

First, We Read, Then We Understand



SABBATH—DECEMBER 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 24:25–27; Daniel 7:6; Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:5, 6; Daniel 9:23.

MEMORY VERSE: “So Philip ran toward the chariot [cart with two wheels]. He heard the man reading from Isaiah, the prophet [special messenger from God]. Philip asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ ” (Acts 8:30, ICB).

THIS QUARTER, we study the book of Daniel. We are Adventists. Our church started because of this book. When we read Daniel, we must remember some important rules. These rules will help guide us in our study:

(1) We must remember always that the book of Daniel is about Jesus. The whole Bible is about Him too.

(2) We must pay careful attention to the outline that Daniel uses to write his book. How does Daniel arrange, or put in order, his ideas? What comes first? What ideas come next? This outline is important. The outline helps us understand the meaning of the book.

(3) We need to understand why Daniel writes his prophecies. Prophecies are special messages from God.

(4) We must understand something important about Daniel's time prophecies. Time prophecies are God's special messages about time. They show us things that will happen in the future. Time prophecies also tell us when these things will happen. Daniel's prophecies tell us about the many things that will happen hundreds and thousands of years in the future.

(5) We must remember that the book of Daniel does not only tell us information about the future. Daniel's messages have important truth for our lives today too.



We must always remember that the book of Daniel is about Jesus.

**THE BOOK OF DANIEL SHOWS US JESUS
(Luke 24:25–27)**

How does the Bible show us Jesus? For the answer, read Luke 24:25–27; John 5:39; and 2 Corinthians 1:19, 20.

The Bible is all about Jesus. We see this truth everywhere in the book of Daniel. Chapter 1 shows us Daniel’s experience. Daniel’s experience is the same as Jesus’ experience in many ways. Jesus leaves heaven to live on this earth. He fights against the powers of darkness. In the same way, Daniel is taken from his home to Babylon. In Babylon, Daniel stands against evil. Also, God gives Daniel and his friends wisdom to live holy lives. Jesus shows this same wisdom in His life too. Chapter 2 shows us a stone. This stone is a word picture for end-time truth. The stone shows us that Jesus’ kingdom will replace all the kingdoms on earth. Chapter 3 shows us Jesus in a hot oven filled with fire. Jesus is in the oven with His loyal servants. Chapter 4 shows us that God removes King Nebuchadnezzar from his kingdom for a time. God wants the king to understand that the “ ‘Most High God rules [controls] your kingdom’ ” (Daniel 4:26, ERV). The words “ ‘Most High God rules [controls]’ ” help us remember that God the Father gives Jesus power and the kingdom in Daniel 7.

Chapter 5 shows us the end of King Belshazzar and the kingdom of Babylon. The Persians beat the Babylonians on the night that King Belshazzar throws a wild party. Babylon’s end shows us the future. This story shows us that Jesus and His angels will beat Satan and end-time Babylon. Chapter 6 shows us the evil leaders who plan to destroy Daniel. The evil leaders lie about Daniel. Their lies help us remember the lies that the religious leaders say against Jesus. Also, King Darius tries to save Daniel. But the king does not succeed. In the same way, Pilate tries to save Jesus from death (Matthew 27:17–24). But Pilate fails too.

Chapter 7 shows us that Jesus is the Son of Man (Daniel 7:13, NIV). God gives Jesus, the Son of Man, the kingdom. Then Jesus is King over His people. Chapter 8 shows us that Jesus is our Holy Leader. He works in the temple in heaven. Chapter 9 shows Jesus as the Lamb that was killed. His death makes the Agreement between God and His people strong again. Chapters 10–12 show us Jesus as Michael. Michael is a Captain. He fights against evil. He saves God’s people from death. So, the book of Daniel is all about Jesus. Every chapter shows us Jesus in some way.



Michael is a Captain. He fights against evil. He saves God’s people from death.

THE PARTS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL (Daniel 2–7)

Daniel wrote some parts of his book in the Hebrew language. He wrote other parts in the Aramaic language. Chapters 2–7 are written in Aramaic. These chapters show us a special pattern. The pattern helps us understand the message of chapters 2–7. It also helps us understand the message of the whole book. Let us look at the pattern:

- A. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about four kingdoms (Daniel 2)
- B. God saves Daniel’s friends from the hot oven filled with fire (Daniel 3)
- C. God judges King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4)**
- C'. God judges King Belshazzar (Daniel 5)**
- B'. God saves Daniel from the lions’ den (Daniel 6)
- A'. Daniel’s dream about four kingdoms (Daniel 7)

This pattern helps us see the most important idea in Daniel 2–7: God controls the earth.

