Revelation 19-21 picture their relationship being "consummated"? How do the best earthly marriages give us a glimpse of what awaits us when Jesus returns?

Though controversial in some circles, it is important to also discuss sexuality and marriage. God made love-making a beautiful, bonding and life-creating experience. What can we learn about the unity God wants to have with us from sexual, emotional, physical, and mental unity between loving marriage partners? How much better could our unity with God be than the best marital intimacy?

Closing Comments

Marriage today is often seen in society as outdated, and fewer and fewer people are covenanting themselves to one another, and thus the very image of God is broken. God's people have a tremendous opportunity to restore the beauty of marriage, and to show how the 2nd coming of Jesus as a groom to get His beloved has been symbolized in the daily lives of married couples, and even portrayed in the endings of the best types of books and novels where the hero saves his bride-to-be from the clutches of the evil dragon, and they live happily ever after!

Opening Question

Do we ever see God working in obvious ways through the nations of the world or in secular governments?

Introduction

While every human is individually accountable to and beloved by God, we also see larger groups of people become the object of God's regard or judgement, nations through which He can work, show His power, or choose as His special possession; or nations that reap the results of God's wrath for their iniquity. The lesson this week explores the role that the Babylonians played in later prophetic literature, and how the call of and covenant blessings to Abraham finds fulfillment in Christ. For this study guide, we will consider more closely the relationship between Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar as evidence of God's working in and through the nations, through the rise and fall of kingdoms.

Israel vs. Babylon

Read Daniel 1:1-3. The language is that of territorial warfare where regional gods spar. The unique aspect of this battle, however, is that the loser (Judah) writes about their defeat, yet ascribes it to their God's will. History is typically written by the victors, and thus few defeats are experienced by the historian's own people.

The backstory for these verses takes us back to the Deuteronomy 28-29, but more recently, the promise made by Isaiah to Hezekiah in Isaiah 39, "then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the LORD of hosts, ⁶ 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the LORD. ⁷ 'And *some* of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'" ⁸ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good." For he thought, "For there will be peace and truth in my days." (vs. 5-8).

The story of Jehoiakim (also known as Eliakim) and his failures is found in 2 Kings 22-23. We find that as goes the King of Israel, so goes the nation. Israel's desire for a human monarch was both a blow to God's heart as their King, and yet used to foreshadow the Messiah's kingly work. Ultimately, Israel is captured by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians.

How does the city of Babylon here in Daniel foreshadow Babylon the Great in Revelation 14-19? Why does God use Babylon for His purposes when they are a pagan nation? (see Jeremiah 25)

Nations and God's will

As Daniel spends more time in the pagan city and nation of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar is privileged to see more and more miracles and signs of Yahweh's power. We can track these stories in chs. 1-4.

1. He finds Daniel and his friends fitter and more intelligent than his other trainees.
2. He witnesses Yahweh give a dream, tell him the dream, and provide an interpretation of the future. Daniel's God is a "god of gods, and a Lord of kings."
3. Yahweh delivers his faithful servants from the furnace and the King's own decree. Nebuchadnezzar responds with a hate-speech law.
4. This chapter is a testimony by the king himself. Another dream, this time Nebuchadnezzar experiences a fall from his arrogance, and humbly recognizes the God of heaven as sovereign, accepting Him as his own God.

If we remember the story of Israel, as goes the king, so goes the nation. Without question, Nebuchadnezzar's conversion led to changes in Babylonian belief systems. His son-in-law Nabonidus may have worked to reverse some of these changes.

Did God put Israel in Babylon for a purpose greater than simply their own chastisement/punishment and reform/repentance? (see Daniel's prayer in ch. 9)

Revelation describes a two-fold call that Babylon has fallen (14:8 and 18:2), and in ch. 18, it goes even further calling God's people out of Babylon! What are they doing there? In Daniel, they were sent by God Himself. God's purpose went far beyond Israel's conversion; it included being a witness to the nations. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all (the nations) would come to repentance.

However, there was also a time to leave Babylon. God's people read the prophecies of Jeremiah 29, they were to live in Babylon in peace for a time, but after 70 years, they would return to the land of promise. This occurred under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. Revelation portrays a similar story where Babylon falls (see the 5th and 6th plagues in Rev. 16) because of the drying up of the Euphrates to prepare the way for the kings from the East. In Revelation, the fall of Babylon and exodus of God's people lead the way for the final kingdom of God and the reign of Christ in the promised land.

Have we been called to proclaim to modern-day "Babylon" the wonders of our God? Are we *in* Babylon today, or do we believe we are outside of it? Who are those called to "come out of her, my people"?

The visions of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2 and 4) and Daniel (chs. 7-12) reveal the rise and fall of sequential nations from Daniel's day until the end. God is working with His people and the nations simultaneously. Paul admits that God uses both Jews and Gentiles for His ultimate purpose, to save as many as possible.

