

ADULT
SABBATH SCHOOL
BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Oct • Nov • Dec 2004

Daniel



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH



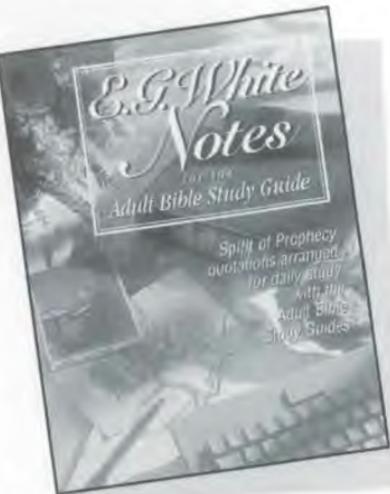
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Daniel, Aristotle, and the End

About four centuries before Christ, the Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote about “the end,” meaning the final purpose of things, that to which “all things aim.” For Aristotle, “the end of the medical art is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel, that of strategy victory, that of economics wealth.” Applying this principle to humanity, he said that the end of humanity, its ultimate purpose, is “happiness”—that which we seek “always for itself and never for the sake of something else.”

Not a bad conclusion for someone working without revealed knowledge. But although happiness can certainly be a laudable goal, it hardly answers the crucial questions about the end and purpose of life, especially when that life always ends in the grave, where the issue of happiness is, indeed, rather irrelevant.

In contrast to Aristotle, the prophet Daniel (a few hundred years earlier) also wrote about “the end” but from a radically different perspective. For Daniel, the end wasn’t found within humans themselves as some natural result of who and what they were; instead, the end was something brought about by the supernatural intervention of an all-knowing, all-powerful God who promised that “the end”—meaning the end of this world—was, in fact, the beginning of a new one. In short, while Aristotle looked within humanity for its end, Daniel (as do all the Bible writers) puts the end in something that transcends humanity, and that is the God who first created humanity.

How thankful we should be, too, because if our “end,” our purpose, were limited only to ourselves, it hardly seems worth the effort to reach that end. Why expend all the energy and pain of eking out an existence here, only to have it all culminate in death? In contrast, Daniel shows that “the end” is, really, a new beginning.

Of course, one of the great purposes of the Bible is to show us not only what our ends are but how we can reach those ends. The book of Daniel, our topic for the next three months, fulfills a unique role in helping us do just that. In it are impressive prophecies that, perhaps better than anywhere else in Scripture, help establish a firm and rational foundation for our faith in the One who, through the work of Jesus Christ, has assured us our end: eternal life in a new creation (*Isa. 66:22*).

Whether through the stories (where we are shown God’s intervention in the lives of individuals) or through the grand, sweeping prophecies (where we are shown God’s sovereignty over the world), the book of Daniel not only reveals the presence of God in our world but, in a sense, helps prove that existence and intervention.

Daniel belongs to what is called “apocalyptic” literature. “Apocalyptic” comes from the Greek *apokalypsis*, meaning “an unveiling” or “a revelation.”

The apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation describe, by means of symbolic visions, important stages of human history. But even more so, they reveal to us “the end”—that is, the end of all things as they are now but not what they will be forever.

Throughout the Christian Era, the stories and prophecies of Daniel have inspired poets, artists, and philosophers. They have given comfort and hope to the weary; yet, at the same time they have challenged the minds of historians and theologians.

Above all, the book has shown that our world is not an iceberg drifting toward some unknown and unforeseen end but that, behind the scenes

and in ways we cannot imagine or now understand, our God is working to bring all things to a grand and glorious conclusion.

“As we near the close of this world’s history, the prophecies recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are living.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 547.

Even Jesus Himself points us specially to Daniel, saying, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)” (*Matt. 24:15*; see also *Mark 13:14*).

Considering the importance of the book of Daniel, it shouldn’t be surprising that the enemy would hate it and has gone to extraordinary lengths to weaken its impact. For instance, though Daniel himself in various chapters dates his writing, higher critical scholars dismiss those dates as fabrications, placing the book hundreds of years later and focusing it on events that are not the concern of Daniel. In this way, by arguing that Daniel wrote after the events he described, scholars weaken the impact of the book and the powerful prophecies within it. After all, anyone can write history; only inspiration can tell the future. As Seventh-day Adventists, we must firmly reject the humanistic attempts to undercut the supernatural origins of these writings.

This quarter’s Bible study guide was written by Gerhard Pfandl, an associate director at the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference. A native of Austria, where he pastored and taught for almost twenty years, Dr. Pfandl also worked for several years in California and Australia. He is married and has two grown children. A longtime student of Daniel, he is more than qualified to teach us about a book that so powerfully and convincingly reveals an end that Aristotle—with all his knowledge—never could have imagined or even dared to hope for.

Anyone can write history; only inspiration can tell the future.

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Meeting Agenda:

- Lay brick*
- Install windows*
- Roof the church*

Pastors around the world attend workers' meetings to lay plans for the future. In Russia "Workers' Meeting" takes on a new meaning. They come not in suits, carrying notepads, but in their work clothes, carrying tools. In Moscow, where these pastors live, the city of 8.3 million people has only one Adventist church. Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help check off these agenda items!

MISSION

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on December 25
supports projects in the Euro-Asia Division.

“To Eat or Not to Eat— That Is the Question”



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 1.*

Memory Text: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (*Psalm 119:105, NIV*).

