

Episode 9

Living In Light Of The Last Days: Lessons To Be Learned (Part 1)

The two main questions that people ask about the Christian faith.

First, is it true? Second, can it work for me?

After our initial introductory episode of “Today in Bible Prophecy,” in the following episodes, 2-8, we gave indisputable evidence that the Bible is God’s Word. We saw that there was no other way to explain the precise fulfillments of these many predictions. Indeed, some have already been supernaturally fulfilled in the past and others are being miraculously fulfilled right now.

We concluded that God has provided irrefutable evidence to the first question that people ask about the Christian faith, “Is it true?” The answer: Yes, indeed it is.

Now we’re going to look at the second question that people ask, “Can it work for me?”

The following answer comes from our book, *God Wants Us To Know The Future: An Introduction To Bible Prophecy*. It is from Question 31.

Living In Light Of The Last Days: Lessons To Be Learned (Part 1)

How should we conduct our lives in light of the times in which we are living? What does the Lord expect from us?

In other words, what practical steps should believers take as the coming of the Lord draws near? What lessons should we learn from our study of Bible prophecy?

There are, indeed, many lessons that we can learn about how to live the Christian life successfully in light of these last days. They include the following:

Lesson 1: We Can Understand The Times In Which We Are Living!

This first lesson is primary! The Bible itself emphasizes that we *can* know, and we *can* understand the times in which we are living. Therefore, we should take the time to understand precisely where we are in God’s prophetic timetable.

We read about this promise in the Book of Daniel. He was told the following:

But you, Daniel, close up these words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will dash about, and knowledge will increase (Daniel 12:4 NET).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

But you, Daniel, keep this prophecy a secret; seal up the book until the time of the end, when many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase (Daniel 12:4 NLT).

This passage should be highly instructive for us. Daniel was told to “seal up the book *until* the time of the end.” Though many people would attempt to understand the meaning of these things which were predicted, they would not be able to.

Indeed, the prophet was told that it would only be “at the time of the end” that believers will understand what is taking place with respect to the events of the “last days.” This is because “knowledge shall increase.”

Specifically, it is talking about knowledge of Bible prophecy which includes the predictions contained in the Book of Daniel.

Therefore, those who would live at the time of the end would be in a unique position to make sense out of what was going on in the world.

The Question From The Heavenly Being

Furthermore, in this context, there was also a question from one heavenly being to another heavenly being about the things that Daniel was told:

One said to the man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the river, “When will the end of these wondrous events occur?” (Daniel 12:6 NET).

In this instance, we find that one of these heavenly beings was ignorant as to when these predicted events would take place, so he had to ask another one of the heavenly beings about the timing.

The point is this: this heavenly being wanted to know what the Lord had in store for the future, and we should want to know, too!

Daniel Did Not Know

Next, we find that Daniel himself admitted that he did not understand the things he was hearing:

I heard, but I did not understand. So I said, “Sir, what will happen after these things?” (Daniel 12:8 NET)

This is profound. To put this into perspective, let us precisely recall the ministry of Daniel the prophet.

Daniel’s Ministry

This man was given more prophetic insight into the future than any other man who has ever lived, with the possible exception of John in the Book of Revelation.

For example, Daniel interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Chapter 2) which told of four successive Gentile kingdoms coming to the earth, to eventually be replaced by the fifth kingdom, the kingdom of God.

Daniel also received his own vision of these kingdoms in (Chapter 7) with further information given about each of them, particularly the last one.

In the ninth chapter, Daniel was given specific information on the exact time of the Messiah's First Coming to the world.

These are just some of the many predictions that Daniel recorded in his book.

Daniel Would Not Be Able To Understand

Yet, Daniel was told that he would *not* be able to understand the meaning of certain predicted future events that he himself recorded. We read:

He said, "Go, Daniel. For these matters are closed and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made clean, and refined, but the wicked will go on being wicked. None of the wicked will understand, though the wise will understand (Daniel 12:9-10 NET).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

But he said, "Go now, Daniel, for what I have said is kept secret and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, cleansed, and refined by these trials. But the wicked will continue in their wickedness, and none of them will understand. Only those who are wise will know what it means (Daniel 12:9-10 NLT).

Please note that it would only be those living at the time of the end that would understand what was taking place.

We should pay close attention to what is said here—it is again emphasized that these truths about the last days are closed up and sealed "until" the time of the end! At that time, the "wise will understand" what is taking place, but the wicked will never understand.

