

# The Compass

Week 48

OT Readings: Daniel 2:24-11:1

NT Readings: 1 Peter 4:7 – 1 John 3:6

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## Things to Watch for in Your Readings this Week

### Old Testament

- Daniel is a far more complex book than it first appears. It is writing of a particular kind, called “apocalyptic.” This type of literature is written for God’s people in times of crisis to encourage them that God has history in hand.<sup>1</sup>
- Daniel’s structure is easy to follow. Part one (chapters 1-6) is mostly “court stories” of Daniel and his friends; part 2 (chapters 7-12) visions of the rise and fall of various empires.

### New Testament

- 2 Peter is a “farewell speech” to remind the readers of the need for godly living and to take care that they not be led astray by false teachers.
- In 1 John, John writes in the context of false teaching (“they went out from us” 1 John 2:19) urging his readers to stay true to the truth they have received.<sup>2</sup>

## Highlight of the Week: Who is God?

**Daniel 2:44-45. 7:13-14, 18.** The pressures and disappointments of their day may have caused Daniel’s readers to doubt that God was doing anything at all in history.<sup>3</sup> Vision of God’s coming and ultimately triumphant kingdom were meant to encourage and reassure – “God is at work, don’t miss it!”<sup>4</sup>

God’s kingdom, His reign, might be missed and overlooked, even by us. In Jesus own day, when He came proclaiming that the “time was now” for God’s kingdom rule; Jesus message was misunderstood (John 6:15).<sup>5</sup> For some American Evangelicals, everything from “health & wealth” to “rapture fever” endangers us from seeing the real truth of the kingdom – though it is *alive* in our midst – Jesus kingdom today marches forward, quietly and unobtrusively, to its magnificent conclusion.

The question for us is simple, “Do we understand what God is doing in our own generation (the kingdom of God!) and are we fully engaged to see His purposes brought about?” Can God say of us, as did Paul of David, that “we have served the purpose of God in our own generation?”<sup>6</sup>

## Application: “What about me? How does this apply?”

**1 John 1:1-3.** John’s language in describing their relationship with Jesus is very experiential, “heard, seen, touched;” No doubt it should be, they lived and walked with Him for three years. But I think John is saying more. Notice 1:3. John proclaims to his readers those first disciples’ *past* experience with Jesus so that his readers can now have a *present* experience with Jesus *and* with John, “so that you might have fellowship with us.”<sup>7</sup> What kind of “fellowship?” “Our fellowship (koinonia = participation/close relationship) is with the Father and the Son...” In other words, the invitation is this: “What we have experienced with Jesus in the past, when He was with us in the flesh, we *still* are experiencing (though He is not physically present) and we invite you into that close circle of intimate relationship and experience with the Father and the Son.”<sup>8</sup> What they experienced with the living Jesus continued and they are inviting us to the same!

Is my relationship so alive and dynamic that I can say back to John, “My joy really *is* full because of Who this living Jesus is to me!”

## Difficult Question of the Week

**1 John 2:1 with 3:4-10. Q. “Does John really mean to say that Christians are not to sin??”**

It seems remarkable that such a question need even be asked. Sin is the most destructive and horrendous thing ever unleashed on God’s created order; it is abhorrent and devastates God’s heart. NO ONE should be sinning!

Now, I know that is not the question here; rather it is, “Is it possible that we could live without sinning?” John seems to think so. Any full discussion of the nature of sin is beyond us, but John’s “if” is quite telling (2:1) – sin is not to be the norm for the Christian, in fact, sin belongs to the realm of the devil (1 Jn. 4:8). While this may seem to be some sort of “smoke and mirrors” perfectionism, that is not John’s intention. Rather, it seems, he believes that as we walk in close relationship with God, *sin as a habitual way of life* will end.<sup>9</sup> This should encourage us – we can live in the way God created us and live to bring joy to God’s heart.

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<sup>1</sup> The book of Revelation in the NT has apocalyptic characteristics. For more information on how to interpret this genre, see Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, 251-252. Specifically on Daniel, Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, 204-210.

<sup>2</sup> 1, 2 and 3 John are written by John, one of Jesus’ original twelve and the author of the gospel of John. In 1 John, “The primary concerns are three: the Incarnation, love for brothers and sisters...and the relationship between sin and being God’s children.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, 412.

<sup>3</sup> The date of Daniel is disputed; from 6<sup>th</sup> century BC to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Regardless, this entire period was time of doubt and questions – “Where is God in all of this?”

<sup>4</sup> The historical identification of the various “kingdoms” is of less importance than the central message of Daniel – God will establish His kingdom in the world – an everlasting kingdom and rule. Also, beware of using Daniel to “predict” the end times = today. All attempts violate the essential context and message of Daniel and only add to people’s confusion.

<sup>5</sup> They saw His power and attempted to force Him into their mold of what the King and kingdom was to be – an immediate, earthly kingdom that would overcome the Roman oppressors and return Israel to earthly greatness. They were wrong.

<sup>6</sup> One of the great dangers of any eschatological view that looks for Jesus immediate return (in my view) is that it misses an essential understanding of what God is doing through His kingdom in the world – that *it takes time*. God only asks us to be faithful to His will and leave the outcome entirely to Him. (Matt. 24:36. Acts 1:6-8.) Throw away your charts. Check out (if you dare): <http://reknew.org/2012/10/rapture-theology/>

<sup>7</sup> The Greek here uses a hina clause (“so that” or “in order that”) which indicates either purpose or result. Here it seems purpose: “We tell you these things for the purpose that you might have fellowship with us = with the Father and the Son.”

<sup>8</sup> We might add, “And with the Spirit!” 1 John 3:24, 4:13.

<sup>9</sup> Obviously, there is much more to talk about, e.g., what exactly is sin? However, I feel that John puts an end to any theological systems that endorse the idea that we *must sin* in “thought word and deed everyday.”