What is one of the best ways for you to communicate your message to people? First, make your idea clear. Then say it again. Let us look at an example of this plan in the Bible. In Genesis 41:1–7, God gives the King of Egypt two dreams about Egypt’s near future. In the 1st dream, seven skinny cows eat up seven fat cows. In the 2nd dream, seven sick plants eat up seven healthy plants. Both dreams show the same message. Egypt will have seven years of good crops. Then there will be seven years of very little food.

God uses this same plan in the book of Daniel too. Daniel shows us four prophecies, or time messages. God gives us the same message in each prophecy. Each prophecy is a little different. But all four prophecies show us the same time in history. We can see this pattern in the chart below.



In the 1st dream, seven skinny cows eat up seven fat cows.

Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8, 9	Daniel 10–12
Babylon	Babylon		
Media-Persia	Media-Persia	Media-Persia	Media-Persia
Greece	Greece	Greece	Greece
Rome	Rome	Rome	Rome
God sets up His kingdom	God’s people judge the evil dead during the 1,000 years	God cleans sin from the temple in heaven	Michael stands up

END-TIME MESSAGES IN DANIEL (Daniel 7:6)

In the book of Daniel, we read about prophecies, or special messages about time. These prophecies show us things that will happen in the future. Daniel's prophecies are different from most prophecies in the Old Testament. Daniel's prophecies show us things that will happen in the end times. But most Old Testament prophecies are messages from God to His people. They do not show the things that will happen in the end times. It is important to understand how end-time prophecy is different from other prophecy.

End-time prophecy has some special parts that regular prophecies do not have. We will name the parts below:

Visions and dreams. In end-time prophecy, God uses dreams to communicate His message to His messenger. In regular prophecy, God sends His word to His messenger. "The Word of [from] the LORD" (ERV) is written about 1600 times in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. God's word can include visions or dreams.

Word pictures. In regular prophecy, we see very few examples of word pictures. The word pictures in regular prophecies are examples of things or people we see every day. But in end-time prophecy, God shows us word pictures that have very deep meaning. Some examples include monsters with wings or horns or strange animals that mix two different animals.

God's special knowledge and power. Regular prophecies often depend on choices that Israel will make. But end-time prophecies are different. They always will happen. In end-time prophecies, God shows the kingdoms that will control the earth from Daniel's day to the end of time. End-time prophecy does not depend on human choices. Whatever we choose to do, end-time prophecy will happen just as God says it will.

Read Jonah 3:3–10; Hosea 3:4, 5; Amos 8:11; and Zechariah 9:1. Are these regular prophecies? Or are they end-time prophecies? Explain. What about Daniel 7:6?

It helps us to know why regular prophecy is different from end-time prophecy: (1) We learn that God uses many different ways to communicate His truth (Hebrews 1:1). (2) Information about prophecy helps us understand the Bible better. Then we will see the Bible's beauty more clearly. (3) This knowledge helps us to understand Bible prophecy correctly. Then we can explain it to other people (2 Timothy 2:15).



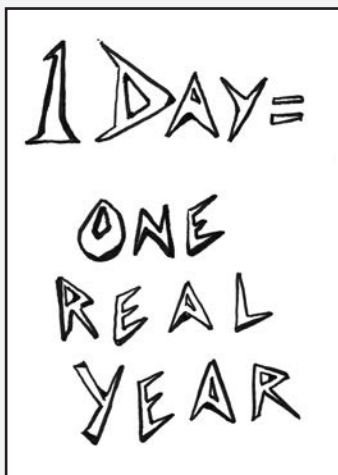
When we understand Bible prophecy, we can explain it to other people.

THE YEAR-DAY RULE (Ezekiel 4:5, 6)

What is the best way to understand Daniel's prophecies, or special time messages? We believe the prophecies in Daniel show history from Daniel's day to the end times. But not everyone agrees. How do they explain the prophecies? (1) Some people think that the prophecies in Daniel announce things that happened already. So, they put all the prophecies in the past. (2) Some people believe that these same prophecies show only the things that will happen in the future. (3) There also are some people who believe that the time prophecies are just word pictures. They say that these word pictures show us spiritual truths only. But they do not believe the prophecies show us anything about history or the future. As we said, we believe the prophecies in Daniel show history from Daniel's day to the end time. The first Adventists also believed that Daniel's prophecies showed history from Daniel's day to the end times. Ellen G. White believed this truth too.

We will study the time prophecies in Daniel chapters 2, 7, 8, and 11. We will see that each chapter shows us history from Daniel's day to the end times. But each chapter shows us a different view and gives us new information.