In other words, at the time of the end, the wise—those who take the Bible seriously—will understand the significance of many of the major world events. These particular events that we read about, the things that we see happening, will all make sense in light of what the Scripture has to say about the "last days."

Consequently, the lesson for us is this: We can understand the times in which we are living *if* we take seriously what the Bible has to say about this subject.

Lesson 2: We Should Be Thankful and Humbled By The Privilege Of Living In These Times

This brings us to another lesson—we should truly appreciate the fact that we are living at the time of the end of this present age!

The Testimony Of Jesus

Jesus' words to His disciples should inspire us. He testified that what they saw and heard fulfilled the desire of all of those who came before them:

But your eyes are blessed because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it (Matthew 13:16-17 NET).

Therefore, the generation that heard the words of Jesus, and saw the miraculous things which He did, was a special generation. Indeed, there has been none other like it, either before or since.

In the same way, since the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven some two thousand years ago, each generation of believers has been looking to see the specific signs of the "last days." But they have not seen them.

The fact that they are happening today, right in front of our very eyes, should cause us to be thankful, as well as humbled.

As with the disciples of Jesus, we are seeing things that no previous generation was allowed to see or experience.

Therefore, the second lesson that we should learn, as we study the subject of Bible prophecy and begin to understand the times in which we are living, is that we should appreciate the honor and privilege that all of us have in living at this time in history.

Indeed, we are seeing the sorts of things that people in the last two thousand years have longed to see but did not see, and we are hearing things that these individuals have longed to hear but did not hear.

Consequently, we should be both thankful, as well as humbled, for the privilege of living in these last days.

In addition, since we are living at this special time in history, it should motivate each of us to be that person that the Lord wants us to be.

Lesson 3: We Should Interpret The Prophetic Passages At Face Value

At His First Coming, the Lord expected the people to understand the words of the Hebrew Scriptures as well as His words, at face value, or literally.

We read about this in a conversation Jesus had with the religious rulers:

Now when the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test Jesus, they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He said, "When evening comes you say, 'It will be fair weather, because the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, because the sky is red and darkening.' You know how to judge correctly the appearance of the sky, but you cannot evaluate the signs of the times (Matthew 16:1-4 NET).

Jesus emphasized that the predicted signs were there for everyone to see. Indeed, the Lord fulfilled them precisely as they were written. Everything that was predicted about His coming was fulfilled and it was fulfilled literally.

Consequently, there was no excuse for ignoring these signs. However, the people of Jesus' day missed the "signs of the times."

In fact, as Jesus was entering Jerusalem during the last week of His life, He wept over the city for not understanding the events that were taking place:

Now when Jesus approached and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "If you had only known on this day, even you, the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:41 NET).

Since the people did not pay attention to the clear teaching of Scripture, with respect to the fulfillment of the events that were transpiring right in front of their eyes, these truths would now be hidden from them. Instead of the blessings they could have received, judgment would be coming!

The Basic Rule Of Bible Interpretation

This brings us to a very simple rule of Bible interpretation:

If the literal sense, makes good sense, then seek no other sense, lest you come up with nonsense.

In other words, if we can interpret a passage in Scripture in the normal, literal sense, then we should do so.

Indeed, when a person examines the Bible and interprets what is written, including predictions about the future, in their normal, literal sense, then they will appreciate the fact that the God of the Bible, and He alone, has accurately predicted hundreds of events that have already taken place.

Therefore, the lesson here is that the Lord means what He says and says what He means!

Furthermore, when we are to read the Bible, we are to read it at face-value. In other words we do not have to read between the lines to find hidden messages. Paul wrote:

Our letters have been straightforward, and there is nothing written between the lines and nothing you can't understand (2 Corinthians 1:13 NLT)

The Amplified Bible puts it this way:

For we write you nothing other than what you read and understand [there is no double meaning in what we say]. And I hope you will [accurately] understand [divine things] until the end (2 Corinthians 1:13 Amplified Bible)

To sum up, we go to the Bible for our information about what the Lord has to tell us. In doing so, we read the Scriptures in a straightforward manner. There are no hidden messages or any double meanings in the text.

Lesson 4: We Are Not To Go Beyond That Which Is Written

This next lesson is especially important: Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

I have applied these things to myself and Apollos because of you, brothers and sisters, so that through us you may learn “not to go beyond what is written,” so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of the one against the other (1 Corinthians 4:6 NET).

It is so crucial that we understand this truth. So many foolish and ridiculous claims are made about the Bible and the “last days.” This happens because people “go beyond that which is written.”