April 1945, the Pacific. In the midst of a fierce battle, about eighty war-hardened American soldiers owed their lives to one man, Private Desmond Doss. They once had ridiculed him for his refusal to carry a gun. However, while enemy crossfire cut down soldier after soldier, the medic, Private Doss, ignoring the danger to his own life, dragged more than seventy-five wounded men to safety. The man who was once a butt of their jokes became their hero.

Doss was not afraid to stand up for what he believed, and he was not afraid to stand up on the battlefield. For his outstanding bravery, Doss was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by the president of the United States.

This week we'll take a look at another war, another battle, fought in another part of the world in totally different circumstances. Yet, whatever the circumstances, some people (often a minority) will, like Private Doss, stand for what they believe, no matter the personal cost. Who were these people, what did they stand for, and what can we—who, in our own situations, often face similar challenges—learn from their example?

The Week at a Glance: What do Babylon and Jerusalem symbolize? What caused the demise of Jerusalem? Why did innocent people have to suffer in the onslaught? Why didn't Daniel eat the king's food?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 2.

A Tale of Two Cities: Babylon and Jerusalem (*Dan. 1:1*).

The book of Daniel is the story of two cities, Jerusalem and Babylon. One represents the rule of righteousness, the other of wickedness. One reveals the mystery of godliness, the other the mystery of sin. Thus, the stories and prophecies of the book illustrate the principles of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, often manifested before us as a battle between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and error.

The first time we read of Babylon and Jerusalem in Scripture is implied in the book of Genesis (*11:9, 14:18*); the last time we hear of them is in the book of Revelation (*18:21, 21:10*). And, in one way or another, either literally or figuratively they appear all through the Bible.

What were the historical circumstances under which the two cities (under similar but not exact names) are first mentioned?

- Babylon (*Gen. 11:1-9*) _____
- Jerusalem (*Gen. 14:17-20*) _____

Babylon: The Babylonians derived the name of their city from *Bab-ilu*, which means “gate of god.” According to Genesis 11:9, however, the name means “confusion,” because there “the Lord confused the language of all the earth” (*NKJV*). There seems to be a play on words, for the two Hebrew words *balal*, “to confuse,” and *babel*, “gate of god,” sound very similar. While the people’s intent at *Babel* was to build a tower that would reach into heaven, God turned it into a symbol of humanity’s folly.

Jerusalem: The Hebrew word *shalem* means “complete” or “peaceful.” In Psalm 76:2, Jerusalem is identified with Salem, the city mentioned in Genesis 14:18. At the time of David’s conquest of the city, Jerusalem was occupied by the Jebusites (*1 Chron. 11:4-7*). From David’s reign on, it had been the capital of the Jewish nation.

What is symbolized by the city of Babylon in the book of Revelation? *Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21.* What is its ultimate fate?

Jerusalem (“peaceful, complete”), Babylon (“confusion”). You can’t live in two places at once, either physically or spiritually. Where are you living now (spiritually), why are you there, and—if you need to move—how can you?

The Innocent and the Guilty (*Dan. 1:2-7*).

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand" (*Dan. 1:1, 2, NIV*).

It's hard, from our perspective, to realize just how incredible those words in the above two texts are. If written in a newspaper, they would be headlines standing six to ten inches tall. Here was Jerusalem, where the Lord dwelt in His temple, taken over by pagans and its king captured!

What were some reasons why God gave Judah and Jerusalem into the hands of the Babylonians?

● 2 Kings 21:10-16

● 2 Kings 24:18-20

● 2 Chron. 36:15-17

● Jer. 3:13

"It should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional."—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 695. The people of Judah could have avoided the Babylonian exile. Through Jeremiah God pleaded with the people to return to Him. Had they repented, they would not have been punished (*Jer. 4:1-4*). But they refused to listen, and, finally, judgment was poured out upon them.

All this, however, brings up another question: Sure, the leaders rebelled and didn't obey. But why should the innocent be punished, as well? It hardly seems fair that Daniel and his three friends, godly young men, should suffer for the sins of others. Yet, as we all eventually learn, life in this sinful world isn't fair. That's, of course, why we must have the hope of a new one.

Daniel's Determination (*Dan. 1:8*).

Being served the best food that the kingdom of Babylon had to offer, Daniel and his friends refuse to eat it. Why would they not eat the king's food? *Prov. 23:1-3, 29-32.* What principles are being expressed by these texts?

Daniel and his friends refused to be conformed to the world; the will of God, instead, was the all-absorbing purpose of their lives. Hence, they might have refused to eat the king's fare because:

1. Some of the food was unclean meat (*Leviticus 11*).
2. Even the clean meat was not prepared the way Moses had instructed the Israelites (*Lev. 7:22-27*).
3. Eating and drinking involved an act of idol worship because the food was first offered to idols.

When Daniel requested a different menu, he used the word *vegetables* (*zero 'im*), which is the same word God used in Genesis 1:29 when He told Adam, "I have given you every herb that yields seed (*zorea'*; *zera'*)" (*NKJV*). With this request Daniel affirmed his faith in the Creator, who gave us all that is good and healthy to eat.

Read Daniel 1:8. Here they are, captives in a foreign land, at the mercy of heathens who, on a whim, could have them killed. How easy it could have been to have rationalized eating the king's food and drinking his wine. Keeping this background in mind, look up the following texts. What are they saying that relates to what Daniel did here? What lessons are there for us? *Matt. 10:22, Luke 8:11-15, 1 Cor. 10:13, Phil. 3:8, 2 Tim. 2:12.*

Daniel's decision in regard to the king's food showed that he understood the connection between health and holiness. The test over food was one of the means of strengthening his character and fitting him for future greatness. Each right decision carried out in spite of difficulties makes a person stronger. Each resolution broken leaves a person weaker.