Closing Comments

God loves people and works through the nations. Maybe an important question for us today is this: how do we live as citizens of heaven first, while also living as faithful citizens of our own nations? Can we be patriots of earthly kingdoms and heavenly witnesses simultaneously?

Opening Question

What good does human-led government provide us, and are there potential pitfalls?

Introduction

Scripture is clear about God wanting to be Israel's sole leader; humans do poorly at ruling when they trust to their own abilities, thinking, plans, and effort. This is not to say that all humans have failed, but that leadership and rule inherently contain a power-dynamic that the broken, sinful heart can easily abuse. This can happen even when rulers believe in their causes or have the best of intentions. How does the history of Israel's monarchy move power from their nation to others, and how does God work through them anyway as we head toward earth's final events? That's the topic for this study with Daniel 2 and 7, Revelation 12, and 13 as our Biblical focus.

Daniel 2

Read through Daniel 2, and notice who the main characters are in the drama. The Neo-Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel the exiled and now court-wiseman interact over a significant dream. The king's mind turned toward the future, and no doubt, his own kingdom of which we learn in ch. 4, he was *very* proud. Would his kingdom last? Would the lands he conquered be added to? Daniel is not initially called in, but asks for time to seek God's counsel and an answer to the king's request. God grants it, and Daniel gives the king what he desires: a recap of the dream, and what it all means.

It's noteworthy that Dan 2 has a language shift; the first chapter, and the last 5 of Daniel are all in Hebrew, the language of Daniel and his friends, and their homeland. But in chs. 2(vs. 4) through 7, the book shifts to Aramaic, the language of the Babylonians. This shift also suggests that the messages there are more Babylon-focused than Israel-focused.

The king's vision portrays the nations in an unbroken sequence of major nations that would rule God's people until the Kingdom of God would finally take over. This final kingdom would last forever, and would never be overthrown.

What do we learn about the permanence of earthly nations from this vision? What would Nebuchadnezzar have felt upon hearing Daniel's interpretation?

The king sees the nations as parts of an image—an idol—something to be worshipped and prized, and for the king, a divine mandate. His gods, in his view (read Daniel 1:1-3), gave him power over Israel and their God. But as we see, Yahweh handed Israel over to Nebuchadnezzar, and the nations become part of God's plan for Israel's discipline.

The lesson points out how the image proceed from most valuable to least as it progresses through Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and its divisions into the nations around the Mediterranean and beyond. It's also significant to see how the various body-parts represent the nations pictured. For instance, the two arms of the silver represent the two nations of the Medes and Persians in alliance together. But there's more: the metals progress from most to least malleable; this becomes important in ch. 4 (and ch. 7 referencing the lion with wings who has a

human heart given to it) because it suggests that part of what makes Nebuchadnezzar like the head of gold is not just his wealth, but that he is refined like gold when he submits to God's leadership and humbles himself.

What can we learn about God's foreknowledge from Daniel 2? How does *He* regard the nations here? If the final empire is iron, but mixed with baked clay that is said to not adhere to one another up to the point of God's eternal kingdom, what does that suggest about our earthly nations today? Should we expect to see a single, unified, and world-wide government that all people give allegiance to?

Daniel 7

Read Daniel 7, and then compare/contrast this chapter with Daniel 2. Note the similarities and differences. Who receives *this* vision? What becomes quickly apparent is that Daniel 7 covers the same kingdoms as ch. 2, only provides quite a bit more detail about the later kingdom(s) and kings, and especially a last-day religio-political power. Daniel sees predatory animals rising out of the "great sea," the Mediterranean. This situates the vision geographically, and for Daniel, these nations around Israel and the middle-east are ravenous beasts feeding on small nations like his own.

The focal point of most of the text for this chapter is on the 4th beast—not described by known animals—and the iron teeth/bronze claws suggest Rome mixed with some of Greece. But even Rome isn't the main point; rather it's the spiritual/religious/national power that arises *out of* Rome in the form of a "horn" power. Many Christians who come from the protestant reformation heritage have equated the abuses of the professed Christian church of the middle ages with this horn, and its human head, the papal leadership of Rome. While this may seem politically incorrect, we must remember that God is not in the business of earthly perspectives of earthly nations, but a heavenly one.

To what degree are Christians susceptible to the lure of earthly and governmental power? Should the church wield political authority or rule? Can we use legislative decrees for religious means? What dangers exist for Christians in modern political activism? When should Christians seek out national influence?

Revelation 10

At the end of Revelation 10, John is invited to prophesy again about/concerning many nations. Seventh-day Adventists have self-identified with John's eating of the little book (perhaps the book of Daniel, once sealed, but now "having been opened,") and the sweet yet bitter experience of expecting Christ's return and being disappointed. But the nations are not to be left out, God still has a calling for them. And if John is a symbol for the church in ch. 10 as it experienced the great disappointment, then he is also a symbol for the church's evangelistic purpose until Christ returns.

Closing Comments

God is in control of the rise and fall of nations, but He cares for them, too!

Opening Question

What would you give up for someone you love?

