

SHARING SCRIPTURE

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The Bible and Prophecy

For use: June 7 - 13

Texts: Daniel 2:27-45; John 14:29; Numbers 14:34; Daniel 7:1-25; Daniel 8:14; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

A popular meme making the social media rounds these days states, “So in retrospect, in 2015, not a single person got the answer right to ‘Where do you see yourself five years from now?’” In fact, we had no idea in January what life would be like in June. Sociologists are now working to predict what life will be like post-pandemic.

The Irish Times asked several people how their lives have changed and what they are looking forward to as we emerge from the pandemic’s upheaval. Mother-to-be Maura McElhone is discouraged because of the ban on hospital visits and social gatherings such as baby showers. She hopes the baby is overdue to give more time for life to return to some kind of normalcy. Dr. John Ball states that half of his calls currently involve mental health issues. He hopes that a year from now people will not take life, health and happiness for granted. And Reverend Maria Jansson bemoans the fact that people can’t gather together for support, especially during times of personal crisis. She is looking forward to just “sitting in the sun, having a cup of coffee with a friend. That’s heaven.” [1]

Predictions of life in the future are humanly impossible to make with any measure of accuracy. We can hope and pray, and that optimism can give us the measure of encouragement we need to survive day-to-day. The purpose of Bible prophecy is just that—a boost to remind us that this world and our personal lives are in the palm of God’s hand. Jesus said in John 14:29, “I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.” The purpose of prophecy is not to scare people into the kingdom with nightmarish visions of beasts and turmoil, but to remind us of God’s omniscience and omnipotence.

This week's lesson gives us a primer on some of the essential principles of prophetic interpretation. We see the time-tested interpretive school of historicism established in Daniel chapter 2. Historicism is foundational to the Protestant Reformation and to our identity as Seventh-day Adventists. As we see the pieces of Nebuchadnezzar's dream fit into the puzzle of history, it gives us confidence that the future fulfillment of other prophecies are sure.

Additionally, Bible scholars have accepted the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation for centuries, and it helped the reformers establish the identity of the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8. It also confirms that Jesus arrived on the scene when the fullness of time had come for the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. It is true that God gave prophetic messages with some bizarre signs and symbols. It is for the same reason that Jesus spoke in parables: to confound the hard-hearted while opening the eyes of honest truth-seekers.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/after-covid-19-what-kind-of-life-will-be-waiting-on-the-other-side-1.4230645>

For Reflection

Connecting: What do you think life will be like post-pandemic? What will stay the same? What will change? What are you most looking forward to as we emerge from our restrictions?

Sharing: Which statement best describes your understanding of the Investigative Judgment?

1. I understand it as well as possible and accept it as God's truth
2. I think we have it wrong, but I can't explain why
3. I have a limited grasp on it, and I'm okay with that, but there must be more to it that we haven't yet learned
4. It is totally out of harmony with the gospel and therefore it can't be true
5. It fits perfectly with the gospel of the kingdom because it confirms that judgment is pronounced in favor of the saints of the Most High
6. Other:

Applying: What have you learned about yourself and others during this time of COVID quarantines and restrictions? Have you had opportunities to serve and bless others during this time? What meaningful service activities can your group continue to perform after life resumes more normally?

Valuing: What is your favorite Bible promise for the future? What prophecy do you most look forward to seeing fulfilled? Share your thoughts with another person and pray for each other to stay strong as you move forward with God's plans for your lives.

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