The story of Daniel illustrates that a right decision bravely carried out often becomes the turning point in a person's life and a determining factor in that person's destiny. "God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 486.

The Test (*Dan. 1:9-16*).

When Daniel and his three friends arrived in Babylon, they were given new names, had to study the arts and sciences of the Babylonians, and were expected to eat from the king's table. The first few issues presented no great problem for them. The last matter, however, became a challenge to their faith.

The hard question often is, How does one know where to draw the line? After all, in the ancient world, names often came with spiritual significance (Daniel, for instance, means "God is judge"). Couldn't Daniel have refused this name change simply on principle? Or could he have refused to study the Babylonian arts and sciences, because they were filled with divination, paganism, and other things in which he surely didn't believe? There's no record, though, of them refusing anything, at least not at this point, except the food. Here they drew the line.

Read again Daniel 1:8. Why did Daniel believe it would have been wrong for him to have eaten that food?

Who else, besides these Hebrew boys, was facing a risk by their refusal to eat? *Dan. 1:10*. Why would this have given them, if they wanted, a good excuse to back down and do what the king asked?

At first glance, this test over eating and drinking seems fairly insignificant. But then, the test for Adam and Eve, not to eat of the tree of good and evil (*Genesis 3*), also seemed rather trivial. It, too, concerned appetite. But isn't it true that love is often revealed in the little things people do for one another? Perhaps there is a spiritual lesson in the fact that great doors often swing on little hinges. *Genesis 3* and *Daniel 1* illustrate the fact that Satan usually endeavors to reach us through our senses; through what we hear, see, smell, touch, and taste. Successful Christian living, therefore, depends on guarding our senses. Indeed, if God's Spirit reaches us through the nerve cells in our brain, and if these nerve cells are influenced by what we eat and drink, what more important duty could there be than that of preserving our bodies in the best possible condition?

Put yourself in Daniel's place. Write out a paragraph justifying why you should eat the king's food. Is what you wrote convincing? If so, why should that concern you about how easily we can talk ourselves into compromising our faith?

The Reward (*Dan. 1:17-20*).

At the end of the three-year period, Ashpenaz brought the young men before the king, who tested them. What were the blessings that came to the four young Hebrews as a result of their decision to remain loyal to their God? *Dan. 1:20*.

Apart from the fact that they were the best in their class, they had clear minds and healthy bodies. Their experience indicates that God will bless all who are not afraid to be considered narrow and overscrupulous when tempted to yield their religious principles. In this instance, in a clear and undeniable way, their faithfulness to the Lord paid off in a manner in which all could see the results of their faithfulness.

Sometimes, however, the immediate endings turn out differently, do they not?

Contrast the fate of the four Hebrew boys to Stephen's. What do these two stories tell us about what can happen when one remains faithful to biblical principles? Why, for Christians, should these endings, happy and tragic, make no real difference regarding the choice of whether or not to stay faithful to religious principles?

On the immediate level, things turned out quite well for Daniel and the three Hebrew boys, certainly better than they did for Stephen.

As Christians, though, we know that whatever happens to us here, bad or good, whether being stoned to death or exalted to the head of the class—these outcomes are not the end. Instead, there's an eternity awaiting us, a whole new life in a new heaven and a new earth where sin, death, suffering, and loss will no longer exist. In contrast to that, it hardly matters what our *end* here is; what matters, instead, is that we stay faithful to God and what He asks of us, regardless of the immediate consequences.

What would you say to someone who has been, all his or her life, compromising Christian principles yet who wants to change? What hope could you offer him or her that all is not lost?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 479–490.

How did Daniel and his three friends manage to study the learning and scientific knowledge of the Babylonians and yet not become influenced by the superstition and sorcery included in this training?

- Through the right exercise of the will: “Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 48.
- Through the recognition of the influence of the body on the mind: “Daniel’s parents had trained him in his childhood to habits of strict temperance. They had taught him that he must conform to nature’s laws in all his habits; that his eating and drinking had a direct influence upon his physical, mental, and moral nature, and that he was accountable to God for his capabilities; for he held them all as a gift from God, and must not, by any course of action, dwarf or cripple them. As the result of this teaching, the law of God was exalted in his mind, and reverenced in his heart.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 154.
- Through a consistent life of prayerful dependence upon God: Daniel “was surrounded with influences calculated to subvert those who would vacillate between principle and inclination; yet the Word of God presents him as a faultless character. Daniel dared not trust to his own moral power. Prayer was to him a necessity.”—Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life*, p. 20.

Discussion Question:

Imagine how easily Daniel and his three friends could have justified not cooperating with their Babylonian captors. After all, these were pagans who had destroyed their city and taken them captive. Wouldn’t death be better than working with these heathen at all, much less becoming important officials in the court of the very king who had destroyed their nation? What can we learn from the answer to this question?

Summary: Daniel and his three friends are pressured to conform to the customs of the Babylonians. But they remain true to their God, and He rewards them with exceptional wisdom and insight. By their commitment to God and faith in Him, they became examples for every Christian tempted to compromise.