Introduction

The lesson this week is how the concept of sacrifice found throughout the Bible plays a role in the prophetic literature. As an earlier lesson noted, Genesis is the starting point for most major topics in Scripture, and certainly in Revelation. Sacrifice is so much a part of Revelation, that if we miss the temple/sanctuary structure of the book and the various sacrifices that take place there, we will fail to grasp the big picture of the Great Controversy, and how God uses *His own* sacrifice and that of His son to bring about everlasting peace.

Genesis 4: First Sacrifices

Although Adam and Eve are said (see Gen. 3) to be clothed with skins often assumed to be animals sacrificed to take their place in death, the first sacrifices mentioned in Genesis are by their sons. Each bring an offering to God: Abel's is accepted and Cain's is not. Read Genesis 4 through for the story here. Some have suggested that the *type* of offering is what mattered most, yet both fruit of the ground and herd animals were accepted as offerings at the sanctuary. Here, the text suggests that is isn't the exact gift offered, but the heart/attitude of the offeror that mattered to God. And yet, the animal offerings had a specific purpose—that of pointing to a sin-bearer, a redeemer that would give life. This becomes an important part of God's conversation with Cain. Cain becomes angry, kills his brother, and essentially offers his own brother up as a sacrifice.

This story forms a background to the 5th seal in Revelation 6. There, souls under the altar cry out to *God* for justice and vengeance against those who have taken their lives without cause. Careful readers of the Bible will note that in the Hebrew sanctuary, the blood of the sacrificed animals would be poured out at the base of the altar. (Exo 29:12, Lev 4:7, etc.) This means that the blood poured out there has been sacrificed, just as Jesus' blood was poured out. We are not to understand from this image that people are still alive after death any more than Abel was alive; yet God said of Abel to his brother, "you brother's blood cries out to me from the ground" where it was spilled.

How does the concept of sacrifice strike you? In the west today, most people do not offer animal sacrifices (except for food, perhaps); what are the lessons God wants us to notice about taking life of an animal?

Jesus as Lamb

Throughout the New Testament, there are references to Jesus as a sacrifice or lamb. John the Baptist points to Jesus at the beginning of His ministry (John 1:29, 36) as the "lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." This identification of Jesus with the sacrificial lamb may be the first time Jewish believers tied the Messiah's work with that of sacrificial life-giving.

Paul also alludes to Jesus a sacrifice in 1 Corinthians 5:7 when he says, “⁷ Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” This statement links Jesus’ death with that of a specific sacrifice, that of the Passover lamb.

In a more general way, Paul speaks to the Ephesians about Jesus as sacrifice: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.” In this case, Paul notes that Jesus willingly gave Himself up as an offering. This offering is dramatic evidence of His love for us.

We find this same language of Jesus in Hebrews 9:24-26, where Jesus puts away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. But we read more in Hebrews 9:11-15, and 10:1-10. Animal sacrifices could never truly make atonement for humans. Their value is no true replacement for human life.

In what way is Jesus’ death better than the sacrifices of lambs/sheep (and bulls and goats)? How can the sacrifice of Jesus “cleanse our conscience” as Hebrews 9:14 suggests? What effect does meditating on the cross and Christ’s sacrifice have on your heart?

Revelation 5

Jesus, throughout Revelation is associated with blood, often (but not always) His own. This is especially the case in ch. 5. There, Jesus is pictured as the only one who is worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll. It’s amazing that even God sitting on the throne cannot open the scroll; though it seems to be less about ability/power than legal right, that is, worthiness.

In the Greco-Roman world, scrolls sealed with seven seals often represented a will, covenant or testament, and could also be related to a law. That John weeps when nobody is found worthy to open the scroll suggests the closed-book is significant for him personally. It’s likely this is a will, and requires someone’s death. As we read, Jesus is declared to be the Lion of the tribe of Judah who has “overcome” so that He is now worthy to open the sealed scroll.

But what John sees is not a lion, but a lamb who looks as if He’s been slain. The death of the lamb is required to open the scroll. The purchasing of people with His blood is the required event that leads to the scroll’s opening, and the roll of the saints being called. We know we inherit all things because of Christ’s sacrificial death. (see Col. 1:9-12 as well). We inherit because Jesus gave all.

How does the conquering lion/slain lamb imagery help us understand the work and character of Christ? How does Jesus actually “overcome in this case? Is it this a model for us?

Closing Comments

In Revelation, Jesus gives all so that we might live. We are valuable enough that He would purchase us, and the cost? His own blood. We *are* worth the price to Him. Wow!

Opening Question

How do you think you would respond if you met God face to face?

Introduction

This lesson directs us to the throne, and to the living beings and their activities around it. While not a tremendous amount can be known of the angelic world—indeed some angelology goes far beyond scripture!—several books of the Bible highlight their role and proximity to God. We can learn more about the purposes of God by examining these beings.