Study the year-day rule in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5, 6. How much time does a "day" equal in time prophecy?



The year-day rule is important. It shows us that a day in a time message equals one real year.

The year-day rule is an important rule to follow. Use this rule for the time messages in the book of Daniel. So, a day in a time message equals one real year. Let us try out this rule with an example from Daniel. If we use this rule, the prophecy about the 2,300 evenings and mornings equals 2,300 years (Daniel 8:14). In the same way, the prophecy about the 70 weeks is 490 years (Daniel 9:24–27).

The year-day rule is correct for three important reasons. (1) Daniel's dreams are word pictures. So, the times in his dreams must be word pictures too. (2) The dreams show things that happen from Daniel's day to the end of time. So, time in these messages should match the things that happen. (3) Daniel gives proof that the year-day rule is correct. A clear example comes from the 70-week prophecy. It starts from the days of King Artaxerxes and ends when Jesus comes as Savior. So, we see the best way to understand time messages is to use the year-day rule.

**LIFE LESSONS FROM DANIEL FOR OUR DAY
(Daniel 9:23)**

Daniel wrote his book more than 2,500 years ago. But his book has important truth for God's people today. We now look at three lessons Daniel can teach us.

God is in control of our lives. Even when things go wrong, God is in control. He works in our lives to do what is best. Daniel's experience in Babylon is much the same as Joseph's experience in Egypt and Esther's in Persia. These three young people lived in strange lands. The people there did not honor God. Daniel, Joseph, and Esther fought hard against the ways of life that went against God. Do you think that some people in these lands thought Daniel, Joseph, and Esther were weak and that God was not with them? Of course! But the Lord made Daniel, Joseph, and Esther strong. Then He used them in powerful ways. Do you have troubles? Are you suffering? Look back to the things that God did for Daniel, Joseph, and Esther. Their stories will help you see that the Lord is with you in hard times. He will not forget you. He will never leave you alone.

God controls history. At times, we feel upset by all the evil we see in life. But the message from the book of Daniel is clear. God is in control. Every chapter in Daniel shows us this truth. Ellen G. White says, "History books try to make us believe that countries and kingdoms depend on man's power to grow. History books want you to believe that things happen on earth because of human power and wishes. But the Bible shows us the truth. The Bible shows us that God works out His plan. God is patient and silent as He works in humans to make His plan happen."—*Education*, page 173, adapted.

God provides an example for His end-time people. Daniel and his friends are examples. They show us how to be loyal to God when people around us do not obey Him. At times, we may feel that we need to give up the truth to be a success. But Daniel and his friends show us to trust in God's law. They encourage us to stay strong when people attack us because of our faith. At the same time, Daniel shows us that we can make life better for people in our communities. We do not need to give up the truth.

Read Daniel 9:23; Daniel 10:11, 12; and Matthew 10:29–31. What do these verses tell us about how much God cares about our troubles and suffering?



Daniel's story will help you see that the Lord is with you in hard times.



We “must hunt for truth the same as hidden treasure.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “God made the Bible to be our guide. The Bible will show everyone God’s plan to save them. God gave men special messages about the future to help them know His plan. These messages are true and sure. Angels and even Jesus Himself came to Daniel and John with special messages. The angels and Jesus showed Daniel and John the things that must shortly happen. God’s special messages show us that God’s plan to save us is important. God does not keep secret the information about His plan. God does not share this information in a way that will confuse the honest person who wants to know Bible truth. That is why God told Habakkuk, His special messenger: ‘ “Write down what I show you. Write it clearly on stone tablets [a writing pad] so whoever reads it can run to tell others [people].” ’ Habakkuk 2:2 [ICB]. The Bible is clear for everyone who studies it with prayer. Every honest person who looks for truth will find it. ‘Light and happiness shine on those [people] who want to do right.’ Psalm 97:11, [ERV]. A church will become holy when its members search for truth. They must hunt for it the same as hidden treasure.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 521, 522, adapted.

“Study the history of Daniel and his friends. They lived in a place where the devil tried to get them to sin all the time. But Daniel and his friends honored God. They gave Him glory in their daily lives. They decided to stay away from all evil. They refused to walk down the road to sin. They stayed loyal to God. God gave them rich blessings.”—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, volume 4, pages 169, 170, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① The book of Daniel shows us that God is in control of everything that happens. He also knows how everything is going to end. What comfort and hope does this knowledge give us? The Lord knows all your thoughts too. That shows you how close He is to you. How does that thought comfort you?
- ② In class, talk about the different types of prophecy: end-time prophecy and regular prophecy. What other examples of these two types of prophecy can you find in the Bible?