

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 14 2024

troubling dream

Scripture Story: Daniel 7.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 45.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

In Daniel 7 God takes Daniel into vision and shows him a troubling dream filled with weird-looking, fearsome creatures. First the lion, then the bear, a leopard, and a dragon-like beast that starts out with 10 horns and later loses three to a little horn with eyes like a man and a mouth that speaks boastfully (Daniel 7:8). Whew!

As Daniel peered through the scene he saw thrones set in place and the Ancient of Days having taken His seat. The scene is a cosmic courtroom, and the books of humanity's record are open (Daniel 7:9, 10). The vision culminates in a blaze of glory as the fourth beast is slain and the Son of man, Jesus, is "given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him" (Daniel 7:14, NIV), and His kingdom lasts forever.

This chapter of the Bible sets the Word of God apart from all other sacred texts because it points the way to the end of time and the ushering in of God's eternal kingdom. Your students must know that in Daniel 7 God has allowed them to peer into the future, to get a good look at how the world will end. He wants them to know that just as God through Jesus has saved us from the power of sin, one day He will save us from the presence of sin. Thus, Daniel 7 is more than strange beasts; it is an unveiling of history designed to prepare us to meet God and give us hope as we wait for His soon appearing.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that the vision of Daniel 7 is God's way of letting us know that He will save His people from the presence of sin into a kingdom without end. *(Know)*
- Trust God with their future lives since He holds the future. *(Feel)*
- Choose to accept God's invitation to be ready for His imminent return. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Second Coming of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 25

"The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. . . . (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-6; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 1:7; 14:14-20; 19:11-21.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Discuss with the students the answers to What Do You Think?

What does it take to make accurate predictions? How are human predictions different from prophetic messages given by God? What do the prophecies that were fulfilled hundreds of years later tell you about God?

Close by making the point that human predictions of the future are extremely unreliable. Then ask the students if they believe God can be trusted with the future. What assurance do we have that God can be trusted when it comes to predicting the future?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"As a captive in a foreign land, Daniel determined in his late teens to be true to God. Ushered into the luxurious banquet hall of the Babylonian king, he refused to worship the king's idols, drink the king's wine, or eat the king's unclean delicacies. Yet he did it with such grace that he eventually won the hearts of his captors. Daniel's spiritual integrity continued throughout his life. When he was in his mid-80s, he faced perhaps his greatest test. Conniving coworkers schemed against him. They slyly influenced the king to pass a decree forbidding worship of any god except himself for 30 days. Obviously Daniel could not comply. The price for disobedience was high.

"The prophet did not make his decision based on the consequences of his actions. He made it based on faithfulness to God's Word. Had he considered the consequences, death in the lions' den, he might have yielded. . . . Anytime the consequences of a decision become the driving force in making a decision, we are likely to yield. One of the most successful coaches in the history of professional football was Vince Lombardi, of the Green Bay Packers. A reporter asked why they gave so much of themselves each Sunday. He queried, 'Why is your team notably different? Why do you leave everything out on the field?' The players responded, 'We are not playing for the crowd in the stands or the millions in the television audience. We aren't overly concerned about what the news media says. We are playing for one thing: "the coach's eyes." When we review the film Monday mornings, we want to know we have satisfied Coach Lombardi.'

"Daniel did not play to the crowd. He lived to please his heavenly Father. He played for the 'Father's eyes.'

"When the final films of life are shown, living life to please God is what will truly count. The great heroes of faith all lived for a purpose. They stood above the masses. They viewed life from a different perspective. They did not live to please themselves or the crowd. The prime purpose of their life was to please God. In making this fundamental decision, Daniel lived a centered life. God's formula for true peace and lasting success is still the same today."—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, 2003, p. 205

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The Word of God is marvelously concentrated, designed to help us live victoriously in this life and prepare for the life to come. In Daniel 7 God gives us a prophetic view of the nations that would rise and fall at the end of time, the judgment of the wicked, the salvation of the righteous, and the ushering in of God's everlasting kingdom. The momentous events of Daniel 7 remind us that God is soon to return for His children. The question is, however, "When He comes what will He find us doing?"

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- *Review what you learned from Daniel 2 about the kingdoms symbolized by the various divisions of the great statue. What symbols are used in Daniel 7 to describe the same kingdoms?*
- What are the eight characteristics of the little horn described in Daniel 7:8, 20, 24, and 25?
- Is there a promise in Daniel 7 that spoke to you of God's love? Which one is it, and why do you think it captured your attention?
- *Place an asterisk* at the points in the narrative where you see God's grace. Is there grace in Daniel 7?
- According to Daniel 7:13, 14, who is "the Ancient of Days" (NIV)? Who is the "one like a son of man" (NIV)? What significant event is described here? What authority did the son of man receive when He was brought before the Ancient of Days?
- The little horn of the fourth beast is a religio-political power with eyes like a man and a mouth that speaks boastfully. What power is being referred to here?

