

Daniel & Revelation Study Guide



Gregory John

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A guide for anyone studying
Bible prophecy

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Introduction

When it comes to the books of Daniel and Revelation, there are differences of opinion as to which is the best method of study. This book not only critically looks at three of the most common methods of study but also discusses eight principles (rules) which can be applied when it comes to studying the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

As for the book of Revelation, God's Word is clear, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it" (Revelation 1:3, NKJV). In other words, Revelation is an open book to those who search for understanding (Rev. 22:10); therefore, let us hold firm to the Lord's promise, "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (Rev. 22:7, NKJV).

Bible prophecy is not to be understood by worldly wisdom but is spiritually discerned through the Omniscient Spirit of God which leads the humble in heart seeking after a knowledge of the truth! Gregory John

Chapter One

Study Methods

When it comes to the study of the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation there are several important factors to consider. First and foremost, is choosing a method of study. The other factor is deciding on a set of principles (rules) to use when studying the Bible's prophecies.

This chapter will discuss the three main interpretative methods of study, which include: Preterism, Futurism, and Historicism.

Method # 1: Preterism

Preterism comes from the Latin root word *praeter*, meaning: in the past. Preterism as a method of interpretation, seeks to show that most of John the Revelator's prophecies have been fulfilled in the early centuries of the Christian Church. Preterism was first introduced in AD 1614 by the Jesuit priest, Alcazar and was in counteraction to the Protestant reformers who identified the Roman papacy as the Antichrist power forewarned of in the Bible.

Method # 2: Futurism

Futurism as its name suggests, places the bulk of John the Revelator's prophecies to a time just prior to Jesus' second coming. Much like Preterism, Futurism was first proposed in AD 1591 by the Jesuit priest, Ribeca. Most Christians today who believe in a secret rapture of the Church followed by seven years of tribulation on the earth, hold to the Jesuit methodology of Futurism.

Method # 3: Historicism

Historicism, or "continuous historical", sees John the Revelator's prophecies as unfolding along a historical timeline: starting with the time of John the Revelator and ending with Jesus setting up his Kingdom on the new (renewed) earth. The evolution of historicism within Christianity first took shape during the early period of the Protestant reformation movement. The early Protestant reformers all pointed to the Roman papacy's dark and corrupt history and identified it with the little horn power of Daniel, as well as the Antichrist-beast power of Revelation.

In comparing historicism with preterism and futurism, it is evidently clear that the Protestant reformation is what led to the historical approach to Bible prophecy. Furthermore, it is what brought about the Roman Catholic methodologies of preterism and futurism which were designed to counteract Protestant thinking and to deflect the Bible's spotlight off of the Roman Catholic Church.

When it comes to the interpretation of the book of Revelation, preterism points us back to the distant past and futurism points us to a time yet future, which leaves us in the present with no bridge of understanding

between the past and future. Historicism on the other hand, spans the past, present and future. In pointing back to the prophecies fulfilled, it provides us with the understanding and assurance for the prophecies yet to be fulfilled. Furthermore, it is the only method of study that shows us where we are standing in earth' history prior to Jesus' coming.

Chapter Two

Principles of Prophetic Study

In using the historicist's approach and method of study, the following eight principles (rules) of interpretation are discussed.

PRINCIPLE I: ALL OF SCRIPTURE

The foundation from which all prophecy is to be studied is the belief and understanding that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). In using this principle, first gather together all scripture texts on the subject matter being studied. Second, using a Bible concordance, examine key words and phrases within the texts so as to know their true and proper meaning in the original language in which they were written. A Bible concordance is a valuable study tool for examining and interpreting translated words or phrases that were originally penned in the languages of Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament writings) or Greek (New Testament writings). Third, after evaluating their meaning and context, retain the Bible texts that are found to be most relevant to the subject matter being studied.

PRINCIPLE 2: SCRIPTURE AS ITS OWN EX-POSITOR

Let scripture interpret scripture. This principle, which is sometimes called “Isaiah’s Principle,” is found in Isaiah 28:9-10: “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? ... For precept must be upon precept...; line upon line...; here a little, and there a little.” When using this “scripture upon scripture” principle, it is important to remember that it is not any one verse but precept upon precept and line upon line that helps build an understanding.

An example of this principle is the Bible's own interpretation of the word "sleep," which is in reference to the state of the dead. See Acts 7:59-60; John 11:11-14; 1 Kings 2:10; Job 14:10-12.

PRINCIPLE 3: REPEAT AND ENLARGE

Often the main points of a vision or parable are repeated and enlarged (magnified) by other more descriptive scriptures. An example of this principle can be found in the prophetic book of Daniel where the visions of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 7 and 8) repeat and enlarge upon King Nebuchadnezzar's visionary dream (Daniel 2).

PRINCIPLE 4: SYMBOLISM

All scripture in Bible prophecy should be taken literally, unless it defies nature (e.g., a leopard with four heads and four wings) or there is a justifiable reason to believe that its meaning is figurative or symbolic in nature. When trying to determine the literal or figurative meaning of a word or phrase in Scripture, first look for other scriptures that may identify and give further explanation as to its literal or figurative meaning. An example of this can be found in Revelation 17, where "many waters" (Rev. 17:1-2) is symbolic of

“peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:15).

