

NOVEMBER 30

This is a red letter day. Today you'll begin 1 John and finish Psalm 119. Tomorrow you will begin your final month reading The One Year Bible this year. Hopefully you feel encouraged. Don't give up if you've fallen behind. Just begin again on January 1. Everything you've learned in the Word this year will seem familiar as you begin reading in January. Also, you've learned some stuff about yourself, and this next year you'll be more likely to be more regular about reading every day. It takes three to five years of reading The One Year Bible to develop the habits that will keep you on track for a full year. Imagine, there are people who have been believers 40 years to whom the Word is a familiar, yet foggy, book. Their quiet times come out of secondary sources that only reference the Word. They are attuned to the words of men about God, but not God's Word. They never invested five years to set their hearts on developing a life-long walk with God every day in His truth. And if you are meeting regularly with 2-3 others, sharing what the Spirit is teaching you, the effect of walking with the Lord like this is magnified 100 times and becomes a disciple-making way of life.

Daniel 7

Daniel is either liked because of the "children's" stories in chapters 1-6, or because of the apocalyptic portions where beasts are doing beastly stuff, or because angels are warring with one another. In my opinion, if you only look at the first six chapters as interesting kids' stories, you miss the entire point, and with that, Daniel ends up in the lion's den as a 20-40 year-old man. Clearly in the first six chapters, God is moving and influencing the nations for the return of Israel to their land. Now, in chapters 7-12 we need to ask ourselves what God's purpose is in letting us have this information. I would say that God is showing how He will also be moving the nations and influencing them for the return of the Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom. Yet, there is still the question of why God is giving us this future information. Think about that.

V. 1 The first year of Belshazzar's reign means this vision is given to Daniel about 14 years before the lion's den. Why did God give this to Daniel now? It's all speculation; but I think, among other things, He wanted to encourage Daniel. When Belshazzar was given the rule in Babylon, while Nabonidus was living the high-life elsewhere, that must have felt bad. The empire began to decline even faster. Daniel was powerless and was now demoted. This might have been to inspire Daniel to know that God was still in charge and that this weakening of Babylon was a part of His plan to bring about the next empire. That might be a reason for all of these chapters. One thing all of these empires had in common was their rule over Israel, God's people.

Many people on this planet feel powerless regarding the direction of their country, government, and the trends of culture. Daniel felt that, but what God showed Daniel has to help us too. We are disciples following Christ in the harvest on a dying planet that will ultimately experience the wrath of God. We are no longer people identified by a nationality like Jews or Greeks, or identified by a geological area like the USA, China, or Europe. We belong to the kingdom of God, and just like Jesus sent the 70 ahead of Him into every place where He Himself was coming, we are heralding the coming of our King and His offer of forgiveness. We need to wake up and do our work. We were meant to love our cultures and care for our people, but this time must come to an end because of the ravages of sin and the rule of Satan. God says that things will only get worse before the coming of our Lord. But as the clouds roll in before the storm, many people will be stirred and will open their hearts to Christ. We are here for Christ to reach out to them.

This is the final chapter that is in Aramaic. Now, you could understand chapters 2-6 being in Aramaic, since they were like news communications in the empire, but what about chapter 7? This again is speculation, but I think that as chief of the wise men, Daniel published this in their

literature. Chapter 7, as well as chapter 2, hang together and help interpret one another. The rest of the chapters deal exclusively with Israel and how nations and events will impact God's people. Those chapters, specifically for the Jews, are written in Hebrew. Chapter 7 belongs to the explanation of chapter 2, and so I think this was also included in the official records of Babylon, though maybe, only under the note, "for wise guys only."

Just as an aside, we have no idea as to what Daniel did among the wise men. I can't imagine they just did card tricks all day. He must have had some input into their learning and doings. You know that the wise men who visited Jesus after His birth came from the east, from the region Daniel ruled. How do you think they knew about this coming King who would set up an eternal kingdom? Although you can't say for sure it was the influence of Daniel, it would be silly to exclude that possibility. I don't know how, but I think that through Daniel, God gave the information to the wise men that would culminate with the journey of the Magi to worship the young child Jesus.

