

Speak the Truth, Live With the End in Mind - Daniel Study - Chapter 9

Living with the end in mind is key to my confidence today. If, as a coach, you knew the final score of the game was in your favor, how would you coach during the game? In the game of life and eternity, God is the champion, and victory is guaranteed. Daniel chapters 7 to 12 give us a glimpse into the future in which God will reign with all who believe.

Daniel chapters 7 to 12 are not chronological. These chapters reveal dreams or visions that Daniel received later in his life. The dream or vision in Daniel 7 was received during the first year of Belshazzar, most likely 553 B.C., which occurred chronologically between chapters four and five. God gave Daniel these dreams to reveal the future and display His plan for human history. We see that what God says will happen, happens. Many to whom God gave promises about the future, like Abraham and Moses, never personally experienced the fulfillment of those promises, but, none-the-less, the promises were fulfilled. For Daniel, it was the same. He saw the fulfillment of the vision about Babylon and Persia, but Greece, Rome and the kingdom of God were all fulfilled after his time. In order for Daniel to record the visions given to him, he had to believe that God would fulfill them. If any of the visions did not come to pass, then he would be considered a false prophet and have no credibility. By sharing these visions, Daniel was putting his life and reputation on the line.

Do you really believe the truth of the Bible? Are you willing to put your life on the line for the truth?

The Vision and Interpretation

Read Daniel 7:1-8, 15-28. Daniel had a vision that the four winds of heaven were churning up the seas below, and from the seas came four beasts. The four winds of heaven represented God's power over the world. God churned up the seas and the world with the winds of heaven. He is the one who directs the winds. Out of the seas and the world arose four beasts which represented four world empires that would arise. Notice that these empires were represented by wild beasts. Most of their rulers were brutal, totalitarian and had a goal of world domination.

The first empire was represented by a lion with the wings of an eagle. The eagle's wings got torn off, and the beast stood on two feet like a man and was given the heart of a man. The empire represented was Babylon (609-539BC), and the two symbols were the lion and the eagle. Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, was powerful like a lion and swift like an eagle. As we know from Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar was humbled by God, and his rule changed from ruthless to compassionate. In Daniel's vision, the lion stood like a man and was given a heart symbolic of care or compassion.

The second empire was represented by a bear that had three ribs in its mouth. This represented the empire of Medo-Persia (539-331BC). In Daniel 5 and 6, we read about the Medo-Persians defeating the Babylonians. Just as a bear was bigger, but slower-moving than a lion, so was the Medo-Persian Empire. The Medo-Persians conquered more, but moved slowly in doing so. One side of the bear was raised higher, noting that the Persians would have greater authority in the partnership. The three ribs were probably the powers defeated by the Medo-Persians: Lydia, Babylon and Egypt.

The third empire, Greece, led by Alexander the Great (331-146 B.C), was represented by a leopard with four wings and four heads. Alexander conquered the world as fast as a leopard can run. But at the age of 31, Alexander died and his kingdom was divided into four parts represented by the four heads.

The fourth empire was represented by a beast so terrifying that no animal could be associated with it. This was the Roman Empire. The fourth beast represents a span of time both historical and in the future. From this empire the anti-Christ arises. The greatest blasphemes come from its rulers both in the past and the future. The scene shifts from the earth to heaven. The focus shifts from world domination to the desire to dominate heaven. In the end we will see God sitting in judgment of all world empires. Only the Kingdom of God will last forever.

The beast had ten horns. Then another horn rose, being smaller at first, and it defeated three horns. The small horn then became the most powerful and ruled all other horns. This horn challenged the God of heaven and boastfully blasphemed God. For a time he persecuted the people of God, and in his efforts to replace God, tries to change set times and laws.

Stages of the Roman Empire: The Vision and Connections to the New Testament The first stage was historical. Rome conquered more than any of the other empires and ruled for more than 500 years. It was during Roman rule that Jesus walked the earth, and Satan and all his forces were in full attack against Christ. Read Revelation 12:1-17.

The second stage was the 10 horn stage. In this stage, the Roman Empire consisted of a 10-nation confederacy. Since that did not happen during the first Roman rule, it would happen in the future and set the stage for the anti-Christ.

The third stage is the little horn, or anti-Christ, stage. The little horn does three main things:

1. He boldly spoke out and blasphemed God. (2 Thessalonians 2:3,4; Revelation 13:5,6) Many followed and even worshiped him. (Revelation 13:8)
2. He waged war against the people of God and had success for a period of time. (Revelation 13:7, 20:4)
3. He claimed his superiority and exalted himself as God. In order to establish his godhood, he attempted to change seasons and laws, but God is over time and has put moral and physical laws into place. Somehow the anti-Christ attempted to change laws and seasons to prove himself as God. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

The Kingdom of God Rules

Daniel 9-14. The greatest empire is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is eternal, all powerful and holds all earthly empires in judgment. God, along with all believers in Christ, will rule forever (Daniel 9:27). The Ancient of Days-God pronounced judgment upon the anti-

Christ and destroyed him forever. In Revelation 19:11-21:7 we are shown the fulfillment of God's victory over evil and rule of Christ forever with the believers.

Note: The description of God in Daniel 7 is similar to one the Apostle John sees in Revelation 1:9-18 and Isaiah sees in Isaiah 6: 1-9. Take time to note the visions of God by these three men. Meditate upon the greatness of God. Consider the response of these men of God when faced with a vision of God.

How should we respond to his greatness and power? Meditate upon this until it makes a difference in your soul. Live with the end in mind!

When we share the truth, we have to trust that it is true. Do we really believe God's ways taught in the Bible are true? Are we willing to put our job on the line to coach God's way because we know it works? Tony Dungy is the perfect example of a coach who is committed to coaching God's way. He knows that God's way works and patiently does things God's way. Even if we don't win the championship, doing things God's way develops a person for this life and the one to come. We have to be more concerned about character and salvation than winning. Praise God, though, that most every time, character and winning go hand-in-hand.

TALKING POINTS: SPEAK THE TRUTH - LIVE WITH THE END IN MIND

Main thought:

Living with the end in mind is the key to my confidence today.

Key Scripture:

Daniel 7:9-14, 26-28

Discussion questions:

1. Why is it important to know about the end times? How should that impact the way you live today?
2. Discuss the greatness of God in verses 9-14? How does the greatness of God impact your perspective of the world?

COACH'S TESTIMONY: SPEAK THE TRUTH - LIVE WITH THE END IN MIND

Tommy Tuberville, Former Head Football Coach, Auburn University

Tommy Tuberville is an example of a coach who coaches with the end in mind. Walking through the halls of the Auburn football office, you can almost feel it. There's something different about this athletic complex—something bigger than just sports.

Make no mistake about it, these Tigers have the same on-the-field mission as every other football team in the country. They want to win. But unlike most other teams, their definition of a "win" isn't restricted to a scoreboard. The successes of this team are found in the graduation rates of the players, in the marriages of the coaches, in the personal development of mature young men, in the integrity of the program and, for many, in the spiritual development of all involved.

Yes, God is up to something at Auburn University, and from the looks of things, this is only the beginning.

Bible Reference:

Revelation 13



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