

TODAY'S MESSAGE: "CHOOSE TO HIKE THE HARD TEXTS"

Pastor Erick Loh, Lead Pastor September 10, 2017

Text: 2 Peter 3:14-18

Structure:

Pursue holiness and reject false teachings (14-15a)

Because Paul's letters support these things (15b-16)

Reject false teachings and pursue holiness (17-18)

Instructions: Two Parallel Commands (14-15a, 17-18)

Reasoning: Four Theses (15b-16)

1.

2.

3.

4.

Application: Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature (see handout)

- A BRIEF GUIDE TO -
Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature

LOCATION: WHERE DOES APOCALYPTIC LIT APPEAR IN THE BIBLE?

1. The book of Daniel, especially chapters 7-12
2. The book of Zechariah, especially chapters 1-6
3. The book of Revelation

CHARACTERISTICS: HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE APOCALYPTIC LIT?

1. It responds to persecution in the lives of the readers
2. It utilizes a narrative framework
3. Heavenly mysteries are related through a spiritual being
4. Human history is viewed from God's perspective
5. It uses extensive symbolism and colorful metaphors to describe real events and shake up our normal way of thinking
6. It has a dualistic conception of history that sharply contrasts the present sinful world with the world to come

OT CONTEXT: WHAT WERE THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL EXPERIENCING?

1. They were in exile, experiencing the curses God promised he would bring if they were unfaithful to their covenant with him (e.g. Deut 28:15-68)
2. They were waiting for the day when God would fulfill his covenant promises to restore them from exile (1 Kings 8:46-53; Jer 29:10-14)

HISTORY: WHY DID THIS GENRE OF LITERATURE ARISE?

1. Knowing God's perspective in difficult times fuels hope
2. A heavenly being is needed to relate God's perspective to humans
3. Without symbolic language, it is hard to describe the far distant future, grand events, or divine realities
4. Symbolic language is well-suited to describe a real event and give it meaning at the same time (think: political cartoons)
5. In ancient Israel, symbols came from events they were familiar with, such as creation (e.g. Jer 4:23 cf. Gen 1:2) and the Exodus

CHALLENGES: WHY IS APOCALYPTIC LIT HARD FOR US UNDERSTAND?

1. This genre of literature does not exist today, so we aren't naturally familiar with how this genre communicates truth
2. We aren't as familiar with the OT, so we don't recognize the significance of symbols when they appear
3. We aren't as familiar with the OT, so we don't recognize places in the NT that reference OT apocalyptic literature
4. Schools of thought on interpreting apocalyptic literature are numerous, deeply entrenched, and hotly disputed

STRATEGIES FOR READING APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

1. Pray for help and insight by the Holy Spirit
2. Read with humility
3. Read over and over again
4. Read in light of the original audience
5. Don't read in an overly wooden fashion
6. Remember that symbols are not always linear or literal
7. Focus on the main point more than the details
8. Don't be afraid to be confused; ask questions!
9. Read in light of the whole Bible
10. Ask for help: pastors/elders, study Bibles, commentaries

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN READING APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

1. Primary question: what is the author trying to communicate?
2. What is the structure of the story? Where does it start/stop?
3. What is the main point of the story?
4. Is there any interpretation given? If the passage interprets some symbols for you, then you already know what those symbols mean and that they are related to the main point
5. Use narrative analysis:
 - a. What is the plot conflict?
 - b. Who are the main characters?
 - c. What changes as the story unfold?
 - d. What is the final resolution?
6. What event (specific or general) is being described by the symbol?
7. What does that symbol tell us about the meaning of the event?
8. What was the situation of the original audience?
9. How does this episode relate to the rest of the book?
10. Does this story draw upon images or events earlier in the Bible?
11. Is this story referenced by later passages in the Bible?
12. What does this passage tell us about God? About humanity?
13. How does this passage relate to Christ and the gospel?
14. What does the author encouraging us to do? What kind of person is he encouraging us to be?
15. What challenges might we anticipate if we attempt to apply this passage's main point and how does the passage help us face those challenges?

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Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.
2 Timothy 2:15
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