The Lucky One

Jim Zachary

George never knew his parents. He lived with his grandmother in Kenya until she died. Then he was taken to his great-aunt's home to live. When life became unbearable, George ran away. He was 9 years old. For five years he lived on the streets of Nairobi, Kenya, begging for money and searching for food in garbage cans.

Then something happened that turned George's life around. A Pathfinder Club was having an outing. Each Pathfinder had brought along three extra lunches, planning to share them with the homeless children of Nairobi.

The club members went into the poorest part of town and invited the street children to join them in a city park for lunch and games. The program included a spiritual talk. This was the first time some of the children had heard about Jesus. Then the children played games together.

George heard shouts and laughter as he sifted through the trash for food. Curious, he went closer. *Wow, he thought, those kids look sharp in their uniforms.* Someone invited George to join in the fun. How good it was to enjoy a decent, fresh meal and play games with other children. For a few hours George forgot his troubles.

As the party wound down, George said, "I wish that I could become a Pathfinder." When someone asked why, he answered, "I want to be like them—and I want to go to school." The Pathfinder leader told George, "Meet me here in this park in two days."

When the leader returned two days later, he told George that he had arranged for him to enroll in the Adventist school as a boarding student. George, now 14, could not believe his ears. He had not yet completed the fourth grade, so he had a lot of catching up to do. Life was so different at the school. Good food replaced garbage scraps, and he slept on a mat in a warm room, not on the sidewalk. He no longer had to run away when a police officer came by.

"I am so happy," George said. "Life is good; I can go to school." George has joined the baptismal class. George is studying hard and ranked second in academic standing in his class. He has made friends and recently was elected to a student-body office.

Some 5,000 children live on the streets of Nairobi. George is a lucky one, for he has found his future, and it includes a loving church family.

J. H. Zachary was coordinator of international evangelism for *The Quiet Hour*.

Nebuchadnezzar's Image



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Daniel 2.

Memory Text: “ ‘He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding’ ” (Daniel 2:21, NKJV).

Years ago, a psychic named Cheiro warned editor W. T. Stead not to travel by water during April 1912. Stead lost his life, in April 1912, on the *Titanic*. In the summer of 1961, psychic Jeane Dixon foretold that United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld would be killed in a “plane crash in mid-September.” On September 18, 1961, the secretary-general was killed in a plane crash.

What does this prove? Only that Satan certainly can make predictions and then bring about their fulfillment, nothing more (if even that).

Nevertheless, prophecies dealing with the future of nations hundreds and thousands of years in advance—such as Nebuchadnezzar’s dream as depicted in Daniel 2—are found in the writings of the Bible, not in the prognostications of psychics. This dream and Daniel’s inspired explanation are part of the primary evidence for the inspiration of Scripture.

This week we’ll take another look at this faith-affirming prophecy.

The Week at a Glance: What kind of test did the king put to the wise men in order to be sure of their interpretation? How is God’s power revealed in this chapter? What does Daniel 2 teach us about God? In what ways does this chapter expose our basic human helplessness and dependence upon God?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 9.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dilemma (*Dan. 2:1-13*).

One night King Nebuchadnezzar had an impressive dream. When he awoke, he called his wise men and asked them to tell him what he had dreamed. Did Nebuchadnezzar really forget his dream, or did he just want to test the wise men of Babylon to see if they were as clever as they claimed? *Dan. 2:5*.

The King James Version, following the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), translates the first words of the king (*vs. 5*) as “the thing is gone from me”—generally understood to mean that the king had forgotten the dream. Modern translations, following the Aramaic text, render the phrase as “‘my decision is firm’” (*NKJV*). Both translations may be true. Having forgotten part of the dream, the king used this fact to test the wise men. If he had forgotten the dream completely, he would not have been troubled by it.

“The Lord in His providence had a wise purpose in view in giving Nebuchadnezzar this dream, and then causing him to forget the particulars, but to retain the fearful impression made upon his mind. The Lord desired to expose the pretensions of the wise men of Babylon.”—Ellen G. White, in *The Youth’s Instructor*, Sept. 1, 1903.

Nebuchadnezzar probably was afraid of the meaning of the dream. Angry that the wisest men of Babylon were unable to help him, he ordered them all killed. This was no idle threat: Cutting up the bodies of enemies and burning their houses were common practices in ancient Mesopotamia.

In response to the king’s threat, what truth were the wise men forced to admit? *Dan. 2:11*.

Unable to tell the king his dream, the wise men of Babylon had to admit that only the gods, “whose dwelling is not with flesh,” could tell the king his dream. The Babylonians did not think that the gods would come and dwell in human flesh, but Christians know that God indeed “became flesh and dwelt among us” (*John 1:14, NKJV*). This confession of failure provided a remarkable opportunity for Daniel to reveal something of the God whom he served.

The wise men are admitting their helplessness. Martin Heidegger once said that “Only a God can save us.” This seems to be the confession of the wise men, as well. Look at your situation. Are you able to admit your own helplessness? How, then, is the knowledge that there not only is a God but that He’s the God revealed to us in Jesus able to comfort you no matter your own situation?

Daniel's Prayer Meetings (*Dan. 2:14-23*).

What can we learn from the response of Daniel and his friends to the king's death decree? *Dan. 2:17, 18.*

Throughout the book of Daniel, God's people are threatened by death. This is of special relevance to the believers living at the end of time, for they will have to face the threat of death, as well (*see Rev. 13:13-18*).

