

HOPE
in the Midst of
A HOSTILE
WORLD

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
THE OLD TESTAMENT



A series of studies on the lives
of Old Testament characters, written for
laypeople and pastors, and designed to
encourage Christ-centered reading, teaching,
and preaching of the Old Testament

TREMPER LONGMAN III
J. ALAN GROVES

Series Editors

HOPE
in the Midst of
A HOSTILE
WORLD

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

DANIEL

GEORGE M. SCHWAB



P U B L I S H I N G

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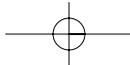
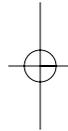
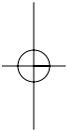
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*This book is dedicated to
the men and women
exiled from their homeland and
at war with horns great and small in Babylon,
especially the Dean of Erskine Theological
Seminary, Chaplain (LTC) R. J. Gore Jr.*

Come home safely.



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FOREWORD



*The New Testament is in the Old concealed;
the Old Testament is in the New revealed.*
—Augustine

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. (1 Peter 1:10–12)

“In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. (Luke 24:22–27)

The prophets searched. Angels longed to see. And the disciples didn't understand. But Moses, the prophets, and all the Old Testament Scriptures had spoken about it—that Jesus would come, suffer, and then be glorified. God began to tell a story in the Old Testament, the ending of which the audience eagerly anticipated. But the Old Testament audience was left hanging. The plot was laid out but the climax was delayed. The unfinished story begged an ending. In Christ, God has provided the climax to the Old Testament story. Jesus did not arrive unannounced; his coming was declared *in advance* in the Old Testament, not just in explicit prophecies of the Messiah but by means of the stories of all of the events, characters, and circumstances in the Old Testament. God was telling a larger, overarching, unified story. From the account of creation in Genesis to the final stories of the return from exile, God progressively unfolded his plan of salvation. And the Old Testament account of that plan always pointed in some way to Christ.

AIMS OF THIS SERIES

The Gospel According to the Old Testament Series is committed to the proposition that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is a unified revelation of God, and that its thematic unity is found in Christ. The individual books of the Old Testament exhibit diverse genres, styles, and individual theologies, but tying them all together is the constant foreshadowing of, and pointing forward to, Christ. Believing in the fundamentally Christocentric nature of the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, we offer this series of studies in the Old Testament with the following aims:

- to lay out the pervasiveness of the revelation of Christ in the Old Testament

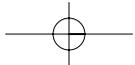
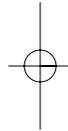
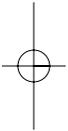
- to promote a Christ-centered reading of the Old Testament
- to encourage Christ-centered preaching and teaching from the Old Testament

To these ends, the volumes in this series are written for pastors and laypeople, not scholars.

While such a series could take a number of different shapes, we have decided, in most cases, to focus individual volumes on Old Testament figures—people—rather than books or themes. Some books, of course, will receive major attention in connection with their authors or main characters (e.g., Daniel or Isaiah). Also, certain themes will be emphasized in connection with particular figures.

It is our hope and prayer that this series will revive interest in and study of the Old Testament as readers recognize that the Old Testament points forward to Jesus Christ.

TREMPER LONGMAN III
J. ALAN GROVES



P R E F A C E



My Daniel course met on September 12, 2001, a day after terrorists brought down the World Trade Center, killing about three thousand people. Like everyone else in the country, the students were in shock, trying to make sense of the unthinkable. One said in near hysteria, “We’ve already lost, since they’re willing to die for their beliefs!” Another minimized the horror: “It doesn’t matter, since no one cries for the millions who died in slavery.” Some saw red: “They’re rabid animals fit only to be nuked!” A few agonized, “Shouldn’t Christians forgive our enemies?” One student asked, “How can people do such things and think they are acting for God?” On his face was confusion, and he looked to me at the front of the class for an answer.

