

SECRET KNOWLEDGE

Have you even had someone tell you that they knew when Jesus was returning or that there were secret plans that most people don't know about?

ABOUT APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

- "Apocalyptic" means "revelation," the unveiling of something (that was /is hidden)
- This genre is used in the Bible in multiple places (e.g., Daniel, Revelation)
- Though the word commonly has a sense of 'doom,' the books of the Bible that use apocalyptic language are filled with joy and optimism. Though they sometimes picture 'the end' of things, they also have positive results:
 - The end of human violence, corruption
 - The end of the oppression of God's people
 - The victory of God over the Devil, demons, evil people
 - The ushering in of God's good, heaven, being with God (Revelation 21:3)
- We need to avoid misunderstanding, misuse, and abuse
 - We need to see them in the plain sense to the original audience
 - We need to avoid having them say more than what is clearly revealed in other Scripture
 - We need to avoid abuse of the visions such as ...
 - assigning a date to the Second Coming of Christ (this has happened many times in the past)
 - wasting time and effort solving mysteries that God has not revealed
 - spending time and effort on the signs of the times rather on our mission to follow Jesus in our days

LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

In the previous chapter, God gave Daniel dreams of hybrid beasts to represent kingdoms that were to come. In this chapter, Daniel has a vision of common animals, and then God sends the angel, Gabriel, to help him understand the meaning.

Suggestion: Read through the entire chapter, highlighting key places to gain an overview.

Consider the following questions after you have read it through:

This is two years after the "dream" in chapter seven. How would you summarize the "vision?" (Who are the main players, what happens to each of them, etc.)

The theme of "human evil" is reoccurring in these chapters. What evil do you notice?

The understanding of the "vision" is revealed by Gabriel at the command of God. Who are these animals and what will they do?

The last king mentioned (v. 23) is Antiochus IV (Epiphanes, a name he gave himself). What was prophesied that he would do? (23-25)

In the end, Antiochus IV will be “broken but not with human hands” (i.e., by God. He died of grief after a defeat.) Why is this an important part of the vision?

How might this vision have affected the Jews, (both the people in exile and those still in the land)?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

The accuracy of this vision fulfilled centuries later is striking, amazing, and even doubted by critics. How might this impact how we see biblical prophecy and the Bible overall?

Throughout history, people have misused apocalyptic literature to propose secret or never before known dates or conclusions. Why do you think that we are drawn to this or attempt this?

For us, who now see these things as history, how should we then live? How does knowing how God worked in Daniel’s times help shape how we are to live in our times? What is God encouraging us to be or do?

APPLY IT THIS WEEK

Every generation struggles with the illusion that things are just going to go on as it is now. But the Word of God repeatedly teaches us that things will change, hard times will come, and that we need to live out being faithful to God throughout our days. If you knew that Jesus would return in a week, what would faithfulness look like in your life? What if it was a year? a decade? God gave us four very powerful aids to live faithfully: (1) the Holy Spirit indwelling us, (2) The Word of God, (3) prayer, and the (4) the people of God. Do you feel ready for the King?

PLEASE PRAY

- Please pray for and contact your Global Partner this week. Plan a special time to encourage them, pray with them, and help as needed.
- Please pray for parents, friends, and grandparents of students as they encourage and shape their beloved teens.
- Please pray for Pastor Jerrod and those giving leadership to our Young Adults and for them to continue to make disciples who make disciples.