The prayer meeting Daniel and his friends had that day must have been intense. Their lives hung in the balance, but they could approach God with confidence, because, to the best of their knowledge and ability, they had served Him thus far. After God had revealed to Daniel in a night vision what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed, they still prayed, this time giving Him praise and thanksgiving.

What are some of the key phrases of Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving in *Daniel 2:20-23?*

Dan. 2:20

Dan. 2:21

Dan. 2:22

Dan. 2:23

Note how Daniel begins his prayer with "Blessed be the name of God." In the Old Testament, people frequently bless the Lord (*Judg. 5:9, Neh. 9:5, Pss. 103:1, 134:1*). The Aramaic and Hebrew words for "bless" also can be translated as "praise," and this is the meaning in Daniel 2:19 and 20.

Daniel's hymn of praise emphasizes that there is a divine Power who controls history. He's also a God who communicates intimately with those who are open to hear His voice. Through the dream of the image, God conveyed to Nebuchadnezzar the truth that He exercises His power not only in heaven but right here on earth.

What do you say to someone who, after having read this part of Daniel 2, asks, But why haven't my prayers been answered in such a powerful and precise manner?

Daniel's Testimony (*Dan. 2:24-30*).

How did Daniel respond to the fact that God had revealed the dream to him? *Vss. 24-28.*

Notice that Daniel's first concern was for the wise men of Babylon. Although they had done nothing to earn this stay of execution, they were saved because of the presence of a righteous man in their midst. Throughout history such cases have been reported. On his journey to Rome, Paul's presence on the ship saved all those on board (*Acts 27:24*). Therefore, Jesus calls God's people "the salt of the earth" (*Matt. 5:13*); that is, they have a preserving quality, as illustrated in the life of Daniel. Indeed, just as our bad deeds can have a negative impact on those around us, our good deeds can have a good impact, an important point to remember for all who follow Christ.

Having taken care of the wise men, Daniel stood before the king and explained that neither the wise men of Babylon nor their gods could do what the king demanded but that there was a God in heaven who could reveal secrets. Daniel was neither ashamed nor afraid to confess his God before the king. Yet, he disclaimed any superior wisdom or knowledge for himself as the reason for what he was going to tell the king. He ascribed the revelation and its explanation entirely to God. Daniel seemed to understand clearly that his relationship to his God and Savior was one of complete dependence. Of course, that's how salvation works, as well; we are completely dependent upon the Lord.

Look up these following texts. What do they tell us about the sheer impossibility of our being able to save ourselves? *Rom. 3:23, 8:3, 1 Cor. 15:14-17.*

As sinners we have been irrevocably cut off from God, the Source of all life. But thanks to Jesus, who was both God and man, we have been restored to that Source of life. Only Someone who was God and man and not only man but a sinless man, a man who kept God's eternal and immutable law perfectly, could bridge the gap between heaven and earth, thus solving the one thing that we, of ourselves, can never solve: the problem of death.

Daniel and his friends, under the threat of death, prayed. Of course, most people, even atheists, under such circumstances, would have done the same thing. Why do you think, in the case of these boys, however, that prayer was something they did all the time? In what ways might that fact help explain why their prayer was answered as it was?

The Image and Its Interpretation (*Dan. 2:28-45*).

What is the meaning of Daniel's reference to "the latter days" in verse 28? See also *Gen. 49:1*, *Num. 24:14*, *Deut. 4:30*, *31:29*.

A study of this phrase in the Old Testament shows that the "latter days," an idiomatic phrase for "in the future," can refer to (a) a specific future period in the history of Israel (*Deut. 4:30*); (b) the future history of Israel beginning with the conquest (*Gen. 49:1*) or the monarchy (*Num. 24:14*); and (c) the Messianic age (*Isa. 2:2*, *Hos. 3:5*) or the time immediately preceding it (*Ezek. 38:16*). Most modern versions, therefore, translate this phrase as "in the days to come" (*Gen. 49:1*, *NASB*); "in time to come" (*Deut. 31:29*, *NRSV*); or "in later days" (*Deut. 4:30*, *NIV*).

Thus, we can conclude that "the latter days" in Daniel 2 refers to the future, which began in the time of Daniel and reaches down to the time of the second advent of Christ symbolized by the stone kingdom.

What did God reveal to Nebuchadnezzar? What did these images symbolize? *Dan. 2:30-45*.

The head of the golden image is clearly identified as the kingdom of Babylon (626–539 B.C.) in verse 38. From history we know that the other three kingdoms following Babylon were Media-Persia (539–331 B.C.), Greece (331–168 B.C.), and Rome (168 B.C.–A.D. 476). Although the Roman Empire ruled longer than the other three kingdoms put together, it was not succeeded by a fifth world power but was divided up into many different kingdoms of varied strength, symbolized by the feet of iron and clay—just as the prophecy had predicted. These are the nations that make up modern Europe, nations that, to this day, exist as separate national and political entities.

What is symbolized by the stone cut out without hands and the destruction of the image? *Dan. 2:34, 44*.

The Bible makes it plain that the stone represents Jesus Christ (see *Isa. 28:16*; *1 Cor. 10:4*; *Luke 20:17, 18*), who at His second advent will destroy all the other kingdoms and establish an everlasting kingdom.

Take the symbolism of what Christ does to these other powers at the Second Coming and apply it spiritually to yourself. What needs to happen within us, to the other "powers" within us, in order to truly follow the Lord as we should? See also *Matt. 16:25*, *Gal. 2:20*.

