

Introduction to the Book of Daniel

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The Time of the End

"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel 12:4, KJV) If a chart were drawn showing the increase of knowledge on Earth during the past twenty-six centuries, the line would slowly rise until it reached the nineteenth century. Then, the line would suddenly curve upwards because knowledge has dramatically increased during the past two hundred years. In fact, I have heard it said that the half-life of knowledge today is about five years. If this statement is true, this means there will be twice as much knowledge in five years! How can the doubling of knowledge continue at such a rapid pace, and furthermore, who can absorb all of the knowledge that is current? There is so much to learn and life is so short!

School, by definition, is a series of progressive classes. For example, basic arithmetic is a prerequisite for Algebra I, and Algebra I is a prerequisite for Algebra II, and Algebra II is a prerequisite for Calculus and so on. This progression in learning is necessary because knowledge in mathematics is additive in nature. A student must have a working knowledge of basic arithmetic and algebra *before* he* can understand calculus. Bible prophecy is similar to mathematics. The Bible student must understand certain fundamental concepts *before* he can appreciate the larger issues presented in Bible prophecy.

Many people think Bible prophecy is merely future telling. This definition is terribly inadequate. Bible prophecy encompasses the study of an infinite God and His mysterious ways. Bible prophecy has been unfolding for the past 6,000 years and it reveals the actions and plans of God as nothing else can. Bible prophecy proves that God is deliberate and purposeful in everything He does. Bible prophecy not only reveals the foreknowledge of God, it also reveals the plans of God. Bible prophecy has much to say about the future, but there is very little in the future that has not been witnessed in times past. This is the beauty of Bible prophecy. Almost everything that God plans to do in the future, He has done at various times in the past. This is why Bible prophecy is an encompassing study of an infinite God and His mysterious ways.

Why Now?

Daniel was told that knowledge would be increased at the time of the end. (Daniel 12:4) True to His word, God has granted mankind more knowledge during the past two hundred years than during the past two thousand years! Why has He done this? Perhaps God planned from the beginning to populate the world with as many people as possible at the time of the end. If so, one could say that God has controlled the population of Earth through knowledge. We know that the resources necessary to sustain life on this planet are limited, and access to these resources was impossible until the nineteenth century. Now that knowledge has been given to mankind, access to these resources has brought about a population explosion. For example, the

industrial revolution of the nineteenth century produced mechanical machinery of various types. As a result, farming equipment and agricultural techniques were developed which allow a small number of people to feed an ever expanding global population. Transportation and commerce moves food and supplies to distant places and this translates into larger numbers of surviving people. Advances in medicine also contribute to a longer life span; thus the population of Earth increased because people lived longer and their offspring survived longer. Railroads, freeways, ocean-going super tankers, telephones, banking, energy and computers enable businesses to flourish so that the physical needs of billions of people can be met. Think about this: The expansive infrastructures of our world are built upon knowledge and technology that did not exist a mere two hundred years ago. Consequently, the population of Earth has now passed the *six billion* mark and experts say it will exceed nine billion by 2050. Evidently, this is what God planned. He appears to be crowding this planet with people at the time of the end so that He might populate Heaven with the largest number of people possible!

Knowledge of Bible Prophecy Necessary for Salvation?

When people say, "I don't need to understand Bible prophecy because it has nothing to do with salvation," they are right in a limited sense. Many generations of people have died without understanding apocalyptic prophecy. However, there is a profound difference between past generations and the last generation. A time is coming when prophetic understanding will have everything to do with salvation! (As it did in Noah's day.) The final generation will experience a series of tests that no other generation has faced. This is why God warns us in the book of Revelation about the mark of the beast and the importance of receiving the seal of God.

By increasing our knowledge of His Word and His ways, God has made the plan of salvation so simple that any searching person can understand it. But, God offers more in the Bible than the basics of salvation. (Hebrews 5:11-6:1) *God offers to explain Himself*. People who truly love God and deeply appreciate His generous offer of salvation want to know everything they can about the One who first loved us! A life of discovering a loving God never ends. He is the most interesting subject in all the universe. If the plan of salvation is interesting to study, Bible prophecy is even more interesting because the fulfillment of salvation involves a series of prophetic events!