Angels in Genesis

Throughout the Old Testament, when God sends a messenger to speak or meet with his people, that being is called “the angel of the Lord.” Although we often picture angels in church tradition as a haloed, shining, robed-in-white figure with wings, the Angel of the Lord more often appears to be in human form.

The first mention of angels in Genesis (the foundation-book for the rest of scripture) occurs immediately after the fall of mankind and their expulsion from the perfect garden. Genesis 3: 24 says, “So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.” The use of the plural (-im ending on cherub) suggests more than one, but only one sword.

What was the role of this first divine-messenger being(s)? Why do you think God enlists the help of angelic hosts?

Ezekiel 1

Read Ezekiel 1. We see some strange beings here. They have multiple face and wings, but somewhat human form overall. The faces represent living things on earth today: an eagle, a bull, a lion, and a man. It isn’t clear if these are symbolic pictures just for the human-prophet Ezekiel (and later John) or if the throne of God is literally surrounded by earthly-based creatures. Did God create such animals on other worlds as well?

These beings follow the Spirit of God and the throne. Wherever God goes, so they go. And their appearance and speed are like lightening. Each wheel of God’s throne is associated with one of these beings, as well. The overall picture is strikingly odd, otherworldly, and powerful.

What lesson can we learn about the harmony between the living creatures and God’s throne (and will or purpose)? How can humans (born separated from God) come to know His will and purpose for our own lives such that we act in harmony with Him?

Isaiah 6

Isaiah's theophanic vision describes heavenly beings as "seraphim" (shining ones) who have six wings. One of them is crying out to the other, "holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."

What comes to mind when you hear the word "holy"? Is it a positive or negative word in your experience? The Seraphs use this word to describe the special, separateness of God; how does that add to or modify the way you think of holiness?

Revelation 4

The Throne of God is seen again in Revelation 4. Here, John's theophanic vision takes in not just the one seated there, but those around Him. The similarity to Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6 is unmistakable. These four "living ones" have the same characteristics, including the faces as those in Ezekiel. But here, there are additional features: they have eyes all around, and *all of them* constantly cry out "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

When they proclaim God's holiness, the 24 elders respond by praising the One on the throne for His creative power, and will-full sustaining of all created things. God truly holds everything together and nothing exists that did not come from His power to make, form, and create out of nothing.

What does holiness mean in this context? How is God different from all other beings in the praises of those closest to the throne?

There is a strange worship irony in Revelation: in both chs. 19 and 22, John falls down to worship his angel companion. Both times John is rebuked and warned not to do so, instead to only "worship God!" Perhaps John is a warning to us that divinely created beings are easily confused with the power of the Creator Himself. We must be careful what or who we worship.

Closing Comments

In Revelation 4, God on the throne is worshipped for His Creative power, while in the next chapter, the Lamb is worshipped for His redemptive sacrifice. It is not just accidental or ironic that these are the two main reasons for worshipping today, and both are found in the 4th of the 10 Commandments. In Exodus 20, we're told to remember, and thus rest from labor on, the Sabbath day because God created the world in six days and rested on the 7th, whereas in Deuteronomy 5, God's people are asked to remember that they were slaves in Egypt and God redeemed them; thus we rest *and give rest to those around us* because God redeemed us!

Opening Question

Do you love poetry? Why or why not?

Introduction

The figurative language of poetry allows us to not only express specific ideas, but also feelings, images and pictures in ways that prose cannot. The use of symbols, of metaphor, simile, parallelism, and chiasm all contribute to create literary pictures and emotions that resonate in the heart, that move and draw us. Revelation borrows much of the imagery of the Psalms. The lesson this week explores some of these connections.

The Psalms as a Whole

It is helpful to consider the lyrics (sadly, most of the music is lost to us) of the Psalms, and compare their situation to the experiences of God's people in Revelation and in the last days. It is common to see the Psalmist running from enemies who seek his life, and turning to God who alone can save in this time of tribulation or distress. God comes to the singer's aid, and shows His power, and is worthy of praise for His salvation. But there are also times when the song-writer does *not* sense God's powerful presence; seemingly left alone in darkness, the words flow out in frustration, yet refusing to let go of the only One who can save. Revelation likewise pictures the saints of God facing tremendous persecution, going through a "time of trouble such as never was" and coming through the other side following the Lamb wherever He goes. These similarities suggest that the Psalms are not just songs for Israel in the past, nor are they for our present times of difficulty and devotion, but for a last-day experience when God's final Israel will be, like Abel, persecuted by their own brothers. The Psalms are to be learned, memorized, and hung on to like Jesus did with Psalm 22; while nailed to the cross, it was that song that Jesus recalls for us to point out His own suffering, death at the hands of wicked people, and ultimate victory in God's purpose for Him and the nations.

How have the songs of Israel spoken to you at specific times or events? Have you ever memorized a Psalm? If not, what prevents you from doing so? What can you do to make the Psalms more a part of your daily life and experience today?