Daniel's Promotion

What was Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to Daniel's explanation of his dream? *Dan. 2:46.*

At the end of Daniel's explanations, the king was convinced that his dream had indeed come from a supernatural force. He acknowledged the God of Daniel as the Ruler of the universe. He saw his own place in world history, and he understood that his authority was under the control of the God who had given it to him (*vss. 46, 47*).

The prostration of the king before Daniel (*vs. 46*) was according to Oriental custom. He was ready to worship Daniel as some kind of god, similar to the Lycaonians and Miletians, who considered Paul a god (*Acts 14:11, 28:6*). Paul refused to be worshiped, and we can be certain that Daniel responded in a similar way (though we do not have any record of his response). Nevertheless, the king made Daniel governor over the province of Babylon and head of all the wise men. In his elevation, Daniel experienced the divine principle proclaimed by Jesus, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" (*Matt. 13:12*).

What does Daniel's petition concerning his friends reveal about his character? *Dan. 2:49.*

The prophet did not want to enjoy his honors alone. In his hour of triumph, he remembered those who had joined in prayer with him. As soon as his position was decided, he requested the king to appoint his three friends to administer the affairs of the province of which he himself was made ruler. On the surface this request seems simple enough, but we must remember that native Babylonians probably had to give up their positions to make room for these unknown Jews. In God's providence the sharers in Daniel's prayer are now made sharers in his promotion. Unlike the chief butler in the story of Joseph (*Gen. 40:23*), Daniel did not forget his friends.

God used Daniel's captivity and Nebuchadnezzar's dream to make Daniel a powerful force in Babylon. Joseph in Egypt had a similar experience (*Gen. 50:20*). Both are examples of the biblical principle that "all things work together for good to those who love God" (*Rom. 8:28, NKJV*).

Review the chapter. One lesson that should come through to us clearly and forcefully is that God is in control of the world's history. Compare this with what we saw in the life of Jesus and His intense personal care for individuals (see Matt. 10:29-31). How does what we've seen of God's power, as revealed in Daniel 2, help us to trust Him and His power in our personal lives, as well?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 491–502.

"The king had acknowledged the power of God, saying to Daniel, 'Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, . . . and a revealer of secrets.' Verse 47. For a time afterward, Nebuchadnezzar was influenced by the fear of God; but his heart was not yet cleansed from worldly ambition and a desire for self-exaltation. The prosperity attending his reign filled him with pride. In time he ceased to honor God, and resumed his idol worship with increased zeal and bigotry."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 503, 504.

Lessons From Daniel 2

1. The precise fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 2 in history is strong evidence for the inspiration of the Bible.
2. The prophecy of Daniel 2 shows clearly that everything and everyone on this earth will eventually perish unless linked with God. We are all on our way to eternal nothingness unless we take hold of the hand of God.
3. Frequently historians will tell us that "history teaches us that history teaches us nothing." While this may be true for some, Christians know that history is indeed the story of God working out His final plans to end the great controversy. Christ is not an absentee landlord, permitting His house to disintegrate through careless tenants. The correct study of history leads to the understanding and assurance that He who controls the cosmos also guides the atom.

Discussion Questions:

- ➊ In what ways does Daniel 2 provide purely *rational* evidence not only for inspiration of the Bible but for God's power? Why, if studying with a skeptic, could you find some powerful material in this chapter?
- ➋ In what sense do today's nations in the territories of ancient Rome resemble the feet of iron and clay?

Summary: Daniel 2 provides the blueprint for apocalyptic prophecy. It is foundational for the rest of the prophecies in this book. Nebuchadnezzar's dream revealed the ignorance of the wise men but provided opportunity for Daniel to witness to the king about the God of heaven.

The Gift Goes On

Barbara Huff

Like many young people who attend the Adventist seminary in Zaoksky, Russia, Yuri Zakhvataev (ZACH-vah-tah-yev) would never have been there if it had not been for someone he does not know.

Yuri was studying music at a state university when his mother invited him to attend the Adventist church with her. Yuri went, and his heart opened to God's message. He gave his life to Christ. Not long after his conversion he sensed God was calling him into the ministry.

Yuri did not have the money to study for four years at Zaoksky Adventist Seminary, in Russia. But in faith Yuri applied to Zaoksky. He learned that God, who had called him to the ministry, was calling others to support students such as him who are called to become leaders in the church. Someone sponsored Yuri, paying his tuition during his four years at Zaoksky. Yuri spent his summer breaks working with experienced evangelists and other students holding evangelistic meetings throughout the Euro-Asia Division.

Yuri completed his theology degree and is working in a church-affiliated media center in Russia. He has a burden to minister to those addicted to alcohol and drugs. Yuri has produced a TV series designed to point humans to Jesus, the greatest Man on earth.

While conducting one stop-smoking program, he helped Vladimir successfully kick the smoking habit. Vladimir wanted to help others stop. Now Vladimir and Yuri conduct stop-smoking programs together. Vladimir has been baptized.

Yuri knows that while God called him to become a minister, he could not have completed his education without the help of those who were faithful in supporting him. He can minister to others, because someone else answered God's whisper to help a young person, whom he or she might never meet, study in a school this person might never see.

Yuri's message to those faith partners is, "Thank you for your financial support. With the Lord's blessing I will multiply your gift many times in souls won to Him."

Barbara Huff met Yuri when she was administrative assistant in the Euro-Asia Division office in Moscow. She and her husband are now retired in Florida.

The Fiery Furnace



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 3.*

Memory Text: “‘When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you’” (*Isaiah 43:2, NKJV*).

When Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was brought before a tribunal, the proconsul said, “‘Swear by the fortune of Ceasar . . . swear and I will release you; reproach Christ.’

“Polycarp responded: ‘Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I speak evil of my King who saved me?’

“‘I have wild beasts,’ said the proconsul, ‘and will expose you to them unless you repent.’

“‘Call them!’ said Polycarp, who, never relenting, died a martyr’s death.”—Adapted from Elon Foster, *6000 Sermon Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), p. 273.

This week we will see how three Hebrews, like Polycarp, faced a test concerning faithfulness and worship. The first battle in this world was over worship (*Gen. 4:4-8, 1 John 3:12*); the last will be, as well (*Rev. 14:9-12*). How important that we understand the issues involved.

The Week at a Glance: Why did Nebuchadnezzar have the golden image made? Who delivered the three boys, and of what is that deliverance symbolic? What is the difference between believing in God and knowing God?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 16.

The Image of Gold (*Dan. 3:1-7*).

For a time after the vision in Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar was influenced by the fear of God. However, the prosperity attending his reign filled him with pride, and, in time, he resumed his idol worship. He determined to reproduce the image he had seen, but his image should be entirely of gold—symbolic of Babylon as an eternal, indestructible, all-powerful kingdom that should stand forever.

Why was the king's act of making the statue an act of defiance against what Daniel, in chapter 2, said would happen? See *Dan. 2:34, 35*.

The event in Daniel 3 is not dated, but it must have been several years after the vision of Daniel 2 (603 B.C.). A possible date is 594 B.C., when Zedekiah, as ruler of Judah, was summoned to Babylon (*Jer. 51:59*), most likely in connection with the dedication of the golden statue.

What did Nebuchadnezzar hope to achieve by inviting all the officials of the realm and demanding their worship of the golden statue? *Dan. 3:4-6*.

Kings in ancient times always had to be wary of the danger of an internal revolt. A ceremony such as we find in this chapter, where all the officials had to show public allegiance to the king, would have served well to bring them all into line. The act of bowing to the image would have indicated, at least outwardly, obedience and loyalty to the king himself.

The death penalty for not bowing down to the idol seems rather harsh, but absolute monarchs or rulers in any age have never taken kindly to challenges to their authority. The king dared anyone to defy his power and authority, and the officials knew he meant it. The fiery furnace was no idle threat either. Jeremiah 29:22 records that the king burned to death two Jewish men called Zedekiah and Ahab. This makes the stand of the three Hebrews all the more remarkable.

Nebuchadnezzar, obviously, struggled with his legacy—he wanted it to last forever. We all, to some degree, struggle with this same problem, the sense of our own mortality and transience. What's our only hope, and why? See *1 John 2:16, 17*.

Three Hebrews Defy the King (*Dan. 3:8-18*).

Who reported to the king that Daniel's friends refused to bow down to his image? *Dan. 3:8*. What possibly motivated them to tell the king?

In so vast a crowd, the king probably could not see that three men were still standing, and certain men went to him to inform him. These Chaldeans were, more than likely, jealous of the honors bestowed on the three Hebrews, and they gladly took the opportunity to report them.

What is the relationship between the images in Daniel 3 and Revelation 13:11-18?

Prophecy tells us that in the last days another image will be set up to enforce religious uniformity. A universal economic boycott and ultimately a death decree will be issued against all who refuse to worship "the beast and its image." Also, in both chapters, the number six, as a symbol of man under the control of Satan, is prominent (see *Dan. 3:1*). The worship of the golden image by the people in ancient Babylon is referred to six times (see *Dan. 3:5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 18*). And by God's design, in the book of Revelation, the warning against worshiping the beast and his image is also given six times (see *Rev. 13:15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4*).

On the plain of Dura officials of all ranks attended. The ceremony of dedication was an act of worship of the power and might of Nebuchadnezzar, which the three Hebrews refused to do. The whole story illustrates the close connection between state and religion. This kind of union has, in fact, characterized most nations throughout history. The idea of a secular state, one that keeps as much as possible out of the domain of religious affairs, is a fairly recent phenomenon.

The conversation between the king and the three Hebrew youths is one of the most remarkable recorded in Scripture—an autocratic king and three young men who defy his order because of their belief in the God of the universe. What a scene!

What are some things that now, today, we are tempted to worship? Are we, even as Christians, slowly but surely getting caught up in worshiping something other than God? How can we know if we are, and how can we protect ourselves from this subtle form of idolatry?

The Fiery Trial (*Dan. 3:16-23*).

What are the key elements in the response of the three young Hebrews to the king's death threat? *Dan. 3:16-18*. Rephrase what they said.

The word *deliver* is a key word that appears throughout the book of Daniel. When Nebuchadnezzar asked them, “Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?” The three Hebrews replied that their God whom they served was “able to deliver” them from his hands (*Dan. 3:15, 17, NKJV*). After the miracle in the fiery furnace, the king confessed, “there is no other God who can deliver like this” (*vs. 29, NKJV*). Daniel’s experience in chapter 6 illustrates further that the God whom Daniel served is “able to deliver” His people. Finally, at the end of the book we read that at the end of time Michael, the Great Prince, shall stand up to deliver everyone who is found written in the book of life (*Dan. 12:1*).

Why did the three Hebrews refuse to compromise in this matter of bowing to the golden image? *Exod. 20:3-5*.

Look up Matthew 10:28. How does this text apply here?