- Why is it essential for us to have a correct understanding of these prophecies as we prepare for the kingdom of God? What assurance do we have that God is keeping His prophetic promises?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Daniel 12:6-13; John 14:29; Matthew 24:15, 16.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Understanding the Symbols. Here are some of the symbols found in Daniel 7 and what they mean:

Sea (Daniel 7:2) means multitudes, people, nations (Revelation 17:15).

Beasts (Daniel 7:3) means kingdoms or empires.

Lion, bear, leopard, and dragon-like beast (Daniel 7:3-8) represent four kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Daniel 7:17).

Ten horns (Daniel 7:7, 8) means 10 kings or kingdoms.

A little horn (Daniel 7:8) represents a power that is not only political, but also religious in nature (Daniel 7:24, first part).

Characteristics of the little horn:

1. It came out of the fourth beast that is the symbol of Rome (Daniel 7:8, 24). It ascended from the ruins of the Roman Empire, and therefore its nature resembled that of persecuting Rome.

2. It came after Rome was divided among the 10 barbarian tribes that conquered it (verses 8, 20). These tribes include: the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Lombards, the Anglo-Saxons, the Franks, the Alemannans, the Heruli, and the Suevi.

3. Initially it appeared to be little, but over time it became greater than all the other powers symbolized by the 10 horns (verses 8, 20). The

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Connecting It to Us

To make the material you are sharing practical to the youth, use history to give a subject an up-to-date spin. Try the following:

- Locate maps, photos, symbols that would communicate a sense of the historical significance of the subject matter.
- Consider inviting someone knowledgeable on the history of the subject to make a brief presentation to your class.
- Plan ahead. Give your students an Internet research assignment to find and report an interesting or unknown fact about the subject.
- By sharing or showing a picture of a historic object you might pique the interest of young learners.

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Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

Roman church became the most important religious and political power of its time.

4. It uprooted three other horns when it came to be (verse 8). Catholic emperors destroyed three Arian tribes, namely, the Herulis (A.D. 493), the Vandals (A.D. 534), and the Ostrogoths (A.D. 538).

5. It had the "eyes of a man" (verse 8, NKJV) and a mouth that boasted great things (verse 8), against the Most High. Eyes indicate understanding or wisdom (Ephesians 1:18). Eyes like a man indicates a system based on human, rather than divine wisdom. The "mouth that spoke boastfully" (verse 8, NIV) refers to the claims to assume the prerogatives that belong solely to God (see 2 Thessalonians 2:4), such as claiming to have: the authority to forgive sins (i.e., indulgences, penances), to change God's law, and to be infallible.

6. It attempted to "wear out the saints of the most High" (Daniel 7:25, KJV). The Roman Church was a persecuting religious and political power as attested by the crusades and inquisitions.

7. It attempted to "change times and laws" (verse 25, KJV). The Papacy endeavored to change God's law, the Ten Commandments. It claimed to have authority to change God's day of rest from Saturday, the seventh-day Sabbath, to Sunday.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent states this change in the following terms: "The Church of God has thought it well to transfer the celebration and observance of the Sabbath to Sunday."

8. It was given power for a "time, times and half a time" (verse 25, NIV). A prophetic day equals one year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6; Genesis 29:27). This time period is also confirmed in Revelation 11:2, 3; 13:5. According to the reckoning of "a day for each year," the sum works out to 1,260 prophetic days, or 1,260 literal years. This time period started when Emperor Justinian granted religious and political power to Pope Vigilius (A.D. 538) and ended at the time of the French Revolution when Pope Pius VI was exiled and lost his political power (A.D. 1798). The time period between A.D. 538 and A.D. 1798 is known in history as the Dark Ages, a time characterized by spiritual darkness, when the study of God's Word by the common people was undertaken at the risk of great danger and persecution.

(Sources: "Unsealing Daniel's Mysteries," a Bible study by Mark Finley for It is Written; Seth Pierce, *"Prophecies of Daniel Made Simple"*; William H. Shea, *"Daniel: A Reader's Guide"*; and Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family.*)

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

The prophecy in Daniel 7 reminds us that God will not tarry forever, that His coming is sure. Knowing this, how then should we live?

Allow the students to share some of their responses. Then ask for a volunteer to pray that everyone in the class will make preparation for the second coming of Jesus the focus of their lives.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Through the prophecies of Daniel, God reminds us that He alone sets the sunrise and sunset of human powers. Whether they be political or religious powers, no matter how powerfully they speak or how many weapons at their disposal, they have no power over God.

Daniel 7 reminds us that Jesus is soon to return to earth, that His kingdom will have no end, and all who love His appearing will live forever in the presence of the Ancient of Days.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 45.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Daniel 7.
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Photo by The Crystal Lenz

flashlight

"Shortly before the fall of Babylon, when Daniel was meditating on these prophecies and seeking God for an understanding of the times, a series of visions was given him concerning the rise and fall of kingdoms. With the first vision, as recorded in the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel, an interpretation was given; yet not all was made clear to the prophet" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 553).

keytext

"Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey Him."

(Daniel 7:27, NIV)

what do you think?

Look at the following tech predictions made several decades ago.