I began to talk about the book of Daniel. We remember seeing the towers collapse—think of how the Jews felt watching their temple burn and fall to the ground. Their people were killed too, all in the name of Marduk the god of Babylon. The way we Americans felt on that black day echoes the dark and terrible backdrop of the book of Daniel. Daniel himself was a man confused by his sickening visions, living among a people whose wisdom failed them and who could not discern the signs of the times. It is not a lighthearted book useful for cheerfully padding one’s eschatological schema. It is a book for confused sufferers who need perspective and solid theological grounding. This characterized the Jews in exile while God’s temple lay in ruins. And this characterizes modern-day readers, who read

Daniel for hope and comfort when the world seems to crumble and fall around them.

Jesus is the King of kings, the Son of Man who receives the kingdom. He is the one figure who stands in the place of the saints and whose fate is bound up with theirs. History will be full of rises and falls, terrible wars and rumors of wars, terrorists who target civilians. The people of God groan in this evil world, awaiting their final vindication. It is through this vision of confident hope, in the crucible of the real world, that Christians find Jesus. Not only there, but in the unfolding tragic history of the world, Jesus remains the King over all.

PART ONE

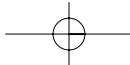
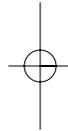
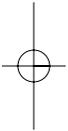
READING DANIEL AS ONE BOOK



Chapter 1 delineates how to approach the narrative and apocalyptic portions of Daniel, and how to outline it (taking into consideration that it is written in two languages). Dating Daniel and the implications for interpretation are at issue in chapters 1 and 2.

The book of Daniel is shown to be a wisdom book in chapter 3, similar in character to Proverbs or Job. One of Daniel's main lessons is that in adversity saints have opportunity to make practical application of their God-inspired wisdom, deeper than the world's wisdom, effective to solve real problems.

Finally, Daniel 1 sets the pattern for the rest of the book. There is a sense in which all of the great issues are seen first in Daniel's opening section. This is discussed in chapter 4.



I

HOW TO READ DANIEL



The book of Daniel comprises two halves—the first, one of the easiest portions of Scripture to understand; the second, one of the hardest. The first is a series of six stories that are obviously meant to convey to the reader, “Go and do likewise.” Children around the world are told about Daniel in the lions’ den, and are exhorted to “dare to be a Daniel.” This use of the stories is appropriate and intended by the author. However, even here there are apocalyptic elements. Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams in chapters 2 and 4 are highly symbolic and call for interpretation—in exactly the same way as the second half of Daniel. In the second half, the esoteric dreams and visions also call the reader to identify with the saints and brace for the trials to come. In fact, the stories of the first half could be reckoned as case histories or examples from the experiences of the Jews in exile that flesh out with a concrete sense of reality the second half of Daniel, which speaks with much more generality and abstraction. Yet the stories do not set themselves as programmatic for the future—this is what the apocalyptic section is for. Thus the two halves of Daniel play off one another; both are needed for the book to succeed.

DANIEL AS A COMPOSITE WHOLE

The division of Daniel into two halves is not a simple matter. As noted above, even the stories have apocalyptic elements. A natural division occurs *not* between the stories and the dreams, but one chapter later. Also, there is a major division between chapters 1 and 2. The division is one of language. Chapters 2–7 are written in Aramaic, and chapters 1 and 8–12 in Hebrew. Thus, chapters 2–7 form an Aramaic corpus within the book of Daniel, framed with Hebrew text. One can read the Hebrew chapter 1 as an introduction to Daniel, followed by the Aramaic section, followed by the Hebrew section.

The Aramaic section is a chiasmus, where the first chapter parallels the last, the second relates to the second-to-last, and the middle chapters to each other. (A. Lenglet's outline is shown in figure 1.¹) Daniel's dream of four beasts (chap. 7), which belongs with the second half of apocalyptic visions, relates to Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue of chapter 2. This links the two halves so that they are not isolated. (Unfortunately, some critics read Daniel as divided in exactly the way it is structured to prevent.)