The Psalms and the Temple

Although it is a bit disconnected, the quarterly author points to the Hebrew Sanctuary and its role in both the Psalms and Revelation. In the Psalms, the term "house of the Lord" is found 8 times in Psalms 23:6, 27:4, 92:13, 118:26, 122:1, 9, 134:1, and 135:2. The House of the Lord is the same as His temple, the place where His throne and objects of worship dominate. The word temple is also found 10 times in the Psalms. With the exception of Psalm 79:1, all references to the temple and house of the Lord are positive. It is there that the Psalmist's prayer ascends, where he can find refuge, from which God's judgements flow out, where praise is given, and where he longs to dwell.

Certainly for David, the one who wanted to build God a permanent house (yet was prevented by his bloodied hands from war) the temple was a place of knowledge about God. The sacrificial services, the work of the priestly order, and the High-Priest specifically on the Day of Atonement, and the forgiveness/cleansing of God's people were all lessons for David about the very character of God.

What similarities exist between modern church-buildings and the Hebrew sanctuary/Temple? What are the differences?

What lessons can/should we learn from the temple or that are meaningful in today's world or our modern culture?

The Temple in Revelation

The entire book of Revelation is based on a Sanctuary structure: each cycle of seven begins with a distinct—yet sequential—piece of furniture from the Hebrew Sanctuary. The seven churches begin with Candlesticks, the seven seals begin with the Throne (likely pointed to by the Table of Showbread), the seven trumpets are introduced by the altar of incense, and the seven angels of ch. 14 are introduced in 11:19 by the ark of the covenant. The seven last plagues begin with the end of the priests' intercession on the day of atonement in ch. 15. The book of Revelation ends with no temple any longer, the need for intercession is ended.

But the saints of God are seen in ch. 7 standing on Mt. Zion. Vss. 13-17 remind us “Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?’ ¹⁴ I said to him, ‘My lord, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. ¹⁶ They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.’”

God's people are allowed into, and even belong, in the very presence of God. They do not get there by accident. They have longed more than all things to be where God is. He has placed His seal on them and they are His people. They are granted access to the very court of Heaven itself.

Do you long to be where God is, or does that frighten you? What would convince you that God wants you there with Him?

Closing Comments

The temple throughout both the Psalms and in Revelation is a central theme drawing our minds heavenward, where Christ ministers for us in a temple not made by human hands.

Opening Question

What is the greatest struggle you've endured?

Introduction

The Psalms offer encouragement to God's people as they journey through the struggle with sin and seek victory. One of the ways God encourages us is by painting pictures of a glorious future, providing hope of a world restored. This is a major theme of the Psalms, as well as the Hebrew Prophets and Revelation, too!

Psalm 46

The lesson this week asks us to meditate on this Psalm. Read Psalm 46, and for each verse or section, consider what experiences here and now are addressed by the lines.

For the choir director. *A Psalm* of the sons of Korah, set to Alamoth. A Song.

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; ³ Though its waters roar *and* foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah.

⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High.

⁵ God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

⁶ The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted.

⁷ The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.

⁸ Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has wrought desolations in the earth.

⁹ He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire.

¹⁰ "Cease *striving* and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." ¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.

How do you think this song would be an encouragement to faithful followers of God going through times of difficulty? What hope does it offer for the future?

Psalm 26, Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21-22

The hopes and dreams of Israel were contained in a remade and restored land where right-living and peace prevailed. This could not exist while Israel was in captivity in Babylon. But Daniel was shown that Israel would return (fulfilling the prophecies of Jeremiah) and dwell safely in the land.

Read Psalm 126. what is the experience of God's people when He restores them from their time in bondage and "captivity"?

Does this song provide you with hope that you can be freed from captivity to sin and temptation?

Isaiah 65 is a quintessential passage offering Israel hope for a new world. The prophetic messages nearly always have a fourfold structure of which Isaiah 65 shows the last part: 1) you're sinning, 2) repent, 3) if you do not repent, there will be judgment, and 4) God will restore with a faithful remnant of His people. Read Isaiah 65:17-25. There can be no question this would have provided hope for God's people living in a land desolated by war, famine, plague, and wild predatory beasts.

While often compared, Revelation 21-22 paint a slightly different picture than Isaiah 65 of the New Heavens and New Earth. Read these two chapters, and see if you can spot the differences and similarities.

What are the differences between God's promise to Israel in Isaiah 65 and John's vision of the New Heavens/Earth? Which would you prefer?

Closing Comments

The Psalms, Prophets, and Revelation are all in unison looking forward to the day in which God restores the fortunes and future of His faithful people.

Opening Question

Can God affect human events without violating our freedom of choice?

Introduction

In this study, the author examines stories from the Old Testament that in one way or another foreshadow, typify, or parallel some final events of the New Testament. The concept here is called *typology*. Essentially, typology is when an Old Testament historical person(s), place, event, or institution somehow prefigures Christ or last-day events. Many Old Testament stories find a parallel in Jesus Christ, such as the near-sacrifice of Isaac, and God's substitution of a ram for the firstborn.

