

Youth Teaching Resources

November 25, 2018



Doing, and Being (September 2-November 25)

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 – “Remembering Always”

1 Kings 17:8-16 – “Doing Faith”

1 Samuel 2:1-10 – “Singing Joy”

Daniel 7:1-14 (RCL 7:9-10, 13-14) – “Dreaming Hope”

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Dreaming Hope

Daniel 7:1-14 (RCL 7:9-10, 13-14)

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

How often do you think about your student's future? How often do you think they think about their future? Students, and parents, can become so consumed by what will happen in the future that they forget to focus on what is happening today. Days turn into weeks, and weeks turn into months, and soon you look back and think what happened. Cherish the days that you have with your students before they become memories.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Before the session begins gather different things that can choose what will happen next; dice, magic 8 ball, coins to flip, etc. As you begin, with each choice that you have to make for the group use one of the objects that you brought to decide the future for the group. Allow the students to use the items to answer their own questions and then bring the group back together to facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

What other items would you use to help you decide the future?

Which of these was the most fun to use? Which was the most accurate?

Was there any way to alter these objects to choose what you wanted?

How much do you think you are responsible for your own future?

What does your faith have to say about what will happen in the future?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Daniel 7:1-28. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why is the king mentioned in the opening verse of this passage?
- 2) What do the different characters represent in Daniel's dream?
- 3) How is God portrayed in this vision?
- 4) What was Daniel's hope for this vision?
- 5) How is this similar to John's vision in Revelation?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Where does this passage fall in the book of Daniel? How does this influence how this should be interpreted?
- 2) Who were the kings in Daniel's vision?
- 3) What happened to Daniel?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": What is apocalyptic?

Transformation

Conclude your session by showing the clip "The Thing About the Future" from *Next*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

What is his "scam" that he runs? How does he get away with his money making scheme?

How are you responsible for the future?

What does your faith have to say about what will happen in the future?

How can having faith in God's future be a positive thing? How can it be a negative thing?

Close with a prayer.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

The text—The official text from the Revised Common Lectionary ignores the context of Daniel’s apocalyptic vision and focuses only on the appearance of God (the “Ancient One”) and of the “one like a human being” who would be given dominion over all (vv. 9-10, 13-14).

This may be fine if its only purpose is to serve as one of four lectionary readings in worship, but for the purpose of Bible study, we need to know more and dig deeper. For this reason, we’ll consider the entire chapter.

Structure—The book of Daniel consists of two parts. The first six chapters are a series of hero stories designed to depict Daniel and his friends as Judean captives chosen to serve in the Babylonian court. Though tempted – and threatened – to live and worship as the Babylonians do, they remain faithful to God even when facing persecution or the possibility of death. God blesses them and saves them from fiery trials. Daniel becomes known as a wise and prayerful man who has the ability to interpret dreams and bring even Babylonian kings under conviction.

The second half of Daniel is very different from the first half. No more hero stories, contests, or miraculous deliverances. Daniel is no longer called upon to interpret someone else’s dream, but with 7:2, Daniel begins to speak in the first person, describing visions he has seen, and how angelic interpreters revealed to him the meaning of them. The last six chapters are all written in the style of apocalyptic literature, as described below in “The Hardest Question.”

Editors of the Hebrew Bible recognized that Daniel is a different type of book, and included it in a section known as the Kethubim (“Writings”). Daniel appears among the prophets in Protestant Bibles because the Greek translation known as the Septuagint and the later Latin translation known as the Vulgate moved it to appear behind Ezekiel, since it was set during the exile.

The date—The book of Daniel, like other apocalyptic works, is pseudonymous, though it claims to have been written by Daniel.

Biblical literalists and conservative scholars may consider Daniel to be a historical character who wrote the book in the sixth century BCE and who foresaw all that would happen in the next 400 years, even though he started getting it wrong after that point. Critical scholars tend to see the stories as more legend than fact, inspired and created in an effort to encourage the Hebrews in a very trying time.

Digging Deeper *continued*

While the hero stories of chapters 1-6 may have been composed by the third century BCE, the apocalyptic accounts in 7-12 can probably be dated to about 165 B.C., after the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes profaned the Jewish temple by reportedly slaughtering a sow and offering sacrifices to Zeus (the “abomination of desolation,” Dan. 8:13, 9:27, 11:31, 12:11) in 167, but prior to his death in late 164, under circumstances different than those predicted by the Book of Daniel.

Daniel is not mentioned in any historical book of the Bible prior to the late book (not in Protestant Bibles) of 1 Maccabees 2:60, where he is mentioned in a prayer. Ezra 8:2 and Nehemiah 10:6 mention a priest named Daniel who returned with them after the exile, but that was more than 100 years after the stories in which Daniel is supposed to have participated.

