



2020 1Q Daniel: Lesson 1 From Reading to Understanding

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

I love the title of this lesson—*From Reading to Understanding*

It immediately brought to mind a quote from the book *Christ's Object Lessons*:

Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him. By earnest attention and prayerful thought **he must learn the meaning of the words of truth**, and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles. COL 59.5

This is the key to all Bible study—not knowing the original words, but the intended meaning.

When doing paraphrase this was one of the key principles I applied—what is the true meaning. I received some emails taking issue with some verses because the English words I chose were not in keeping with the Greek. But to me it isn't the word that matters, but the meaning, so I challenged those who emailed me to tell me what the verse means.

This is what we want to do all throughout the Bible, but even more importantly when dealing with symbols, metaphors, similes, images, parables or any other representative expression.

I have some basic guidelines that I have found to be quite helpful in rightly interpreting Scripture:

1. We must understand the overall context of Scripture (not just the immediate context which is what many focus on and thus lose the forest for the trees—they lose the true message for the local message) and that context is a cosmic reality in which God is love all the time and Satan is a being of selfishness who seeks to destroy what God has created.
2. The battle between God and Satan is not a physical battle, but a battle of ideas, concepts, beliefs. God's prime weapons are truth, love, and liberty. Satan's prime weapons are lies, fear based selfishness, and coercion.
3. The Bible is the revelation of the truth about God, His character methods, and plans to send Jesus to save humankind. It also exposes Satan as the source of evil, death, pain, suffering and reveals throughout human history the problems that deviating from God's design causes.
4. Some specific rules of interpreting Bible prophecy are:
 - If one part of a passage is symbolic or metaphor, then the rest is symbolic or metaphor unless clear reasons to be literal are expressed in the text.



- The Bible will be used to interpret itself (i.e. symbol interpretations will use Bible definitions before other definitions).
- The general theme is that of the conflict between Christ and Satan.
- God's character of love never changes, therefore interpretations will never result in God being represented in a character other than love.
- God's law of love never changes, therefore interpretations will always be in harmony with God's law of love.
- God's other design laws never change therefore interpretations will not violate God's design laws for life.

The lesson points out that Christ is at the center of Daniel—absolutely true. The context of Daniel is what? Christ at the center of Daniel doing something, working to achieve something—and what is that? Our salvation. Christ is battling Satan and satanic agencies for the purpose of healing His creation.

The lesson wants us to also recognize the difference between classic and apocalyptic prophecy:

- Classic prophecy is a message specifically for the people at that time with limited or little metaphor or symbols but with direct simple to understand message. Example: Jonah's prophecy to Nineveh—repent or the city will be destroyed.
- Apocalyptic prophecy is prophecy that tells of future events and often contains symbols, metaphors, images that require interpretation to understand the reality behind it.

SUNDAY

The lesson asks the question, “In what way is Christ the center of Scripture?”

Is it merely about revealing God's character or is it more—that not only is Christ God the Son, but that He is actively working to achieve a specific goal?

Does Scripture reveal Christ? Does it do more? Does it reveal the truth about the Father? Does it do more? Does it reveal the truth about God working through Christ to achieve an outcome? What is that outcome?

Would that outcome be the coming of Jesus to overthrow Satan, cleanse His creation from sin and cure the sin problem?

- Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29 NIV84) –Is this more than revelation of God's character?
- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14,15, NIV84)
- But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (1Timothy 1:10 NIV84)



- The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1John 3:8 NIV84)

Does the Scripture reveal more than the truth about God? Does it reveal what God, through Christ, was achieving? And what was God achieving? The destruction of sin and the healing of His creation!

Then, when we read Scripture do we see the conflict between good and evil being played out with Christ the member of the Godhead who is acting throughout human history to destroy sin and evil and heal His creation?

So, do we interpret the Bible stories through this lens?

Would this mean we could understand Satan working to obstruct God while God working to fulfill His promise to Adam and Eve of a Messiah?

