

Introduction

When we as a people understand what this book [Daniel] means to us, there will be seen among us a great revival. We do not understand fully the lessons that it teaches, notwithstanding the injunction given us to search and study it. (Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 113)

Can the book of Daniel have any practical bearing on our lives today? Is it relevant to twenty-first century living? The answer is found in the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:15, where He gives an unmistakable book endorsement: “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (whoever reads let him understand)”

Notice these ideas found within Jesus’ endorsement of the book of Daniel:

1. Daniel is an inspired prophet and by implication the book of Daniel is trustworthy.
2. The book of Daniel should be read and studied.
3. The book of Daniel will be understood.
4. The prophecies within the book of Daniel will be fulfilled.
5. The book of Daniel’s message is relevant and practical for end time living.

(Leslie Hardinge, *Jesus is My Judge*, p. 1)

Jesus says that the book of Daniel is still important for end-time living in the twenty-first century. Daniel is a Hebrew name that means “God is my judge.” God’s last church in the book of Revelation is called Laodicea, which means “judged people” or “people of the judgment.” So, Daniel can be seen as a type of the people of God who will live during the time of judgment right before Jesus comes back the second time.

Ellen White indicates there are rich blessings in store for those who read and study the book of Daniel: “When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart” (Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 114).

When you consider the two statements above in context, the fact that Adventists have been studying the Book of Daniel for over 150 years (and thousands of years if you include all of Christendom), and no such revival has occurred, it leads me to believe that we are overlooking some important parts of the book. In this series of studies, you and I will use a variety of materials to try to read the book of Daniel through new and fresh eyes as we describe the rules of life for Christ’s believers living in the latter days.

The book of Daniel is still relevant, helpful, and important for life in the end times. May the blessing that was promised in Jesus’s praise of Daniel be yours.

Foreword

Why read the book of Daniel? Here are some possible answers:

- Daniel is an apocalyptic book—and we live in apocalyptic time
- Daniel is about worship—and we need to know about worship
- Daniel is about salvation— and we all need to understand how to be saved
- Daniel is following Jesus under hard times—with the world around us getting harder and harder by the minute, it was never more important than now for all of us to learn to live as disciples of Jesus during easy times and hard times.

The book of Daniel is unique. It is about the past and the future but also about the present. It is intellectually very demanding and also contains stories that are popular with children and easy to understand. It warns of the meanest deception in history and gives invaluable pointers towards a godly lifestyle.

What are the challenges of reading such a book? The number one challenge is that we are surface readers. We all know that there is need of a much closer study of the word of God. We need to give more time to the study of the Bible. We do not understand the word as we should. We do not go deep enough in our search for truth. In doing that deep study we will face the following challenges:

- The biblical author does not always tell us directly what he wants to say
- The author is long dead, we cannot ask him
- The biblical text is centuries old
- Different culture, different writing style, etc.

To meet the aforementioned issues, we shall employ biblical principles. The first premise is concerned with the goal of God's Word. Let's read John 20:30–31: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” As a result, everything in the Bible should point to and lead us to believe in Jesus. With this in mind, we must perceive Jesus on every page of Scripture, even Daniel's book.

We also should remember what Jesus said in John 14:26: “The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” We need to be praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we approach Scripture. The more difficult the reading, the more we need it. Let's never forget that the Spirit is who will guide us to all truth (John 16:13).

We must also remember why God gave us Biblical prophecy in the first place. Consider Jesus' words in John 14:29: “And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.” In this text, Jesus states that prophecy was not given to us so that we might know what would happen in the future. The express goal of prophecy is to deepen our faith once it occurs. That also teaches us that we do not need to know all the details ahead of time, but we do need to comprehend the broad strokes of prophecy so that we can believe when they occur.

How should we read the text then? I suggest the following:

1. Pray beforehand for the guidance of the Holy Spirit
2. Careful (close) reading of the text
3. Paying attention to what is written but also to how it is written (content and form)
4. Reading with all our mind (intelligent reading), preferably aloud
5. Taking the time
6. Setting a counterpoint to the fastness of the media
7. Taking notes

As you read, please pay attention of the following particularities of the book of Daniel:

- The text is very dense and includes precise information which helps to see connections with other texts
- The text contains repetitions (Hebrew style)
- The text contains hints and allusions to other events and stories
- The text builds on texts before

The book of Daniel is divided into two sections: historical narrative (chapters 1-6) and prophecy (chapters 7-12). The book is constructed in a parallel structure within each of the two sections and between the two halves. The analogies with each segment (whether prophetic or historic) assist to give subtlety to what the prophet wants to convey while also allowing us to recognize the most crucial components of the message. The most significant lessons are usually in the center of such a system. See picture below:



The book's chiastic structure demonstrates that it was designed. Everything is significant and interconnected—narratives are related to predictions, and vice versa. It is both a memorizing tool and aesthetically pleasing!

As a last note, as you read the historical part of the book, note that each section has the following structure:

- Problem
- Development
- Crisis (turning point)
- Complication (second problem)
- Solution