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Come visit us at our website: <http://www.adultbiblestudyguide.org>.

Printing and Circulation Office: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193

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End-Time Signs and Symbols

During the First Gulf War (1991), a well-known Protestant writer and preacher believed that the book of Revelation warned about this war before it happened. The preacher was convinced that some of the helicopters in the war looked the same as the locusts in the book of Revelation. Locusts are a type of flying insects. “Then the star opened the hole leading to the pit. Smoke came up from the hole like [the same as] smoke from a big furnace [hot oven]. The sun and sky became dark because of the smoke from the hole. Then locusts came out of the smoke and went down to the earth. They were given the power to sting like scorpions [small animals that sting]” (Revelation 9:2, 3, ERV).

Not the best way to explain the Bible’s end-time messages, right? Sad to say, people explain the Bible in this way all the time. Over the years, books, articles, TV shows, and now websites warn their readers about what will happen in the future. Their warnings include dates for when things will happen during the end times. Many of these happenings include wars or the fighting in the Middle East.

Surprise, surprise! The things they announce and warn about don’t happen when they say they will.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we explain end-time happenings in a different way. Jesus is the most important part of our explanations. We also remind people about the worldwide war between God and Satan to help us understand the Bible’s end-time messages. This war will end when God’s people, Jew and non-Jew (read Revelation 12:17; Revelation 14:12), take the final test. This test is about worship: Will we worship God (read Revelation 14:7) or the beast and its false god?

Daniel 2 is an important part of helping us understand the Bible’s end-time messages. Daniel 2 shows us history before it happens. The chapter also helps us understand the meanings of other end-time messages in the Bible too.

Daniel 2 shows us four worldwide kingdoms: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. After these kingdoms, God sets up His everlasting kingdom. This kingdom “will never be destroyed. And it will not be given to another group of people. This kingdom

will crush all the other kingdoms. It will bring them to an end. But that kingdom itself will continue forever” (Daniel 2:44, ICB). Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 contain special messages that follow this same basic historical timeline. These chapters show us the rise and fall of these worldwide kingdoms until, finally, God sets up His kingdom forever.

In Daniel 7, the angel explains the symbols in the special messages: “ ‘The four great [mighty] animals are four kingdoms that will come from the earth. But God’s holy people will receive [get] the kingdom, and they will have the kingdom forever and ever’ ” (Daniel 7:17, 18, ERV).

So, again, four worldwide kingdoms (Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome) follow one after another in history until the Second Coming of Jesus. Then God will set up His everlasting kingdom.

Of course, we continue to be here in the time of Rome, which is the fourth and final kingdom before Jesus comes back.

The history of Daniel 2 helps us understand the Bible’s end-time messages. This quarter, we will study the topic of how to understand the Bible’s end-time messages. We will study the meaning of some of the Bible’s stories, word pictures, symbols, and signs to learn how they can help us understand the things that will happen in the end times.

We will start in Genesis with the story about how God made the skies and the earth. We also will study about the Tower of Babel, the Old Testament offerings, the book of Psalms, and some examples of marriage in the Old Testament. In all these examples, and more, we can find word pictures, symbols, and signs that will help us understand the end-time messages in the Bible.

Of course, one quarter isn’t enough to study all the stories and word pictures that help us understand Bible truth about the future. Who knows? We may need all of our everlasting life for that! Until then, with God’s mercy, we will study what we can.

We will study the meaning of some of the Bible’s stories, word pictures, symbols, and signs to learn how they can help us understand the things that will happen in the end times.

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