From the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

"By leading Israel to this daring insult and blasphemy to Jehovah, Satan had planned to cause their ruin. Since they had proved themselves to be so utterly degraded, so lost to all sense of the privileges and blessings that God had offered them, and to their own solemn and repeated pledges of loyalty, the Lord would, he believed, divorce them from Himself and devote them to destruction. **Thus would be secured the extinction of the seed of Abraham, that seed of promise that was to preserve the knowledge of the living God, and through whom He was to come—the true Seed, that was to conquer Satan. The great rebel had planned to destroy Israel, and thus thwart the purposes of God.** But again he was defeated. Sinful as they were, the people of Israel were not destroyed. While those who stubbornly ranged themselves on the side of Satan were cut off, the people, humbled and repentant, were mercifully pardoned. The history of this sin was to stand as a perpetual testimony to the guilt and punishment of idolatry, and the justice and long-suffering mercy of God" PP 335.

This is a key concept to understand in Scripture as it helps us understand how love intervenes throughout human history—always working to heal and save, to keep open avenue for the Messiah.

Let's give some examples and tell me where you see Christ:

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There **the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush.** Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

⁴ When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

⁵ "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ Then he said, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham,**



the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:1-5 NIV84)

Who is talking to Moses here?

This is Jesus—and did He tell Moses what He wanted to do? What was Jesus’ plan?

It was to deliver Israel from bondage, have them become a nation of emissaries who rightly represent God’s kingdom, bless them to draw attention of the world to God, convert the world to true worship of God and prepare the way for Messiah to come to cure the terminal sin condition.

The lesson demonstrates that Christ is the center of every chapter of Daniel. Let’s review this:

- Chapter One: Nebuchadnezzar takes captive Israel’s leadership and carries off articles of the Temple—this is a loose metaphor for Satan taking humanity captive and contaminating the Spirit temple with fear and selfishness. Daniel and his three friends stay true to God, and keep their Spirit temples pure and stay faithful to God. The represents Christ, who came to this world and kept His Spirit temple pure.
- Chapter Two: The kingdoms of the world fall one after another eventually they end up fragmented and unable to find unity until Christ returns and establishes His eternal kingdom here on earth
- Chapter Three: Christ walks with his faithful servants through the fiery trials of this world and the smoke if sin in this world will not contaminate those who walk with Christ.
- Chapter Four: Christ therapeutically intervenes to heal Nebuchadnezzar of selfishness and pride.
- Chapter Five: Christ reveals that the methods and practices of this world result only in death, foreshadows the coming of Christ to cleanse the world from sin
- Chapter Six: Daniel is still captive in a pagan kingdom but stays true to God, keeps his Spirit temple pure and stands up to evil and is sentenced to death for it all based on lies; is thrown into the pit but comes out alive. This loosely represents Christ who came to earth, kept His Spirit temple pure, revealed God’s truth, was sentenced to death all based on lies, went into the grave but destroyed death, and came out of the grave to bring life and immortality to light.
- Chapter Seven: Jesus in heaven receives His kingdom and reigns over the universe.
- Chapter Eight: Christ as High Priest applies His remedy to cleanse His people and prepare them to live in His presence.
- Chapter Nine: Reveals Christ wins the victory by becoming the sacrificial lamb of God who destroys the infection of selfishness and establishes a new sinless and perfected humanity.
- Chapter Ten through Twelve: Represents Christ as Michael leading His agencies to fight forces of evil ultimately delivering His people from death.

MONDAY

The lesson provides an outline, a structure, an overview for the book of Daniel:



- A. Nebuchadnezzar's vision of four kingdoms
 - B. God delivers Daniel's friends from fiery furnace
 - C. Judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar
 - C'. Judgment upon Belshazzar
 - B. God delivers Daniel from the lion's den
- A. Daniel's vision of four kingdoms

The lesson suggests that such a structure puts the main point in the center, in this case Judgment upon the two kings.