Vs. 2-7 In chapter 2, we had four metals as a part of one statue. In the last of those kingdoms, something funny happened in the feet that was a part of that last kingdom, a continuation of some sort. In the days of those last kings, God sets up His eternal kingdom. Here we have four beasts, and in the days of that final beast something funny happens. Like the iron legs of the statue that have these toes, this final beast will eventually have ten horns. After those horns, God will set up His kingdom. So, we have two visions with one meaning. But now Daniel is shown something about that final kingdom and God has Daniel particularly concerned with a little horn.

Note, God used the sea often as a symbol of rebellion to His rule. Out of that sea of human rebellion come the nations that will claim world domination, and particularly domination of Israel.

V. 4 Just as the head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar and was given prominence, this beast is also given some honor in its description. God removes the wings and gives it the mind of a man. This is probably alluding to God's education of Nebuchadnezzar, making him rational and understanding that the living God ruled.

V. 5 The bear representing the Persian Empire would have been the breast and arms of silver on the statue. The bear was lopsided, some suggest, because it was of the Medes (weaker side) and the Persians (the stronger side.)

V. 6 This is Greece, the bronze torso and thighs of bronze on the statue. The animal imagery here is very direct. The leopard was a symbol the Greeks used; and after Alexander's death, the empire was divided into four kingdoms: north, south, east and west.

V. 7 Breaking into pieces sort of describes this empire, both in the legs of iron and in this beast with its teeth of iron. I don't know my history, so I don't know that the Romans were more brutal than all other empires, but they did have the distinction of being the empire that both killed the Messiah and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. The ten horns, as we'll see, are ten kings and they would correspond to the toes on the statue. In the description of the statue in chapter 2, it mentions the *days of those kings*. Since we know here, that there are ten kings ruling at once, looking back on that phrase and those ten toes makes sense. I think that because of the way both of these visions help interpret each other, Daniel wrote this in Aramaic, probably to put it together in the file with the vision of the statue.

V. 8 So, in the days of those ten horns, a small one comes up and plucks up three of the others by their roots, meaning, totally removed. The description of the eyes must have to do with some special dark intelligence given to that horn. While it is saying these *great things*...

Vs. 9-10 ...God takes His seat to pronounce judgment on mankind. This is like the beginning and duration of the Tribulation. Notice that some of this description of the glory of God sounds like what Ezekiel saw.

Vs. 11-12 Eventually this horn was judged. The dominion of the other beasts (Iraq, Iran, Greece and Italy) has been taken away, but their lands remain. We don't have enough information on this final manifestation of the final beast, but with everything that is said here and elsewhere about the horn, the killing of the beast seems to be talking about a man.

Vs. 13-14 This would be the coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation.

As a result of v. 13, the Jews had a title for the Messiah, the "Son of Man." Imagine the distress of the religious leaders, when they heard Jesus refer to Himself as the "Son of Man." As you read through the Gospels next year, underline "Son of Man." It will give you an idea of how often Jesus used this title. Here are a couple of times Jesus said this of Himself.

Mark 2:10-11 *But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -- he said to the paralytic -- ¹¹"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."*

Matthew 26:63-65 *But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy."*

Vs. 15-18 Daniel seeks help and is given a very brief summary, with the assurance that God will fulfill His promise to Israel. Remember, this vision is given to Daniel as the Babylonian Empire was crumbling. Daniel is shown and told that God will sovereignly guide Israel to fulfill the promise given to Abraham.

Vs. 19-22 Now, some of this seems like a review of what he saw, except for the part of the horn beating up the people of Israel/followers of Christ until God puts an end to it. Daniel didn't mention this persecution before, but God knew it would catch Daniel's eye. What concerned Daniel was that this king was fighting and beating the "saints" / people of Israel and followers of Christ during the Tribulation. Why would God allow that?

Vs. 23-28 Notice that this last kingdom, in the final years before the return of Christ, will have power over the whole earth. Those who stand and survive against this power will be few. There will be believers on the earth and there will still be nations that will resist God and the antichrist. As C. S. Lewis said, "The dwarfs are for the dwarfs."

V. 25 What is significant in this description of the antichrist is that he will be given power to kill the followers of Christ during the Tribulation, who will mostly be Jews. We will see this when we read the book of Revelation, and there, we'll see God's purpose in it. Remember Romans 8:36.