1. "There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."—Ken Olsen, founder of Digital Equipment Corporation, 1977.

2. "There is practically no chance communications space satellites will be used to provide better telephone, telegraph, television, or radio service inside the United States."—T.A.M. Craven, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) commissioner.

3. "Television won't last. It's a flash in the pan."—Mary Somerville, radio pioneer, 1948.

4. Since all these predictions are proven to be false today, what do you think about making accurate predictions? Is it an easy task? What does it take to make accurate predictions? How are human predictions different from prophetic messages given by God? What do the prophecies that were fulfilled hundreds of years later tell you about God?

did you know?

From the rise and fall of nations as made plain in the books of Daniel and the Revelation, we need to learn how worthless is mere outward and worldly glory. . . .

"A careful study of the working out of God's purpose in the history of nations and in the revelation of things to come, will help us to estimate at their true value things seen and things unseen, and to learn what is the true aim of life. Thus, viewing the things of time in the light of eternity, we may, like Daniel and his fellows, live for that which is true and noble and enduring" (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 548).

INTO THE STORY

"I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this.

"So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 'The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.'

"Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

"He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.

" 'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'

"This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

(Daniel 7:15-28, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What aspects of this portion of Daniel 7 are new to you?

_____
_____
_____

Review what you learned from Daniel 2 about the kingdoms symbolized by the various divisions of the great statue. List these kingdoms on the spaces below. What symbols are used in Daniel chapter 7 to describe the same kingdoms?

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List the eight characteristics of the little horn described in Daniel 7:8, 20, 24, 25:

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According to Daniel 7:13, 14 who is "the Ancient of Days" (NIV)? Who is the "one like a son of man" (NIV)? What significant event is described here? What authority did the son of man receive when He was brought before the Ancient of Days?

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punch lines

"Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" **(Amos 3:7, NIV).**

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" **(John 15:15, NIV).**

"However, as it is written: 'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived'—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit" **(1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, NIV).**

"Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD . . . will accomplish this" **(Isaiah 9:7, NIV).**

further insight

"Prophets have been God's chosen spokesmen, and through them He has made known things to come."—Denton E. Rebok, *Believe His Prophets*, 1955, p. 82

"Prophecy has traced the rise and fall of the world's great empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. With each of these, as with nations of less power, history repeated itself. Each had its period of test, each failed, its glory faded, its power departed, and its place was occupied by another."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 176

Sabbath

Read Daniel 7:9-14.

How did you answer the questions in the *What Do You Think?* section? Predictions are difficult, especially if it's about the future. But for God it is not a daunting task to predict what will happen a day, month, year, or century from now.

How does Daniel portray the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9, 10?

Today's Bible verses present a scene of judgment in which God the Father, "the Ancient of Days" (NIV), is portrayed as transferring the authority for judging to His Son, the "one like a son of man" (NIV). This event corresponds to the commencement of Jesus' high-priestly ministry in the holy of holies in the heavenly sanctuary. Since then He serves both as our advocate and as our judge. How do you feel knowing that Jesus is now your advocate, interceding for you to the Father based on His own merits?

Sunday

Read Daniel 7:1-7; Exodus 20:8-11; Revelation 14:6, 7.

After reading today's Bible passages, read the *Into the Story* section and complete the *Out of the Story* questions. What was it that troubled Daniel so deeply?

One of the characteristics of the little horn is that it attempted to "change the set times and the laws" (verse 25, NIV). In the Ten Commandments the only one that deals with the concept of time is the fourth commandment. History attests to such a change that took place where Saturday, the biblical seventh-day Sabbath, was changed by the Roman Church to Sunday. Why is the question over God's day of worship vitally important especially now in the final days of earth's history?

What parallels do you find between the fourth commandment and the third angel's message?

Monday

Read Daniel 7:27.

This week's *Key Text* is one of hope and encouragement. What assurance do we have that God is keeping His prophetic promises?

Summarize in your own words the message of hope contained in the *Key Text*.

Tuesday

Read Isaiah 44:28; Jeremiah 25:12.

This week's *Flashlight* quotation helps us understand Daniel's dilemma. What is the central message?

These prophecies were known and studied by Daniel and the Israelites who had been held captive by the Babylonians. They read them carefully, praying earnestly for God to fulfill His promises. It was in answer to these prayers that God gave Daniel a series of visions that helped to explain the future.

Wednesday

Read this week's *Punch Lines*. Focus on John 15:15. To whom is Jesus speaking in this passage?

After looking at Bible prophecies that were fulfilled in the past, can you tell who oversees and guides human history? How can you build on the assurance that God will guide your future as well if you trust Him?

Thursday

Read Proverbs 29:18.

What things get in the way of seeking God? Why is it important that you maintain a living relationship with Jesus, who has your best interest at heart and wants to see you in His kingdom?

Friday

Read Isaiah 41:10.

Does the unknown scare you? Are you afraid of the future? Do you have friends who may be? Based on this week's look at Daniel 7, write a short paragraph offering them hope. Quote at least one verse from Daniel 7 in your paragraph.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 45.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.