Ezekiel 14:14 makes reference to a Daniel in the company of Noah and Job, long before the period of the patriarchs, and Ezek. 28:3 contains a reference to Daniel as someone of legendary wisdom.

It is likely that these references are to the Ugaritic hero Danil, who is known from the Legend of Aqhat dated around 1300-1200 BCE. Danil was known as a judge who defended widows and orphans. “Danil,” like “Daniel,” means something like “God is my judge” or possibly, “judge of God.”

This legendary hero would also have been known among the Hebrews as a wise and just man, and that may have influenced the association of the name Daniel with the heroic Hebrew who kept his faith and demonstrated the power of God while serving the Babylonian kings.

The language—Daniel, like the book of Ezra, is not written entirely in Hebrew, but contains large sections written in Aramaic, a language similar to Hebrew that became the most common language spoken across the Near East during the last few centuries BCE.

Chapters 1:1-2:4a and 8:1-12:13 are written in Hebrew, while 2:4b-7:28 (including today’s text) are written in Aramaic. Some scholars think the first six chapters were originally Aramaic, as well, and that the seventh chapter was written in Aramaic to serve as a transition to the apocalyptic visions in chs. 8-12. These may have been written in Hebrew, even though Aramaic was more common, to accent their sacred or authoritative character, or to make them less accessible to the Seleucid rulers under whom the authors were chafing.

King, or not?—Babylonian records show that Belshazzar was not actually a king: he was the son of Nabonidus, an eccentric ruler who preferred the moon god Sîn to the national god Marduk, and who showed little interest in government affairs. Though he held the throne for 17 years, he spent much of that time in the Arabian oasis of Tema (or Tayma), leaving his son Belshazzar in Babylon to rule as his viceroy.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Though Belshazzar was clearly the son of Nabonidus, Daniel 5 describes him as the son of Nebuchadnezzar. This may be due to a simple misunderstanding: the author of Daniel lived hundreds of years after the events he claimed to portray, and he may simply have gotten it wrong, remembering the famous and powerful Nebuchadnezzar, but not his much weaker descendant, Nabonidus.

It's also possible that Belshazzar had claimed to be a "son" of Nebuchadnezzar in hopes of improving his image, and he was a direct descendant. Biblical stories often use "father" as a euphemism for "ancestor."

Nebuchadnezzar was followed as king by his son Awil-Marduk, then his son-in-law Neriglassar, and then his grandson Labashi-Marduk. None of these kings ruled well or for long.

After Labashi-Marduk's short-lived reign, Nabonidus became king. He held the throne for 17 years, but not effectively. He spent much of his time in the southern oasis town of Tema while allowing Belshazzar to serve as his viceroy. Nabonidus' absence caused great consternation among the priests and other leaders of the land, as he refused to return for the annual New Year's Marduk-centered *Akitu* festival, in which the king traditionally played a central role.

A beastly king—The appearance of the first beast probably reflects the story in Daniel 4 in which Nebuchadnezzar was punished for his pride and forced to live as a wild animal for seven years before he repented and was restored to his right mind. A variant of the story about Nebuchadnezzar's punishment and healing in Daniel 4, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, is called "The Prayer of Nabonidus." In it, Nabonidus confesses to having been plagued with illness for seven years before a Jewish seer convicted him of his idolatry.

What's in a name?—Antiochus IV was the son of Antiochus III, also known as "Antiochus the Great." His given name was Mithridates, but he assumed the name Antiochus after taking the throne. On coins minted during his rule, he had himself described as *theos epiphanes*, meaning "Manifest God." This gave rise to the more expansive title, "Antiochus IV Epiphanes."

The king's behavior was so eccentric, however, that some contemporaries called him "Antiochus Epimanes" instead of "Epiphanes." The word *epimanes* means "the mad one."

After Antiochus—The excesses of Antiochus IV Epiphanes led to a Jewish revolt under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus, who successfully threw off the Hellenistic yoke for a while and established the Hasmonean Dynasty. The Hasmoneans held on to some semblance of rule from 164 to 63 BCE, when bitter infighting led to widespread violence and an appeal to Rome for help, bringing Pompey into the picture and into control of Palestine.

Digging Deeper *continued*

What happened to him?—Though Daniel was able to interpret others' dreams, he was shaken by the vision of the four beasts and of the "Ancient One" surrounded by angels. He asked one of the angelic attendants to explain it to him – a typical feature of apocalyptic literature. The angel repeated some of the atrocities committed by Antiochus, and predicted that his reign would last for "a time, two times, and half a time" (v. 25). That may indicate three and a half years, or simply suggest an indefinite short period before "the court shall sit in judgment and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and totally destroyed" (v. 26).