An important question that may not find an easy answer is if God's intrusion into human events to guide them removes their freedom of choice. All relationships with others affect or guide our own decisions because nothing we do or say is ever done in a vacuum. But this does not of necessity remove the ability to choose. God's relationship with people need not affect choice, either, though it might/can influence events.

According to several inspired New Testament authors, significant world events will alter our world in the last days, and many of these events are foreshadowed by Old Testament experiences especially judgment-type incidents.

The 6th Seal Experience

Read Revelation 6. In verses 12-17 (the sixth seal), the wicked believe that cataclysmic events indicate that the day of God's wrath and the wrath of the lamb have come. While it's possible that they are mistakenly blaming God for the destruction and tumult under this seal, the simpler reading takes their evaluation as an honest assessment of the situation. They believe that divine anger has come to them. We read in Hosea 10:8 that Israel was predicted to suffer for their idolatry when God judged them and tore down their altars, and the same language is used here, suggesting that those crying out are those involved in false worship.

**Will these people fear the judgement of God because they were ignorant of Him?
Would a good god destroy people due to their true ignorance?**

Noah's Flood Example for Jesus

Read Matthew 24:36-42. In Matthew 24, Jesus refers to Noah's flood as a foreshadowing of world conditions just before His return. Verse 37 says "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah." The most common interpretation of the days of Noah draws from Genesis 6:5, 11-12 where people were described as completely wicked and corrupt, as does the author of the quarterly. And while this may be the case at the end of time just preceding the 2nd Coming, Jesus in Matthew 24 uses Genesis differently; He refers to the flood story to show the unknowable *timing* of the event, and how people were caught off guard and unaware, yet were

really without excuse. Their lives continued as they always had. Consider that verse 37 is found in the broader context, including the “*inclusio*” verses 36 and 42. The last verses of Matthew 24 are entirely focused on preparation for His return.

In what way did Jesus argue Noah’s flood provides a last-day analogy? What lesson does it leave us? How can we “be ready” for His return unlike those of Noah’s day?

The Flood as Foreshadow

1 Peter 3:11-17 describes the flood as an event that parallels Christian baptism, a cleansing of earth from its pollution by sin. Thus, the flood is not just a historical event, but also a foreshadow of personal salvation—both justification, a clearing of past wrongs, but also of daily transformation by the power of Christ’s resurrection.

Peter references the flood again 2 Peter 3, but this time the absolute historicity of the flood is analogous to the last-day scoffers wondering about the 2nd Coming. Read through 2 Peter 3:1-14.

In what ways does Peter describe the flood that is similar to Jesus in Matthew 24? How is the flood a parallel of last-day events while also being different?

According to Peter, what are the moral implications of the flood for us today? What kind of lives should we live as we look for Christ to return, and the transformation of everything we know?

Sodom and Gomorrah

Just as the flood and God’s cleansing of Israel’s idolatry find New Testament fulfilling, so also does the judgement and destruction of the cities of the plain. When reading through Genesis 18-19, we find the cities to be well-situated, prosperous, and living with every luxury. This gave rise to indecency and lewd behavior. And while some in modern culture only find problematic the “abuse of power” inherent in the behavior of the city residents in regard to the divine messengers, Ezekiel 16 adds that they were also committing *abominations* before God, a reference in this case to the sexual sins listed in Leviticus that included same-sex intercourse.

Peter and Jude both refer to Sodom and Gomorrah as examples of God’s judgment in the last days.

What conditions today mirror those of Sodom and Gomorrah? Were the people of Sodom ignorant of their course and destiny? To what degree were Lot and Abraham missionaries, or should they have been?

Closing Comments

Sadly, much of the last-day judgement ideas in the New Testament come from the Old. The repetition of history must break God’s heart, yet He is so patient! At some point He will bring an end to the cycle of patience—disobedience—judgment—restoration. A final judgment and restoration is yet ahead of us.

Opening Question

What value do you find hearing ancient stories?

Introduction

This lesson focuses on two small books: Ruth (4 chapters) and Esther (10 chapters). These stories have been told in Christian and Jewish circles with much respect for these faithful women, holding them up as beautiful exemplars. The stories contain some surprises when read beyond the children's books, but these only make the stories more complex and dramatic. I highly recommend reading through both books in their entirety, rather than reading a section here or there. We will find, as the quarterly addresses, that these stories have a future-focus as well.

Ruth

Read through the book of Ruth—it's only four chapters, it should take you less than ½ hour. Because it is a story, we should examine it using narrative tools! Consider the narrative setting, the characters, the plot, and the complications to the plot. Look for props used to advance the story

Setting: When did this story take place? What is the geographical setting, and what is the condition of the land? What cultural aspects complicate the story (what do we know historically about Moab, for instance, and its relationship to Israel)? What is God's role as character, if at all?

Characters: Who are the heroes or protagonists? Who are the antagonists? What are the actions they perform that tell you about their character, their motives, and quality?

Plot: What is the overarching plot? How is it complicated or made more difficult to complete? How is it resolved?

