

THE WHOLE STORY

From Genesis to Revelation

Daniel 7:1-28

Introduction:

So far this year studying through *The Whole Story* we have primarily focused on narrative passages in the Bible. This week will be a bit different!

We have all heard the saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Many CEOs devote themselves to communicating a clear vision, or mental picture, to their employees to get hundreds of people focused on a singular goal. Apocalyptic literature in the Bible is more like watching a movie than reading a story (or narrative). Because apocalyptic literature is so different than narrative many Bible readers are intimidated by or skip these parts of the Bible.

This Week’s Main Focus:

To help us read, understand, love and grow from apocalyptic sections of the Bible.

The purpose of apocalyptic literature is to pull back the curtain on the physical world (that we primarily interact with) so that we can more clearly see the unseen, spiritual world and God’s purpose in using the spiritual world to bring the physical world to its ultimate conclusion. The primary way God does this is by the use of symbols. Symbols are meant to be taken figuratively (generally representing something else) and not literally. This week we will read about four great beasts coming out of a sea. This is not warning believers of future, hybrid mutant beast but of four very real kingdoms that will have different terrifying aspects to God’s people.

Another interesting aspect of symbolism in the Bible is that there tends to be a fairly consistent flow of similar symbols. This week we will not do a comparative study of similar symbols in different parts of the Bible (though that is a beneficial use of one’s time); instead we will focus on the symbols in Daniel 7. Avoid the temptation to “speculate” when studying apocalyptic literature - rather, let Scripture interpret Scripture. God has already given the key to unlocking what he is saying in the Bible. Take note of these symbols so that as they pop up again in other parts of Scripture you are ready to have a clearer picture of both symbols God is using to convey his message of salvation through his word.

Don’t give up reading Daniel in chapter 7 and don’t give up reading the Bible when you come to apocalyptic sections - the whole thing is meant for you. You can do this; your group can do this. The Holy Spirit will guide you!

Introduction Question:

1. Do you prefer books, movies, or television for entertainment? What is your favorite genre within that type of entertainment?

- Examples: Books - biographies. Television - crime dramas. Movies - science fiction.

Bible Study Questions: Read Daniel 7:1-28

2. List and describe the different elements or symbols of Daniel's vision in verses 2 to 14.

3. After this amazing vision, Daniel asks for help to understand it. What clarity does the angel's message bring to Daniel about these three symbols and their meaning?

4. Even worldly power (the beast) looked strong and irresistible to Daniel - and they still do today. What do verses 9 and 10 remind us of?

5. Look at verses 23 through 28. Why do verses 23 to 25 leave Daniel with the feelings he expresses in verse 28?

6. How is this vision meant to reshape Daniel's thinking about what God is doing in the world?

Group Application Questions:

7. How should Daniel's dream reshape our expectations of our present and future circumstances?

8. What parts of the Bible do you tend to avoid reading and why? What was helpful during your small group time to assist you in reading apocalyptic sections of the Bible in the future?

Prayer: Read Psalm 119:97-104

- Thank God that his commandments make us wiser than our enemies.
- Confess one way, this week, that you have not obeyed God's commands.
- Tell God one, specific way that his word has been life and a blessing to you this week.
- Ask God to increase you knowledge, understanding and love for his word.