In other words, they look outside of Scripture to find examples of the fulfillment of prophetic events, including so-called “signs in the heavens,” or they make “mathematical calculations” that supposedly tell us specific truths about the exact time of the coming of the Lord.

In doing so, they are basically saying that the Bible, the Word of God, is not enough. In other words, we need these outside signs or calculations to tell us when the Lord will appear again.

This is dangerous because such an idea contradicts an important biblical concept—the doctrine of the “sufficiency of Scripture.”

Explaining The Doctrine Of The Sufficiency Of Scripture

The sufficiency of Scripture can be simply defined as follows: In the Bible *alone*, God has given humanity all things that are necessary for the proper understanding of who He is, who we are, how He has acted in the past, what exactly He expects from us, as well as all we need to know about coming events.

The basic idea behind the sufficiency of Scripture is that nothing else needs to be revealed to humanity about God, or His plan for the human race. The Bible is the record of all of the things that God believed humanity needed to know about Him.

In other words, the Scriptures are complete and sufficient for belief and behavior. Nothing needs to be added to them!

The following points need to be made about the sufficiency of Scripture, in particular, with respect to predictions in the Bible about the time of the end. Some of them are found in our book, *What Everyone Needs To Know About The Bible*: Question 23.

1. Scripture Alone Has The Answers To Life’s Most Important Questions

The Bible contains the things which God thought that we humans should know on a number of different topics of His choosing. Consequently, His teaching on *any* subject is sufficient for us.

Indeed, we do *not* have to go elsewhere to find answers. In fact, the Scripture says the faith has been once-and-for-all entrusted to believers. Jude wrote:

Dear friends, although I have been eager to write to you about our common salvation, I now feel compelled instead to write to encourage you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3 NET).

Therefore, people are able to search the Bible for themselves and find out these important truths about God in its pages, and in them alone. His Word is enough.

To the point, the Scriptures provide us with everything that we need to know about the central questions of life: past, present, and future. It is where we go to find the answers.

2. Everything That We Need To Know About God Has Already Been Revealed To Us

While the Scriptures contain everything humanity “needs to know” about God, it does not reveal everything that we may “desire to know.” The truth that God has revealed is sufficient, but it is certainly *not* exhaustive. There are many things that God has not told us. Moses wrote:

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29:29 NIV).

Therefore, many things about God are still unknown to humanity. In fact, there are countless questions that we will not be able to have answers to in this life.

Consequently, when we are attempting to understand Scripture; and, in particular, events relating to the “last days,” we must understand our limitations.

Indeed, there are things that the Lord has not seen fit to reveal. We must accept this. We are not to try to add to that which has already been revealed.

3. We Do Not Need Some Religious Authority Or Prophecy Specialist To Interpret Scripture For Us

Sometimes it is argued that the Scriptures are not clear in-and-of-themselves. Thus, believers need some type of external authority to properly interpret and understand its teaching. This may come from some church, a creed, or the teaching of some church leader.

However, the facts say otherwise. The Bible is able to be understood by the great majority of the people. Hence, every believer should study the Scriptures for themselves.

In fact, nowhere do we find the Scripture telling believers that they should only listen to some special spiritual leader to know the truth.

This is especially true when it comes to end-times issues. We do not need some individual, or some prophecy specialist, to give us “the true explanation” of things that the Scripture has not revealed. The Bible is a sufficient source.

4. The Lord Would Not Give Humanity A Confused Revelation About Any Subject He Covers

There is something else. It is unreasonable to say, as some have done, that God would give humanity a revelation of Himself that could not be understood by the masses.

To the contrary, the Bible is written in such a way that people in every age are able to understand it. Jesus made this point clear when He compared the nature of human fathers to that of our heavenly Father:

You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Luke 11:11-13 NLT).

He does indeed give us good gifts. Hence, our heavenly Father would not give us a confusing revelation about Himself that we could not understand.

Therefore, the lesson to be learned here is that the Bible itself is a sufficient source for human beings for everything that we need to know about events that will take place in the future. Only the Bible reveals what will occur—we do not need to “go beyond that which is written.”

Consequently, nothing needs to be added to Scripture for us to understand the times in which we are living.

So summing up, not only is there sufficient evidence to believe that the Christian faith is true, the Christian can work for each and every one of us, that is, if we give it the chance.

These are just a few of lessons that we need to learn in order to live successfully in God’s eyes in these last days, but they are by no means the only ones. In fact, we have ten more lessons that we want to give you with respect to living in light of the last days but that will have to wait till our next episode.