Five Prerequisites

The study of Bible prophecy forces the student into a theological corner. This occurs because the student has to reconcile his conclusions on prophecy with everything he knows about God into one harmonious theology. Notice how this process evolves: Some people support the doctrine of a pre-tribulation rapture with the idea that God will not allow Christians to suffer wrath during the Great Tribulation. (1 Thessalonians 5:9) These people claim a pre-tribulation rapture *is consistent* with the experiences of Noah, Lot, Rahab, etc. What do Noah, Lot and Rahab have to do with the Great Tribulation? Actually, nothing. "But," they say, "if Noah, Lot and Rahab were saved from God's wrath, God will save Christians from His coming wrath." (Luke 21:36) This use of logic and a few "proof texts" demonstrates how certain prophetic conclusions are reconciled within a theological framework. Even though I do not believe the

Bible teaches a pre-tribulation rapture, this example demonstrates why prophetic conclusions and theological beliefs are inseparable.

It is almost impossible for two people to discuss the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation if they are not in agreement on essential Bible doctrines. I find there are five essential doctrines in the Bible, and they are easy to remember because they can be associated with the letter "S." The essential doctrines are: **S**alvation by faith in Jesus Christ, the **S**econd Coming of Jesus, the **S**abbath rest of Jesus, the **S**tate of man in death, and God's use of parallel **S**anctuaries. These five doctrines are prerequisites for a study of Bible prophecy. Two examples demonstrate the reasons for this conclusion. First, if a person does not understand the state of man in death, then portions of Daniel 7 and 12, Revelation 6 and 20 will make no sense. If a person is judged at the time of death and he immediately goes to Heaven or hell, why is there a resurrection and a white throne judgment at the end of the 1,000 years in Revelation 20 for those who were previously burning in hell? Second, if a person does not understand God's use of parallel sanctuaries, he cannot understand the casting down of the censer at Heaven's Altar of Incense. (Revelation 8:5) One has to understand the services at the *earthly* Altar of Incense before he can understand the services at the *heavenly* Altar of Incense. Again, certain prerequisites are necessary to understand Bible prophecy. This relationship will be identified at various places in this book and you will be referred to my companion volume, *Jesus, The Alpha and The Omega*, for further study on the five essential doctrines.

Four Rules: Trash or Treasure?

There are hundreds, maybe thousands of books on Bible prophecy and most of these books do not agree on the meaning of Bible prophecy. This diversity of opinion leads many people to conclude that no one actually understands what Bible prophecy says. If Bible scholars cannot agree, how are lay people supposed to decipher the meaning of prophecy? This is a good question. Perhaps you should be warned that this book perpetuates the tradition, because it does not agree with thousands of books already written on this subject. Why, then, should another book on Bible prophecy be written? This book was written because I have stumbled, through God's generous grace, into a discovery of four rules of interpretation that allows Bible prophecy to be understood just as it reads. In days to come, this discovery could prove to be more profound than a cure for cancer or AIDS! Of course, time will tell whether my discovery is trash or treasure, but nevertheless, I am excited about the new end-time story that springs from Bible prophecy, because a significant part of the story is about to take place!

Apocalyptic Prophecy Points to the End of Sin

Because Bible prophecy is much more than future telling, the books of Daniel and Revelation offer a lot more than an explanation of how the world will end. These two prophetic books reveal the ways of God. Furthermore, Bible prophecy serves many purposes, and its ultimate purpose is a revelation of God's love for man. The five essential doctrines explain *why* our world is in a fallen condition and Bible prophecy explains *how* and *when* God will rescue mankind from the curse of sin.

Many people are surprised to learn that Revelation's story does not end with the Second Coming. Actually, the story continues for 1,000 years *after* the Second Coming because Revelation's story is ultimately concerned with something larger than the end of the world as we know it. This "something" is the elimination of the sin problem. If a person looks into Revelation to merely foretell how the world will end, he will miss the best part of the story because God's greatest problem is the presence of sin within *His* universe. God's solution to the sin problem has cost the Father and the Son everything They could give. Consequently, a correct understanding of the sin problem is a prerequisite for understanding Bible prophecy. Bible prophecy indicates God will ultimately eliminate sin and annihilate a large number of people whom He deeply loves. Even more, Bible prophecy reveals that God will be fully justified in the eyes of His subjects when He does this! This is an incredible story that has many dimensions and it takes some effort to understand it.