What law lens do we read Daniel through? Do we read it through imposed law and thus we read it to say that God inflicts punishments for sin upon people and forces His way?

Or do we read it through design law that God is evaluating reality and working to heal and save? Thus, God diagnosed Nebuchadnezzar as having a serious condition of selfishness and pride, but he was not beyond healing—so God diagnosed him and *judged* what intervention was necessary in order to save Nebuchadnezzar, i.e. bring him to repentance.

Later God diagnoses Belshazzar as having the same serious condition of selfishness and pride, but diagnoses him as being beyond healing, so God judges there is nothing God can do to save him, so God sets him free to reap what he chose—which was death.

Does this provide an object lesson for us today? God intervenes to bring discipline to those who are healable and provide them with opportunity to repent and experience healing, but sets those who harden themselves against God free to reap the destruction their sin-condition brings.

Read last paragraph, “In the book of Daniel...” I agree that Daniel uses repetition, no question about it. Prophetic periods are repeated and retold with greater details.

But the lesson suggests this is to show us God's ultimate sovereignty. What do you think about this?

I am unclear what they mean by this?

Hmmm... I looked up the meaning of sovereignty and this is what the dictionary says:

the status, dominion, power, or authority of a sovereign; royal rank or position; royalty.
supreme and independent power or authority in government as possessed or claimed by a state or community.

I absolutely agree God is sovereign over the universe—no question about that. I am just a little confused when we suggest the purpose of these prophecies was to show us that He is sovereign?



Is it the fact God knows the future that shows His sovereignty or are they saying that the end results of the prophecies show He is sovereign? Maybe, that is the what is meant, the end results promise us that God is sovereign.

Okay, the prophecies certainly do. So it isn't the ability to predict the future they are suggesting shows us God's sovereignty but the end results, how the future actually turns out that shows God's sovereignty? Is that what they are saying?

I think it must be, because the power to know the future alone would not make one sovereign, it would make one knowledgeable.

TUESDAY

The lesson differentiates classical prophecy from apocalyptic prophecy, with apocalyptic displaying the following features:

- Visions and dreams
- Composite symbolism often of things not found on earth
- Divine sovereignty and unconditionality

Read fifth paragraph, "Divine sovereignty and unconditionality..." What do you think of the last sentence, it rests on God's foreknowledge and sovereignty and will happen regardless of human choices?

Does that mean God makes it happen? Or could it be God foreknows the human choices and is able to give the prophecy because of His foreknowledge of human choice—so it is dependent upon human choice—which God foreknows and foretells?

When the Medes and Persians invaded Babylon were there no human choices involved? When Alexander the Great led the Greek armies to overthrow Persia are we saying Alexander didn't actually make any choices?

Were all of these people just puppets that God was acting through?

This issue brings in to our discussion the question of God's foreknowledge.

Some argue God doesn't actually know what people will do before they do it only what possible things they could do. They argue this because they falsely believe that if God foreknows then we are no longer free to make the choices that we make. They have formed a false belief that for God to foreknow something then it preordains it to be that way and we are no longer free we are slaves to some fate or destiny and we are not free beings. So, they reject the idea that God has foreknowledge because they want to protect the character of God and the principles of love and liberty.



I appreciate their heart and motive and desire to protect God's reputation and the principles of love and liberty. We do also!

However, they make several key errors in their understanding of reality. One is that they treat foreknowledge as causal—it is not. Foreknowledge is merely that, knowledge it is not causation.

If we had a time machine and traveled into the future and watched the next Super Bowl and come back to today. We now know who does what, what the final score will be, who fumbles etc. Does our knowledge cause it to be this way?

Those who believe God can't know our future choices because it would take away or freedom might cite quantum experiments that demonstrate the observer effect—which is when we measure or observe something our measurements or observations actually determine the outcome. So, they might suggest that if God were to look into the future His observations impact or cause the outcome. The problem of course is that they forget God doesn't live in our reality. He is not constrained to a linear existence. He does not live within the flow of time. He is the Creator of space, energy, matter and time. He lives outside and above it, thus He is not in the stream or flow of time when He observes things, like we are, thus His observations of time don't impact things like ours do.