Figure 1

The Chiastic Structure of Daniel 2–7

- A Dream statue representing four kingdoms (chap. 2)
- B Worship the golden statue or perish in a pit (chap. 3)
- C Judgment on Nebuchadnezzar (chap. 4)
- C Judgment on Belshazzar (chap. 5)
- B Worship Darius or perish in a pit (chap. 6)
- A Dream of four beasts representing four kingdoms (chap. 7)

In Scripture, only the book of Daniel includes original material written in Aramaic and not Hebrew.² Aramaic was the language of Babylon, and continued to be the language of empire until the ancient world was Hellenized under Alexander. The New Testament was written in the new uni-

versal language of Greek, as chapters 2–7 of Daniel were written in Aramaic. This was the language of the court of Nebuchadnezzar, and one may imagine court officials such as Daniel recording exceptional annals in that language. In later centuries, all of the Old Testament books were translated into Aramaic (Targums), but these were not confused with the Hebrew originals. The use of Aramaic speaks to the authenticity of the book of Daniel as an exilic document.

DANIEL AS A LITERARY TRADITION— THE GREEK ADDITIONS

I mentioned the writing of this book to an Orthodox priest and his wife, and she responded immediately by asking, “Are you going to treat the Greek portion of Daniel as well?” I responded by saying that most Protestants are unaware that there is a Greek portion. If one were to include the Greek additions to Daniel, then the Daniel corpus would be made up of three languages, not two!

In the centuries following the exile, the Jews produced many writings, often in Greek. Some of these became so closely associated with the book of Daniel that when Daniel was translated into Greek, these stories were included. This Greek translation of the Old Testament was the Bible of the early church—a Bible that included the Greek additions to Daniel. Although not even the Roman church declared these as deuterocanonical until after the Protestant Reformation, and early lists of canonical books such as that of Athanasius do not include them, today they are considered by many outside Protestantism as divinely inspired.

Every Protestant should become familiar with the Greek additions to Daniel for several reasons. First, doing so will help the reader to enter more fully into the mindset of those early Christians who incorporated these additions into their Bible. Second, the additions are regarded as Scripture by much of the Christian world, and as such deserve, at the

very least, a reading. Third, they indicate how the book of Daniel was read and regarded in the centuries before Christ. And fourth, 1–2 Maccabees chronicle the events and persecutions of Daniel 11, and flesh out with detail the career of the “little horn,” the “king of the North.”

There are three additions to Daniel: Bel and the Dragon, Susanna, and the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men. Bel and the Dragon and the book of Susanna portray Daniel as an ancient Sherlock Holmes, investigating a false accusation by criminal Jewish elders against the godly Susanna, and sleuthing the phony attempt by unscrupulous pagan priests to make the god Bel appear alive. Daniel also debunked the Babylonians’ foolish worship of a dragon. These stories show how Daniel was regarded in the centuries preceding the coming of Christ—as a wise man. His chief characterization was as a sage, not a prophet. He explained mysteries, he solved puzzles. This agrees with how we will treat the book of Daniel—as an example of sapiential writing meant to convey and promote wisdom.

The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men depicts what transpired in the flames of the fiery furnace. Again, this shows how the book of Daniel was regarded in the centuries following the exile. Daniel and his friends were examples to follow, models to emulate. Go and do likewise.

THE DATING AND MESSAGE OF DANIEL

Traditionally, Daniel is regarded as being an exilic, or sixth-century, document. A fifth-century date is within the pale of tradition, allowing for a somewhat later editing process. The alternative view is that it was composed in the Hellenistic era, about four hundred years later.