V. 27 This is clearly the Millennial Kingdom with the Jews being a witness to the world and Christ reigning. For another prediction of this, see Isaiah 55:5.

V. 28 Daniel was distressed because of the damage this king will do to the saints of God. Revelation explains a little more about this. Those days are still future for Israel, but then there will be full vindication from God.

So, knowing that God has everything in His hands, now is the time to work in the harvest, sharing and witnessing the blessings and power of the gospel as we follow Christ, reaching out to the lost and making disciples, who make disciples.

1 John 1

After reading Paul and Peter, what we'll find in John's letters will fall right in line. John wrote this after many churches were established, probably in the 60's A.D., and before the persecution by Nero. What marked this time was the rise of false teaching in the church. God, of course, knew it would come and so He used this rise in false teaching as a help for us to see the apostles

address the issues. In dealing with the false teaching, John will also express, in his unique way, the focus of disciples following Christ in the harvest.

Vs. 1-4 Like the introduction to John's Gospel, the focus is immediately on Jesus and His message. See how many things you can find in this introduction that would caution the believers to resist false teachers.

V. 4 As with Paul, John's joy was in seeing disciples joyfully and faithfully following Christ, making disciples.

Vs. 5-10 This section is definitely aiming at something. Now, even if there weren't false teachers, there would still be the presence of inappropriate lifestyles and the warped rationalizations that supported those in the guise of being OK with God.

Vs. 5-6 We've seen people in Corinth doing all sorts of sin, from immorality to idolatry, justifying it before God. Apparently there were teachers who were not only rationalizing this, but they were promoting it.

V. 7 Notice how this great truth not only rebukes those not honoring Christ in their lives, but it says that as disciples follow Christ, God continually cleanses them from the sins they will inevitably commit. This led John into the next extreme in teaching.

Vs. 8-10 There is no sinless perfection on this earth, whether we say, "Oh that's just the flesh and it doesn't count," or if we say, "I've reached that higher plane of existence." John and the Spirit didn't have much patience for any opinion that says we don't continually need to ask forgiveness before God.

V. 9 This is forgiveness in the family. When a child or spouse sins, it doesn't mean they are out of the family, it means that until someone says they're sorry, you can't pretend that nothing happened. On the basis of the power of what Jesus did, He can justly forgive us and cleanse us as often as we sin. We only need to confess.

V. 10 Again, since this is addressed to Christians, this is not talking about sin before conversion, but sinning while walking with Christ. A disciple will keep a very short, and sensitive, account of his sins and will be talking with God often. It's part of the joy of that closeness with the Lord.

Psalm 119:153-176

Isn't it interesting that David used this alphabet pattern to write this entire psalm. Then in the first part of each section, he refers to something about his life, but the second part always says something about the Word. He goes out of his way to refer to the Word in different ways, yet it is always the same. He couldn't live without being in God's Word in every situation every day and every hour. We need to learn to do the same.

As you read, notice again all of the references to distress or trouble and how the Word helped him.

Vs. 153-154 This is David's plea to God in this section. God knows those who are His and He will deliver them, according to His wisdom and His plan. Sometimes heaven is that deliverance.

Vs. 155-160 God's salvation and compassion are based on a person's relationship to Him. The wicked do not seek or obey God's Word. David not only read and obeyed, but he also loved God's Word.

Vs. 161-162 In the face of unjust persecution, David focused on God's Word to the point of having joy. Notice here that v. 161 sort of echoes John 15:25, *They hated me without a cause.*

Vs. 163-168 Notice all of the emotions in this section from v. 161 to 168: awe, joy, praise, love, peace, hope and love.

Vs. 169-176 Underline *let* in this section. Notice too how crying, pleading, and praising are mentioned.

V. 176 David asked God to seek him when he went astray. God did this for David.

Proverbs 28:23-24

V. 23 I was reading this morning how Jesus strongly cautioned His disciples to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees, which was hypocrisy. Immediately afterward He told them not to worry about death or persecution. To live as honestly and transparently as we should for Christ, apparently, could get us into trouble. At least Jesus must have thought so.

V. 24 Having just read 1 John 1:10, isn't this a funny "coincidence?" We need to call a sin a sin.