Antiochus ruled for about 11 years, but the period of his atrocities was close to three and a half years (167-64), and that may be the intention of the writer. While the persecutions of Antiochus may have seemed endless, Daniel's vision offered hope by declaring that it would soon come to an end. While the present study concerns chapter 7, further visions in chapters 8-12 make it even more clear that the Antiochus IV was seen as an evil ruler who threatened both heaven and earth, but was destined for judgment and destruction.

Antiochus IV died of an unknown disease in 164 BCE. The Maccabean revolt of the Jews had begun at that time, but Antiochus left a commander named Lysias to try and put down the rebellion while leading a larger part of his army against the Parthians, who had attacked from the east. At some point during the campaign, Antiochus IV became ill and died. Many Jews regarded his death as the direct punishment of God.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

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What is “apocalyptic”?

The Book of Daniel belongs to a genre of literature known as “apocalyptic,” a manner of writing that became very popular during the last two centuries before Christ and the first century afterward. There are many examples of this sort of writing, and two of them are included in the Protestant Bible: Daniel and Revelation. The Catholic Bible contains several others.

Daniel was one of the earliest examples of the form, though it builds on emerging apocalyptic ideas found in Ezekiel 38-39; in Isaiah 24-27, 34-35, 56-66; in Joel; and in Zechariah 9-14. Most scholars think apocalyptic thinking, which inevitably begins with end times and predictions of the future, has its roots in Old Testament prophecy. Other scholars, such as Gerhard von Rad, note that apocalyptic writings are highly deterministic and that their heroes are often considered wise men, so they suggest that apocalyptic arose from the Wisdom tradition. Others think apocalyptic may have grown mainly from foreign influences, such as Persian Zoroastrianism.

No matter what strain of thinking was most responsible, what seems evident is that apocalyptic thinking arose during times of severe persecution, when it seemed there was no hope of improvement for the current situation, so people looked toward the end of the present age and found their only real hope in the coming of a new age. In this sense, apocalyptic is *eschatological*, in that it concerns itself with “end times.”

The primary purpose of apocalyptic writings was to encourage a persecuted minority of believers by offering hope beyond the present situation, a hope that would have meaning even if they died in the present world.

By definition, apocalyptic literature exhibits a narrative framework in which secret revelations are given to human beings by means of a heavenly being (usually an angel). The revelations relate to the salvation of the righteous at the end of the age, and the establishment of a new supernatural world.

The above paragraph is my paraphrase of John J. Collins’ classic and widely accepted technical definition: “Apocalypse’ is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transient reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world” (p. 9, *Semeia* 14 [1979]).

The Hardest Question *continued*

Apocalyptic writing intends to interpret the difficult circumstances of the present in the light of the future and from the perspective of the supernatural. In doing so, it hopes to encourage those who are currently living through those difficult circumstances and spur them to faithful living despite the extremity of their situation.

Apocalyptic literature can be subdivided into multiple types, including some that focus on a journey, and others that are built around visions of a historical review in symbolic fashion. Daniel belongs to the second type.

Apocalyptic has several notable characteristics, including these:

- it divides history into periods
- it envisions a multi-story universe containing a heaven, an earth, and some approximation of hell
- it imagines cosmic upheavals, social reversals, and world-ending warfare
- it contains code words and themes that may or may not be interpreted (these code words, which may have been commonly understood by the immediate audience, may be lost on later generations, making interpretation very difficult)
- it tends to be dualistic, explaining the supernatural in terms of conflict between God and an evil being such as Satan or the “prince” of a particular nation
- it purports to have been written by a respected hero or figure of the past, putting into his mouth predictions of things that have already happened (to enforce his reliability), then setting forth predictions of end times yet to come.

Besides Daniel and Revelation, many other apocalyptic documents have been preserved. These include the Jewish apocalypses of 1-2 Enoch, Jubilees, 23, 4 Ezra, 2 and 3 Baruch, the Apocalypse of Abraham, the Testament of Levi, and the Apocalypse of Zephaniah.

Christian apocalypses, in addition to the book of Revelation, include works known as the Ladder of Jacob, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Book of Elchasia, the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian, 5 Ezra (2 Esdras 1-2), the Testament of Isaac, the Testament of Jacob, the Questions of Bartholomew, the Apocalypse of Paul, and the Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle.

Most of these are not regarded as scripture, but give testimony to the popularity of apocalyptic as a type of literature designed to offer hope in seemingly hopeless situations.