Some arguments for a late date are as follows. The apocalyptic portion tracks with known history up until the description of the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (164 B.C.), where the history goes awry; therefore, that part of the book can be dated to the point in time where the accurate history ends and a real (wrong) prediction begins. So, some or all of the apocalyptic portion was composed very late, about 168–165 B.C. This probably includes the dreams of chapters 2 and 7 as well. Darius the Mede of chapter 6 is unknown to history. He is therefore a figure written into the story by someone who did not know the real history of Persia—obviously much later than a sixth-century date. Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity of chapter 4 has no historical basis, but his successor, Nabonidus, was clearly insane. Again, someone must have confused these two kings. Ezekiel refers to a “Daniel”—spelled unlike the biblical Daniel, but like an ancient figure from Ugaritic literature, thus evincing knowledge of an ancient “Daniel” figure known to the Jews (Ezek. 14:12–20; 28:1–3). Perhaps there was no Daniel in the exile, but a later writer invented him using the name from an ancient fable. Further, there are Greek words in the first stories in Daniel—a sure tip-off of a late date, perhaps third century. And in the Hebrew Bible, Daniel is not grouped with the Prophets, but with the later Writings. Perhaps the Aramaic sections are third-century stories that were later supplemented by the Hebrew sections in the mid-second century, and the Daniel corpus continued to grow with the Greek additions.

Of course, the sixth-century date is relatively easy to defend against these criticisms. Daniel was translated into Greek in the mid-second century, 168–163 B.C. How could such a late production, known to be wrong in its predictions, be so quickly accepted as holy writ? It was very popular with the Essenes, and 1 Maccabees quotes it—it was recognized as canonical too early for a mid-second-century date. A good case can be made that the fourth kingdom of

chapters 2 and 7 is Rome, which could not have been anticipated in 165 B.C., so even with the late date Daniel still is predicting the future; Antiochus Epiphanes is not the end of the story. In addition, the Greek loan words are mostly in lists of musical instruments—not sufficient to place Daniel in the Hellenistic era; the marvel is that there are so *few* Greek loan words. The book also exhibits an open and friendly attitude toward foreign nations and rulers, unlike genuine second-century materials. As for the argument that the writer did not know his history—Belshazzar was thought a fictional character until the discovery of the Nabonidus Cylinder proved Daniel correct. Daniel deserves the benefit of the doubt, having evinced knowledge of the Persian era beyond any other writer, ancient or modern. A number of suggestions have been offered as to the identity of Darius, not the least of which is that he is none other than Cyrus himself. These observations add up to a unified book early enough to know about Belshazzar and to have been included with other writings as canonical, containing materials that envision a succession of kingdoms far beyond the date of its composition and redaction.

The dating of Daniel impacts its message. If it is essentially a sixth-century document, it demonstrates God's knowledge of the future and power to control the course of history. As events unfold, Jews suffering under malicious kings and kingdoms can take heart that all is on course and according to schedule. This hope did sustain them when times were exceedingly difficult, as is recorded, for example, in 1 Maccabees. No doubt this track record in the community of faith earned the book a place in the Hebrew Bible—and inspired other stories that featured Daniel to be written in Greek. After the coming of Christ, and throughout the church age, Christians have enjoyed that same confidence in their God. They persevere through persecutions and setbacks, secure in the knowledge that God, who foretold events leading up to the first advent of

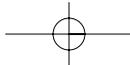
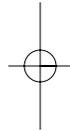
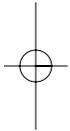
Christ, can be trusted with events leading up to the second advent—which are also under his sovereign control.

This confident hope is lost if one adopts the late-date model. Events are written down after the fact—no demonstration of God’s foreknowledge there. Where true prediction is attempted, the writer gets it wrong. Again, where is the value in that? The stories are not given the benefit of the doubt and are condemned as full of historical inaccuracies; the book cannot speak of the past any more than the future. Its stories are legends or fables purporting to be something that they are not—and the ancient Jews were so credulous that they seemingly placed them in their Bible alongside real prophecy and writings as the word of God.