Metaphorically, we are in a pool of water, no matter what we do, we are impacting the water around us. God lives outside the pool of water and can observe what is happening in it without interacting with it.

It is a question of understand time—which we understand very poorly. God who is the Creator is the Creator of time and lives outside and above it. We are finite beings and live in a linear existence, meaning we move through time. We lived yesterday but today is a different point in time. Further, we move only one way through time. This is God's design to allow our freewill choices to have consequence and permanence and for us to grow and learn from life experiences. In other words, because of time life becomes consistent and predictable.

God is an infinite being and lives outside of time and to Him all points and time are experienced equally.

Isaiah wrote:

Remember the former things, those of long ago;
I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me.
I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come.
I say: My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please. 46:9,10



One Christian writer put it this way in *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

He that ruleth in the heavens is the one who sees the end from the beginning—the one before whom the mysteries of the **past and the future are alike outspread**... 43.1

So, how do you understand Bible prophecy, including apocalyptic prophecy—that God is forcing His way, or despite the decisions of human beings, which God foreknows, God’s methods of love, truth and freedom are being carried forward and will one day be victorious because God is true to Himself and carries out His actions for the good of His creation?

What then is the purpose of apocalyptic prophecy? Would it be to encourage us? To give us confidence? To help build our faith?

WEDNESDAY

Multiple different ways to interpret Bible prophecy exist:

- preterism views the prophetic events as happening in the past
- futurism has the events awaiting fulfillment in the future
- idealism holds the prophecies are symbolic of general spiritual realities without specific historical reference
- historicism holds that the prophecies reveal unbroken history unfolding, reality as a sequence of historical events happening linearly

Which view do you believe is most accurate?

Can we have both historicism and idealism simultaneously, meaning we believe these are real historic events but also see spiritual meaning?

The lesson also points out that based on Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5,6 that in Bible prophecy time is symbolically represented where days stand for years and it is calculated on the Jewish calendar year of 360 days.

THURSDAY

In the second paragraph the lesson points out something we have been discussing for some time—that the Bible records real people who did real historical things, but these lives are also metaphor to tell a larger reality, the great controversy.

The lesson states, “The experience of Daniel in Babylon, resembles that of Joseph in Egypt and Esther in Persia.”



First question—why was Daniel in Babylon, Joseph in Egypt and Esther in Persia?

Because Satan was trying to destroy the avenue for the Messiah. God worked through His loyal followers and was able to deliver them:

- Joseph becomes ruler to provide food in time of famine to save the family line.
- Esther intervenes to prevent the slaughter of the family line.
- Daniel and his three friends were used by God to enlighten the pagan leaders to the Creator God and to eventually have the people restored to their land thus preserving the family line.

There are more lessons:

- Joseph was sold by His brothers into slavery. Philippians tells us Jesus left heaven to become human all the way down to being a servant or slave.
- Joseph was faithful to God and persecuted and falsely accused and put in prison, the dungeon, pit metaphor for grave but arises to rule and save. Jesus was faithful to God and falsely accused and sentenced to death, goes into the grave, but arises to rule and save.
- The story of Esther gives a different object lesson—where were the people of Israel supposed to be at the time of Esther? Back in Israel. They had been set free and God called them to return to Israel and rebuild the temple and reestablish their nation and fulfill their mission to prepare the world for Messiah. Mordechai and Esther were among the Israelites who did not obey. Who did not go where God told them. And thus were exposed to attack by Satan through Hamann. Did God abandon them or did God still stay with them and help them? How many times have we heard that if you do this or that God will not be with you? The book of Esther tells us that God doesn't give up on us even when we make choices that go against His revealed will. He only gives up and lets us go when we are beyond healing, not when we choose something we know isn't what He would want.
- Daniel—already discussed above as metaphor for Christ.