An Omnipotent Jesus

The books of Daniel and Revelation declare an omnipotent Jesus. Jesus is the centerpiece of apocalyptic prophecy. He is Sovereign God and He oversees the final events of Earth from His throne during the time of the end. (Daniel 7:13,14; John 1:1-14; Matthew 26:64; John 5:23; Revelation 1:8; 4, 5) A great war is about to begin. At this very moment, two kings are preparing for a war that will determine the fate of everyone living on Earth. Jesus and Lucifer are extremely powerful and they have legions of angels at their command. A declaration of war has existed between them for thousands of years. For the past 6,000 years, human beings have been trapped in a cosmic drama between Christ, the king of righteousness, and Lucifer, the king of evil. To Jesus, we are objects of greatest affection. To Lucifer, we are targets for destruction. Like it or not – believe it or not, the last generation to live on Earth will be caught in the middle of a no-holds-barred *spiritual* and *physical* war that will take place between these two great rulers. The Great Tribulation will become The Great Divide of the human race. God will test the people of Earth to see who will stand on the side of righteousness and who will capitulate and unite with the forces of evil. Because the coming war is both spiritual and literal, the Bible predicts the inhabitants of Earth will see the physical appearing of both kings. Lucifer, the prince of this world (John 16:11; Revelation 17:8), will gloriously appear first. Later, Jesus, the prince of Heaven's host (Revelation 19:11-21), will majestically appear in clouds of glory and Jesus will destroy Lucifer (the Antichrist), and his followers with a single command that comes out of His mouth! (This command is represented as a sharp sword in Revelation 19:15,21.)

The books of Daniel and Revelation tell a drama that involves truth and lies, death and resurrection. The presence of sin has caused God to do things that He would have not done otherwise. If sin had not occurred, Jesus would not have died for sinners. If Jesus had not died at Calvary, the universe would know less about the depths of God's love, because the death of Jesus on Calvary demonstrates what Jesus was willing to do for man *before* He created Adam and Eve. Jesus knew our parents would sin *before* He created them, but His foreknowledge did not keep Him from creating them nor did He predispose Adam and Eve to sin. They were created with a powerful tendency to live in perfect harmony with their Creator. But, they chose to sin of their own free will, and God chose of His own free will to deal with the lemon of sin by converting this tragic event into lemonade. Because of His love for man, Jesus went to His

death in order that we might have life. It is incomprehensible that Jesus was willing to perish forever so that Adam and Eve and their offspring might have the opportunity to spend eternity with His Father. What love! What amazing grace! Because God is love, the rise of sin produced an opportunity for the Godhead to reveal their true character of love. Of course, the Godhead did not need sin's presence to reveal their infinite love for their creation. However, sin happened because God's children have the power of choice. The Godhead used this misfortune to expose their souls before a whole universe so that every thoughtful observer might understand the righteousness and fairness of God's government and God's ways. Because we live in the darkness of degeneracy and sin, we need spiritual eyesight to understand a host of things that we cannot physically see. (1 Corinthians 2:12) For this reason Jesus has sent the Spirit, the Spirit of *prophecy*, to guide us into an understanding of prophetic truth. (Revelation 1:9; 19:10; John 16:13) When Bible prophecy is properly understood, the entire Bible harmoniously declares a loving God, an unbelievably generous offer of salvation, the promise of victory over sin, a resurrection to eternal life, and the final annihilation of sin with all its harmful consequences. This is wonderful news that everyone should understand! This is why this book was written. The books of Daniel and Revelation tell us the present world order – which groans under the curse of sin – is soon to end and a new-world order is about to begin. The book of Daniel closes with these encouraging words: "**Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days** [for he shall behold the Lamb of God without experiencing death]." (Daniel 12:12, insertion mine)

In closing, I would like to express deepest appreciation to those who helped to make this book a reality. Suzy, Gail and Evonne worked very hard to find and correct my typographical errors. Suzy also did the painstaking research necessary to create the index of Bible texts. Marty spent many tedious hours putting the book in its final format and Shelley searched through piles of photos for the best possible picture for the cover. The product of our hands is in your hands. May the Lord use this little book to His glory is my prayer.

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