The story can be broken up into several "acts" where the first (ch. 1) describes the setting and the challenges facing these women, neither with a husband, no way to have land, and no future because their family options were cut off. The second act (ch. 2) introduces Boaz and develops his attention to Ruth; there is certainly interest beyond just familial obligation! Ch. 3, the 3rd act, takes place at the threshing floor at night. It is some what scandalous in the original Hebrew, but ends with Boaz making a promise to Ruth that He will take care of her and Naomi, unless someone else is a closer relative. Act 4 reveals someone else *is* closer; Boaz and Ruth may be separated! But in the end, Boaz redeems her, makes her his wife, and the book ends with a genealogy. Ruth becomes the ancestor of King David!

In what ways do you find Ruth's story to parallel ours today? The quarterly makes several helpful connections, too! How has Jesus become a redeemer for us in our sinful condition?

Esther

Esther's story is considerably longer than Ruth's, but perhaps attempt reading the book in a sitting. Plan for an hour or more for this task. Once again, ask the narrative-type questions.

Setting: When did *this* story take place? Where is the story placed, and what other Biblical stories might be related to this one? How does the religious/cultural setting affect Esther's choices and opportunities?

Characters: What can we learn of the characters from their actions? How would you describe them? Unlike Ruth, the main characters assume more heroic or evil roles. Also, one character is missing in this narrative—God! His name is never mentioned, yet what role do you think He might play in the narrative?

Plot: Again, what is the overarching plot? How is it complicated or made more difficult to complete? How is it resolved?

Ruth and her cousin shine brightly in this story, courageous in spite of their foreign status, and fears of retribution. Mordecai's actions show him to be a man of honor and conviction. Questions might be asked about the morality of Esther's night with the king and subsequent placement in the harem. Yet it appears she may have had little choice in the matter, and now is placed in a unique position for her people due to her royal status. Haman is the epitome of evil, seeking destruction of all Jews. Only when Esther enters seeking to save her people is the plot resolved!

What time of trouble do God's people go through in this narrative? How is it resolved?

How is Esther a type of Christ? What does the intercession of Esther and Jesus achieve for the people of God? How is the Persian king like and unlike God the Father?

Closing Comments

These are more than merely interesting stories of God's providence in the past; they become encouraging foreshadows of the future, of Christ's intercession and redemption for us! God has not only been active in the past, but has made sure to carefully record these stories for us, on whom the ends of the world have come.

Opening Question

What aspects of the future worry you most?

Introduction

This lesson is primarily drawn from Daniel 2 and 3 and some New Testament parallels, especially Revelation 13. Generally, Daniel can be divided into two sections: chs. 1-6 are narrative while chs. 7-12 are more prophetic/visionary. Yet in both chs. 2 and 4, Nebuchadnezzar has dreams. In both, Daniel interprets them for the king, setting the stage for, and giving us clues of interpretation regarding, the later chapters of the book.

It often surprises Bible readers when they learn that the narratives of Daniel are just as significant to helping interpret Revelation as are the more prophetic portions. Issues faced by Daniel and his Jewish friends are the exact type of issues faced by God's people over and over in history. Revelation will draw on this same language.

Daniel 2

Read Daniel 2. King Nebuchadnezzar has visions of the future, and dreams a dream that he cannot make sense of, yet knows has tremendous meaning. When Daniel comes in and interprets the dream, much is disclosed, and the King is enlightened.

What does Daniel say is the reason for the King's dream? About what was he wondering?

How does God show Himself in this story? What is His plan for the King?

If you were King Nebuchadnezzar, how would you relate to the interpretation? And if you were Daniel, how would you feel giving it, especially after saying, "Oh King, live forever!"

If this vision is a prophetic summary of future kingdoms (and historically, we find it to be shockingly precise!), what part(s) still await fulfillment?

Daniel 2 provides prophetic scholars a template helpful for understanding later prophetic sequences, such as Daniel 7, 8, and 10-12. Likewise, this structure appears to find application in Revelation as well. It's called historicism, where the prophecy begins at the time of the writer, and continues sequentially until the 2nd Coming or other end-time event such as the judgment.

Daniel 3

Read this chapter as well. Rather than being prophetic/visionary, this chapter is story, a narrative. But it is not unrelated to ch. 2! Because the king was told his kingdom—represented

by the golden head of the image—would come to an end, and be replaced by a lesser kingdom, we must read ch. 3 with his kingly hopes in mind. He wants to live forever, to be king of a kingdom that will never come to an end. His erecting of an image *entirely of gold* in ch. 3 shows his response to the dream. He will make his *own* future, despite Daniel's God's prediction.

As you read the chapter, how many times does it mention *who* set up this image? Why the repetition?

Also, notice the repetition of those invited, the decree, and the musical response. Again, why so much repeating words? How much thinking is involved in rote reiteration? What does this say about the mindset of those who worship the king's image?

Describe the character of Daniel's friends here. How does God show up to help them?