The present author assumes the early date of writing and seeks to highlight the substantial foundation for faith and trust in the God of Daniel, leading up to the person and work of Christ, and continuing on until all is fulfilled.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. If you have access to a version of the Bible that includes the Apocrypha, read the book of Susanna. How is Daniel presented there? Consider, in light of this, how you may read Daniel differently.
2. Read Bel and the Dragon, also in the Apocrypha. How might this challenge your expectations of what Daniel is about?
3. God knows your past, as well as your future. How does this fact change the way you deal with adversity?



2

WHY NARRATIVE? WHY APOCALYPTIC?



Historical plausibility provides Daniel with “punch”—something important would be lost without it. This is especially so in the case of the apocalyptic portion; take away the predictive element and there remains little worth reading. On the other hand, the stories of Daniel were not written to inform the reader about what life was like during the exile.

HOW TO READ THE STORIES

The six stories are highly selective, and the reader is told only enough to make the theological point, which is the real agenda of Daniel. For example, in the accounts of dreams, only elements important to the story are included. Everything else dreamed is not recorded, so any attempt at psychoanalysis on the basis of the dream misses the point. That the historical references in Daniel are defensible does not mean that Daniel should be read as straightforward exilic history. Since the stories are so selective, the

reader must concentrate on the theological message being presented.

James Montgomery points out that even though Bels-hazzar did in fact rule Babylon (thus vindicating Daniel as a historical source), much in the stories still runs contrary to what is known of ancient Babylon and Persia.¹ He observes that a kosher Jew as chief magician would be unworkable; Nebuchadnezzar worshipping Daniel's God over against his own stretches credulity. Instead of events compatible with known history, Daniel presents an adventure book full of excitement and larger-than-life drama. Montgomery suggests the genre "religious romance" to explain this. Although the events happened, Daniel is not about the history of the sixth century; it is about what believers should confess and believe in any century.

If the interpreter's agenda is solely to defend—or to deny—Daniel as a historical source, then the point of the stories might be missed. For example, in chapter 3 the three heroes are in mortal crisis due to their fidelity to God. One might ask, "Where was Daniel?" Various commentaries attempt to answer that by reconstructing possible scenarios. Perhaps Daniel had been called away; perhaps Daniel was not present. Some commentators wisely ignore the question altogether. However, the only worthwhile answer does not reconstruct history, but reads the chapter as literature, as a religious romance. The question becomes, "How does the absence of Daniel change the book?" The other chapters all feature Daniel, his friends sometimes added as sidekicks. By excluding Daniel from chapter 3, it is clear that others besides him were also faithful to God in the face of adversity. The whole book is not therefore about one hero, and a possible misconception of the character of the exile is corrected. *This* is why Daniel is absent from chapter 3. The answer lies with the literary purpose of the story, not with any reconstructed history.

The manner in which theology is implanted into the heart and mind of the believer is through the telling of story. A picture is worth a thousand words. It is one thing to encourage the faithful to stand firm during trials. One may rationally explain that an eternity in heaven is worth suffering now; one may logically delineate the ramifications of the fall and why tribulations are inevitable; one may systematically make all the right arguments. But these lessons pale in comparison to the image of Daniel in the lions' den and the admonition, "Dare to be a Daniel!" In this respect, the stories are very similar to apocalypse.

RE-IMAGING THE WORLD

Apocalyptic literature is produced by oppressed people-groups. Daniel was written by Jews suffering in exile. Revelation was written by and for persecuted Christians. The apocalyptic intertestamental literature was written by Jews under the heel of foreign powers. Even the earlier grandfather of apocalyptic, Mesopotamian apocalyptic literature, was written by an oppressed class.² This subjugation helps to explain the hideous images of tyrannical evil and the tortured cries for relief that characterize this material. Salvation is in the distant future. Apocalyptic is designed to comfort the oppressed, to encourage the faithful in distressful times.