PRINCIPLE 5: TYPE-ANTITYPE

In the Old Testament there are many types or patterns of things that have their antitype or fulfillment in the New Testament. A Bible type is essentially a historical truth (person, place, event, or thing) that foreshadows or points forward to a counterpart (antitype). A Bible antitype is usually broader in meaning (amplified), proving to be the “body” which was foreshadowed by the type. The key to understanding this principle can be found in the unity of the Scriptures themselves. An example of this principle is the earthly sanctuary, which was a type or pattern pointing to its perfect antitype, the heavenly sanctuary. See Exodus 25:8-9, Hebrews 8:2, 9:24.

PRINCIPLE 6: YEAR-DAY

The timeline prophecies found in the books of Daniel and Revelation all follow the same principle of one prophetic day being equal to one literal year—a 360-day lunar calendar year. Examples of this principle may be found in the Old Testament. See Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:5-6.

PRINCIPLE 7: THESSALONIAN TEST (1 Thess. 5:20-21)

“Despise not prophesying.”

When it comes to any a new or old theory, one should always be cautious yet not of the Laodicean mindset that “I am rich [in understanding], and increased with goods, and have need of nothing [more]” (Rev. 3:17). To approach or maintain such an attitude will surely bind the mind, close the ears, and shut the eyes to the advancement of truth.

“Prove all things.”

When examining or testing a theory, one must always weigh every point of controversy with the straight testimony of God’s Word. To allow one’s own opinion, culture, beliefs, or even the Spirit of Prophecy to be the measuring stick of truth is to make the Word of God the interpretation and not the interpreter of truth (principle 2). In other words, if it fits your theological understanding and is supported by your subscribed beliefs, feelings, or religious experiences, then it must be a correct interpretation—whereas in reality it may be a square peg (one’s own interpretation) fitting into a round hole (the Bible’s interpretation).

“Hold fast that which is good.”

When accepting or rejecting a theory, all opinion, without prejudice, must rest upon the Word of God. If a theory is found to be in harmony with the Word of God, doesn't violate the principles mentioned, and can be supported by history, then consider it to be truth unless proven otherwise.

PRINCIPLE 8: HISTORICAL APPLICATION

When it comes to history affirming Bible prophecy, there are three basic applications that need to be made. First is to examine the prophecy in relation to the time period in which it was written. After attempting to answer the 5W's (Who, What, Where, When, and Why), one can better determine whether or not the prophecy has already had its fulfillment in history during the time of the prophet.

Second is to examine whether or not the prophecy has any set conditions. If so, then as a conditional prophecy it may have already had its place in history as being unfulfilled. An example of an unfulfilled conditional prophecy was the prophet Jonah's doomsday message, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4). Seeing that the people of Nineveh

took Jonah's words seriously and quickly repenting from their wicked ways, God withheld His impending judgment upon the city and its inhabitants, thus making the prophet's words null and void (see Jeremiah 18:7-8).

The third application is to examine the prophecy in the light of history itself. If well-documented historical facts or events can be linked to the prophecy without violating or distorting the contextual meaning of the prophet's words, figures, or symbols, then the prophecy may be considered validated by history—unless further proven otherwise. An example of history validating prophecy can be found in the book of Daniel, where history affirms what the prophet Daniel predicted regarding the rise and fall of four earthly kingdoms: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

With the application of this or any other principles of study, the examiner of Bible prophecy must always approach God's Word with a humble and teachable spirit, along with the spiritual keys of faith and prayer in hand. In doing so, he or she may look to unlock the mysteries of God's Word. "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Chapter Three

Hidden Treasures

Jesus told a parable of a man who found great treasure hidden in a field. In his excitement, he went and sold everything he had in order to purchase the field of great wealth. The parable is talking about the kingdom of heaven and giving up what this world has to offer in order to joyfully obtain the riches of heaven. The parable also illustrates the hidden treasures waiting to be found in the rich field of God's Word (The Holy Bible). In approaching the books of Daniel and Revelation, we shouldn't have the attitude that the prophecies therein are too obscure to understand. Is this what the Lord God would want from His people living in these

last days? Surely not! Let us diligently search the Scriptures as one earnestly digging for hidden treasure—in order that we may come to a knowledge of the truth!

When it comes to the study and our understanding of Bible prophecy, it is important that we choose a method of study that doesn't limit us to either the distant past or to an uncertain future. Historicism is the only study method that bridges the past, present and future, thus giving us the full assurance of God's omniscience and his sovereign plan for making all things new. Furthermore, when we follow sound principles or rules for interpretation, it removes the human tendency for speculation or bias to arise and take hold of our understanding. Simply put, when we allow the Bible to interpret itself, we will come to a clearer understanding of that which is in the past, is present, and is yet to come!

"But there must be an earnest study and close investigation. Sharp, clear perceptions of truth will never be the reward of indolence. No earthly blessing can be obtained without earnest, patient, persevering effort. If men attain success in business, they must have a will to do, and a faith to look for results. And we can not expect to gain spiritual knowledge without earnest toil. Those who desire to find the treasures of truth must dig for

them as the miner digs for the treasure hidden in the earth.... Those who do this will be rewarded; for Christ will quicken the understanding." Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 111.

About the author

Gregory John, an avid student of God's Word and history, holds himself to the standard that one's theological beliefs are best understood and tested by the two witnesses of truth: The Bible and History that testifies to what the Bible says.

To learn more about Gregory John, visit his Author website: gregoryjohnbooks.com