Read third paragraph, “God steers the course of history...” What do you think about the statement that God stands in control?

If a person you know comes to you and tells you either they or their child was molested—do you say—well God is in control? Why not? Is God in control or not?

If a person comes to you grieving the death of a child in an auto accident do you say, well God is in control? Why not, is God in control or not?

And if you say in such situations that God is in control, what does it mean? Does saying God is in control mean God controlled the molester? That God caused the accident?

A blanket statement that God is in control is, in my view, a way to introduce confusion, misunderstanding and lead some to reject God.

What is a better way to say this? God is in control of what God controls!



The question is, what does God control?

The key to understanding the saying “God is in control,” as well as essentially all theological questions, is how one understands God’s law.

If one views God’s law functioning like the laws that humans make up—imposed rules requiring the ruling authority to impose punishments—then people view God as making everything happen, which inevitably leads them to form wrong theology. A variety of different errors are formed, such as the teaching that when tragedies occur, it is God who is bringing the pain—such as God controlling the molester who abuses people, or God directing the hurricanes, earthquakes, or God hardens certain hearts.

Some who reject a punishing God but don’t reject the imposed-law view embrace and promote Universalism. They teach that because God is love, wants all to be saved, and is ultimately in control, all will be saved in the end. Like the error before, this one also stems from the lie that God is imposing His imperialistic will to maintain “justice” within His government by enforcing His law.

One’s level of spiritual maturity—the level through which one comprehends right and wrong—plays into this.

But briefly, levels one through four are immature levels; in each of these, right and wrong is in some way determined by performance and the individual seeks security in rule keeping of some kind. Those operating at one of these levels find safety in the belief that God controls everything, so they don’t fear getting into trouble as long as they follow the right rules. But this invariably fails as a rational belief, as history is replete with bad things happening to good people. And when the child is molested rule-keeping doesn’t answer the question why did God allow this if He is in control.

Also, the book of Job makes it explicitly clear that bad things are not God’s doing.

The truth is realized when we accept that God is Creator and His laws are the protocols upon which reality is built to operate, such as the laws of physics, law of love, law of truth, worship, liberty, exertion, laws of health, the moral laws, and so many more. It is how reality works.

Thus, God is in control of what God controls—and God controls Himself and all His laws.

He sustains reality; He keeps the universe running upon the protocols and laws He established. And one of those laws is the law of **liberty**, which grants real freedom to sentient beings. Why? Because love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

This is how God hardened Pharaoh’s heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3) *yet* Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32).



How did God harden Pharaoh's heart? By presenting the truth and leaving Pharaoh free to accept or reject it. The accepting or rejecting causes the end result—healing or hardening. The act of choosing to accept or reject truth; to embrace love or embrace selfishness; to steal, lie, cheat, or be honest, truthful and loyal, changes the person who makes the choice. Without the truth presented and the freedom to reject it, Pharaoh's heart would not have become as hardened. Thus, God hardened Pharaoh's heart through the laws of truth and freedom; He presented truth and left the ruler free. God controlled His laws, but Pharaoh exercised his own will and controlled his own choice, and in choosing to reject the truth, he hardened his own heart. This is how reality works and how God is in control.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month.

Questions: If you have questions please email them either at requests@comeandreason.com or topics@comeandreason.com. If you post on Facebook it is likely they will not be answered as I often miss questions posted on Facebook.

The New Paradigm about the Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment Has been Changed: The new title is *The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World*. It has a new cover, new introduction, the call to action section has been removed and other edits to clarify potential misunderstandings have been made throughout. It is already up on our website and print versions will be available November 14. **Please throw away any of the first edition you may still have in your possession and use this version going forward.**

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

January 17-19, 2020: The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course. If you would like to be prepared to more effectively share this message then come to this course. More details will be forthcoming shortly. Allen Texas (30 miles north of DFW airport). See events.comeandreason.com for more details and to sign up.

March 27,28, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at <http://theriverconference.com/>

April 17,18, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.