Apocalyptic is written for those who feel powerless or helpless, under pressure, marginalized, left out; for those who become the objects of scorn and ridicule for their faith; for those who suffer and cry out, "How long?" It is for anyone who feels burned out and tired, who wonders if life is passing him by. It is for all who grieve, who do not get out of life what they expect, who are frustrated and angry. In a word, apocalyptic is written for those who are in need of *perspective*.

At a recent funeral service, I was asked to read Revelation 21:1–7, about the new heavens and earth, everything made new, and an inheritance for those who endure to the end. Revelation focuses on the conflict between Good and Evil, and who finally wins. One young man occasionally suffered from anxiety and fearfulness late at night; in those times he read Revelation through from beginning to end. The theme that came through loud and clear was *victory*—therefore, there was nothing to fear. This effect on the reader is exactly the opposite of the reaction of those who fear end-time tribulation and so hoard goods and munitions, inspired by their teachers’ misunderstanding of apocalyptic.

If John’s book were read in one sitting, even though the symbolism would be elusive, the overall message would be clear: God overcomes evil. The one word that cries out from the book is “Hope!” Daniel gives the same message, intertwined with intertestamental history, so that as its meaning unfolds through time, the saints’ confidence may increase, not decrease. The book of Daniel was produced in crisis. Reading through it, one cannot miss that, despite appearances, God is in control. The righteous will win in the end.

Suffering and pain are not merely mental experiences, they are also deeply emotional. Larger-than-life images capture this visceral response to extreme circumstances. Apocalyptic helps to ameliorate nerve-racking anxiety by pointing the victimized community to an otherworldly hope—a salvation not discovered in this place and this time. For this reason, the value or meaning of the symbol is difficult to unpack. Explaining the symbol along rational grounds paints only a pale shadow of the substantial, awe-inspiring Symbol in apocalyptic. In Revelation, the picture of nations drunk on the blood of the martyrs is not something that can simply be explicated! The symbols are

intended to have renewing power in the life of the believing community.

Apocalyptic is “addressed to the imagination.”³ It presents a picture of the future, a feel for it, a biased prescience of what it will be like for the saints of God. There is no one-for-one correspondence between the vision and the interpretation. *The visions are interpretations of life.* A Godzilla-like horrific beast would not have the power to seduce—but that is what Rome *is*, despite the grand buildings and awesome army on the march. Reality is not what is visible, but the invisible forces that stand behind history and are seen more clearly in visions than in history books.

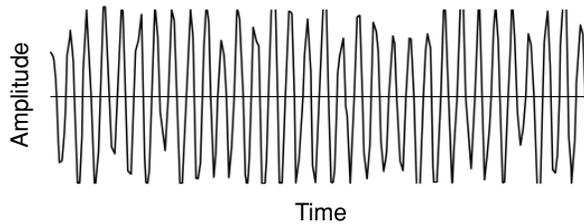
For example, recall the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center towers. In the initial aftermath, Christian and non-Christian alike did not know how to deal with the destruction—and yet they needed to find a meaning in it. Paradigms were thrown at it until it made sense: Osama Bin Laden is the evil that calls for a swift and terrible response; because of homosexuality and abortion, God no longer protects America; Americans should recognize terrorism as a fact of life; opportunities to capture Bin Laden had been squandered; Satan’s face could be discerned in the smoke. Each paradigm carried much emotional freight, for a basic human need is to find some kind of sense in suffering. The destruction of the towers and the Pentagon was the mystery; the paradigms tenaciously offered were the desperately needed interpretations. In a similar way, apocalyptic provides a way of making sense of tragic events past, present, and future.