The miracle saving these men is not a sign for *them*, they already know their God can save. But it becomes a key moment in the life of the King. He will be humbled in ch. 4 and come to know the true God just as Daniel and his friends do!

Revelation 13

Read the second half of Revelation 13 related to the land-beast. This chapter is part of a section starting with the end of ch. 11. The ark of the covenant is seen for the first time suggesting Day of Atonement language, of last-day judgment. The Dragon (Satan) wars against the people of God and *the Son* (ch. 12), but is defeated and thrown to earth. So he goes off to get allies in his war with the bride of Christ—a sea-beast, and a land-beast (both in ch. 13). Adventists have commonly seen the Church-state power of Rome in the sea-beast's description, and the protestant, Christianized western world led by the U.S. as the land-beast.

What parallels do you see between Rev. 13 and Daniel 2-3?

What is the image this time; is it a statue? How is an image "to the first beast" established, and who plays a role in enforcing it?

How is the experience of God's last-day people similar to that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? What similar conditions will they face, and how does Daniel's narrative suggest they respond?

Closing Comments

God has not left us ignorant of the future. He has given us much more than just clues from the past, but actual patterns, parallels, and foreshadowings that predict the broad events of the end. Just as God was with His people then, we can trust He'll be with us, protecting those who are faithful to Him!

Opening Question

What is the largest natural disaster you've experienced personally?

Introduction

Our lesson this week concludes the study of prophetic foreshadowings or types from the Old Testament that predict or hint at final events. The key here is that they show how God's actions in history give us reasons to have hope in the future. The same struggles and victories of His people in the past are ours today.

This lesson looks at Jonah's calling, and then takes us to Babylon to watch it fall, and reveals a pagan "Messiah" who delivered God's people from their exile. Yes, God even uses pagan kings as His deliverers, and as foreshadows of His Son's return!

Jonah

Once again, this is a small book, only four chapters. We see a similar narrative structure in Jonah to our explorations of Esther and Ruth. After reading through it, answer the following questions.

Many pagan cultures believed the Gods were instrumental in their daily affairs. Would their belief had been strengthened or altered after their encounter with God's servant Jonah? What might they have learned about Jonah's God?

Why is Jonah running? Does he actually believe he can escape the "presence of the Lord"? What does he fear, do we know?

Jonah's poetic section in ch. 2 highlights the experience, not just of Jonah, but of Jesus, too; indeed, all who experience a death in the waters (baptism) and a rising to new life, and new purpose. What does this suggest the calling of God's people should be after their commitment to follow Christ?

Why does Jonah become angry? With what aspects of God's character does he find fault? He complains that he *knew* God was like that from the beginning!

How does God really feel about the nations? What does He want from them, as the Ninevites' response reveals to us?

The Fall of Babylon

Revelation 17-19 describe the fall of end-time Babylon, including songs of praise from heaven and its inhabitants, and laments and dirges from the people of the earth who became rich through their relationship with her. Yet this "fall of Babylon" is not the first. In fact, there are two

previous accounts of the fall of Babylon. The first is found in Genesis with the abandonment of the tower of Babel project. The second is referenced in Daniel 5. However, no historical details are given in the Biblical text of how exactly the city would be overthrown. For that, we must read Herodotus. Once we do, though, the Biblical story comes alive and with it, Revelation. Read Daniel 5, then consider the following questions:

What was the attitude of King Belshazzar compared to Nebuchadnezzar? Does he give any indication that he would repent when confronted with both the history of God in Babylon through Nebuchadnezzar, the words of the Queen (likely his own mother), and the supernatural handwriting on the wall?

Although the Biblical text does not describe the fall of Babylon, Herodotus says that King Cyrus of the Persians (dried up the Euphrates river) which flowed directly under and through the old city of Babylon), and found the riverbed uncontested by defending soldiers. The city was overcome from within after the river was dried up.

Read Revelation 16, paying special attention to vss. 12-21 and answer the following questions.

How does the history of Babylon's first fall provide a parallel for end-time Babylon?

If Babylon is no longer a literal city, of what does it become a symbol? How could that "city" fall?

The way is prepared for the "kings from the east," it says. That king in Daniel's story was Cyrus, who, according to Isaiah 44 and 45, becomes an "anointed" ruler sent by God. Does God still use pagan kings and kingdoms for His purposes?

If the city of Babylon in Revelation is a symbol for an end-time alliance between the kings of the world and religious power, then it stands to reason that—at some level, at least—the holy city, the New Jerusalem at the end of Revelation has some symbolic features. If you get a chance, read Revelation 21-22 and ask what the imagery there might be communicating such as, the size of the city, the need for walls, the measurements all based on 12s, and the foundation of the apostles (see references in Ephesians and Peter to the temple of God's people).

Closing Comments

As our study this quarter ends, my hope is that this study guide and the quarterly give you greater encouragement to study your Bibles closely, comparing scripture with scripture, especially the prophetic material.

May the God of all peace, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit be with you as you study His word, making ready to meet Him. May that day be soon!