

A Principle 1: Read with the right attitude.

- ❖ There is a blessing for those who read prophecy (Rev. 1:3a.) However, very few feel blessed by reading the prophecies contained in Revelation, Daniel, Isaiah, Zechariah, etc.
- ❖ Why does this happen? Because they don't read them with the right attitude. When Jesus said, "Let the reader understand" (Matthew 24:15,) he was telling us that we are capable of understanding them, but under certain conditions:
 - Be willing to heed what prophecy teaches us (Rev. 1:3 NIV)
 - Recognize that we do not have the knowledge necessary to understand them, but rather we depend on divine wisdom to do so (Mt. 11:25; Jer. 9:23)
- ❖ Reading prophecy to explain my perspective on how certain events will unfold, or without perceiving God's voice in it, is not a correct approach.

B Principle 2: Discover the main theme.

- ❖ The psalmist acknowledged that he could not comprehend God's knowledge, for His knowledge is infinite (Ps. 139:6; 147:5.) Paul tells us that God's actions are "unsearchable," that is, impossible to study and understand (Rom. 11:33.)
- ❖ It is as impossible for us to understand the thought of God as it is for us to touch the moon with our hand (Is. 55:9.)
- ❖ Fortunately, God has made an effort to come down to our level and help us understand something of His thoughts. In the Bible, the Word of God, even the simplest mind can perceive God's love and the salvation He offers us (2 Tim. 3:15.)
- ❖ The Plan of Salvation is the main theme of the Bible and, of course, of the prophecies contained therein.

C Principle 3: Leverage science.

- ❖ Along with the command to seal the book—to hide its contents—until the time of the end, Daniel was told of an increase in the search for knowledge—the knowledge necessary—to understand it (Dan. 12:4.)
- ❖ When Jesus became incarnate, this seal began to be broken. Some of Daniel's prophecies could now be understood (Matthew 24:15.) Later, they were supplemented by other prophecies written in an "unsealed" book: Revelation (Revelation 22:10.)
- ❖ In 1798, when Napoleon ended the papal hegemony that had maintained its iron grip for centuries, many saw this as the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies. God had completely opened the book of Daniel, offering the knowledge necessary to understand it.
- ❖ Not only were the prophecies better understood since then, but other topics (the Sabbath, or the state of the dead, for example) were also correctly understood again.
- ❖ Let us ask the Author of prophecy to give us the necessary science to understand it.

D Principle 4: Holistic and contextual.

- ❖ Reading prophecies in isolation will only lead to fantastic interpretations, far removed from their true meaning.
- ❖ Jesus taught us to study the Bible holistically, that is, seen as a whole (Luke 24:27.)
- ❖ Taking only one part (for example, a prophecy) and drawing conclusions based solely on that part is a flawed way to study God's Word. The correct approach is to compare these texts with others that address the same topic in various parts of the Bible.
- ❖ Another point to consider is the context, that is, the context surrounding the text being studied. What do the texts before and after it say? Who wrote it, when, and why?
- ❖ Taking a passage out of context can make it say whatever you want, but not the truth it wants to teach us.

E Principle 5: Meaning of symbols.

- ❖ Biblical prophecies are replete with symbols and images. In a few cases, the prophecy itself tells us its meaning (Dan. 8:20; Rev. 1:20.) However, in most cases, its meaning is not explained.
- ❖ Trying to take these images literally is absurd. Jesus does not have a sharp, two-edged sword coming out of his mouth (Rev. 1:16.)
- ❖ To understand these symbols, we must turn to other parts of the Bible where similar ideas or symbols are used. Let's look at some examples:
 - What do the horns of the dread beast in Daniel 7:7-8 mean?
 - They are kings, and the kingdoms they represent (Dan. 7:24; 8:21)
 - What does the sword coming out of Jesus' mouth in Revelation 1:16 mean?
 - The Bible (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12)
 - Who is the woman in Revelation 12:1?
 - God's Faithful People (Eph. 5:31-32; 2 Cor. 11:2)
- ❖ God has made sure that whoever searches the prophecies is able to understand them.