TRANSFORMATION

One way to understand how to read apocalyptic is with the model of a mathematical transformation from the field of communication theory. In the “time domain” a radio

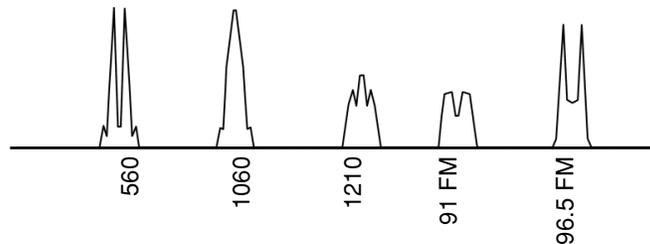
signal appears as random fluctuations; various broadcasts are mashed together and cannot be distinguished, as seen in figure 2. In order to discern individual broadcasts, a Fourier transform must be performed. Once transformed

Figure 2
Time Domain of Radio Signal



into the frequency domain, the true character of the radio signal can be readily distinguished, as seen in figure 3. Each radio broadcast can now be tuned to play on a radio. In one domain the signal has one appearance; to see it clearly it must be transformed into another domain. Yet it is exactly the same signal—seen as it appears in two domains.

Figure 3
Fourier Transform in Frequency Domain



In Jesus' parable of the sower, there is a literal sower sowing literal seed on four kinds of literal earth. This is the parabolic domain. Once transformed into the existential and historical domain, there is no longer a sower but an evangelist, no longer seed but the word of God, no longer birds but Satan. In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, there is Giant Despair, a "real" monster; when transformed, there

is no longer any great threatening creature, but rather despondency and hopelessness. Moses beats Pilgrim with a rod; after transformation there are only guilt and moral failure when trying to keep the law. Crossing a river, when transformed, is Pilgrim's death.

In the domain of the book of Revelation there are lamps, incense, robes, seven heads, 144,000, the mark of the beast, and Satan bound for one thousand years. In the existential and historical domain, there are vital churches (1:20), the prayers of saints (5:8), righteous deeds (19:8), hills and kings (17:10–11), a vast multitude (7:3–9), 666 or man's number (13:18), and the gospel going forth into the whole world and a call to missions (20:1–6). Ezekiel's valley of dry bones or great temple must be transformed into the domain of history and experience—this is its interpretation.

The images must be transformed from the apocalyptic domain into the human existential and historical domain. A picture is worth a thousand words. Apocalyptic takes the teachings of the rest of the Bible and expresses them with unforgettable images. (A sound hermeneutical principle is to interpret unclear passages of Scripture in the light of clear ones, not the other way around.) To suffering saints, sometimes a cold, scientific list of the facts of life does not elicit a movement of the heart toward trust in God; a picture may produce better spiritual fruit. Hope is elsewhere; hope is otherworldly; hope is not rooted in understandable events. God is transcendent; God is close at hand; the future is certain and true.

In the book of Daniel, there is no millennium, no systematic presentation of angelology or demonology, no Satan; and only cryptic and tangential referents to the second advent of Christ and a final oppressor of the saints. Nevertheless, some scholars cannot resist using Revelation as an interpretive grid and importing dispensational theology into the text. For example, Stephen Miller writes in his commentary, "At first glance one might receive the

false impression that the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked will occur simultaneously. . . . But this is impossible in light of other Scripture, particularly the parallel passage of Rev 20:4–6.”⁴ This shows a lack of sensitivity to Daniel. One should ask why the righteous and the wicked rise together in Daniel. What truth does that convey? Miller would vigorously argue that Daniel is “true” when it touches on history, but he flinches when Daniel touches on eschatology! If Daniel is untrustworthy with eschatology, how can it be trusted with history?

Sensitivity to the book of Daniel comes through paying attention to its unique character. For example, there is a reason the name of Yahweh occurs only in the prayer of Daniel and nowhere else in the book. The goal of interpretation should be to feel the force of Daniel, not to flatten it out with assumed theology.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. How have you tried to find meaning in tragic events?
2. In what ways do the books of Daniel and Revelation help to explain how God can be in control even while bad things happen?
3. How is apocalyptic literature like Jesus’ parables?
4. How does apocalyptic imagery touch us on a more visceral level than straightforward doctrinal statements?