In spite of the king’s rage and fury, the three men would not bend or budge. They obeyed Nebuchadnezzar as far as their conscience permitted. They journeyed to the plain of Dura, but when their conscience told them, No farther, they refused to join the other worshipers, knowing that they had “to obey God rather than men” (*Acts 5:29, NKJV*). They refused to break God’s law, which forbade idol worship, regardless of whether or not God would deliver them.

Throughout Christian history there have been those who have responded similarly. Fox’s *Book of Martyrs* traces the lives of thousands of Christians who were killed for their allegiance to God.

Compromise is a favorite word of politicians. But is there a place for compromise when it comes to matters of faith? If so, in what way and under what circumstances? What things, if any, can or should be compromised? How can we tell if we are compromising or simply being prudent?

One Like the Son of God (*Dan. 3:24, 25*).

Read carefully Daniel 3:14, 15. The king asked the three boys a question at the end of verse 15. What was the question; how was it answered?

“Who is the God who shall deliver you?” he asked. It was the same God who (*in chapter 2*) the king had confessed was “‘the God of gods, the Lord of kings’” (vs. 47, NKJV). How quickly, though, the king forgot. All through the Bible we can find similar examples of God manifesting His power in a remarkable way, only for people to so quickly forget.

What did the words “Son of God” in verse 25 mean to Nebuchadnezzar? Did he recognize who the fourth Being really was?

Verse 25 alternately can be translated “son of the gods,” which simply means a supernatural being. In verse 28 Nebuchadnezzar identifies the fourth Being as an angel, but the biblical text does not indicate whether Nebuchadnezzar understood the true nature of the fourth Being.

Christians, of course, understand the Son of God as Jesus Christ Himself (*Matt. 8:29, Rom. 1:4, Heb. 7:3, 1 John 3:8*). Here, in this chapter, we see a small foretaste of the total victory over death that Christ gives to all His followers at the end of time. He delivered these three boys in a remarkable manner then, and He will deliver all of His followers in even a more remarkable manner when He returns.

What do these texts tell us about the deliverance that we, as Christians, have in Christ? *Rom. 7:24, Gal. 1:4, Col. 1:13, 1 Thess. 1:10, 2 Tim. 4:18.*

Think about Nebuchadnezzar, who one chapter earlier praised the same God he now defied. In what ways do we find the same thing happening in us? God works something miraculous in our lives, and before long we are doubting and questioning Him. What can we do to protect ourselves from this common spiritual trap?

Nebuchadnezzar's Change of Mind

(*Dan. 3:26-30*).

When the three young Jews walked out of the fiery furnace with heads held high, the effect on the assembled multitude must have been tremendous. They saw that "the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them" (*Dan. 3:27, NKJV*).

Though there's a lot more involved in this account than what we have been told, it does seem clear that the Lord again revealed to this monarch His power and majesty in a way that did, indeed, reach the king. One might have thought that, after what He had already shown Nebuchadnezzar of His power (*chapter 2*), the Lord would have been through with the defiant and arrogant king. However, even despite this blatant act of defiance against Him, the Lord again showed His mercy and patience toward Nebuchadnezzar.

What other examples can we find in the Bible of the Lord giving powerful leaders numerous chances? What do these accounts tell us about His character? What hope do they offer for us? See, for instance, *Exodus 7-15*, *2 Sam. 12:1-13*. At the same time, what are the limitations of His patience with us?

What effect did the miracle in the fiery furnace have on the king? *Dan. 3:26-28*.

On the surface, then, it seems that the king certainly came to realize something of the might and power of the Lord of heaven and earth. Yet, as subsequent chapters will show, believing in God or even confessing His power isn't enough. The king needed, instead, to know the Lord (*John 17:3*). This is a crucial distinction. Knowing God is more than just knowing propositional truths about Him. The most unregenerate degenerate can believe in God's eternal nature, His creative power, and even His atoning death.

It's one thing, though, to believe in the God of the Bible or to even acknowledge His power. Demons know about both (*James 2:19*). It's another thing to know Him as your Lord and Savior. Do you simply believe in God, or do you know Him (*John 17:3*)? Explain your answer. The answer makes all the difference in the world.

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, "The Fiery Furnace," in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 503–513.

According to Ellen White, Nebuchadnezzar understood who the fourth Being was: "How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 509.

Discussion Question:

In *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville wrote about a man who was asked to worship the idol of his pagan roommate, Queequeg. Follow the logic of the man's reasoning. "I was a good Christian; born and bred in the bosom of the infallible Presbyterian Church. How then could I unite with this wild idolator in worshipping his piece of wood? . . . But what is worship?—to do the will of God—that is worship. And what is the will of God?—to do to my fellow man what I would have my fellow man to do to me—that is the will of God. Now, Queequeg is my fellow man. And what do I wish that this Queequeg would do to me? Why, unite with me in my particular Presbyterian form of worship. Consequently, I must then unite with him in his; ergo, I must turn idolator."—*Moby Dick* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1999), p. 70. What's wrong with this reasoning? What does this tell us about how easy it is to rationalize wrong spiritual decisions?

Summary: The three Hebrew boys refused to compromise where it mattered. As Christians, we need to know what matters and then never compromise on those things.

As Little Children

It is easy to understand why children hold a special place in God's heart.

When Kathy Seeley, primary-unit teacher in an Adventist Academy in the United States, saw her children fervently drawing pictures one day, she asked what they were doing. The children announced that they were going to sell the pictures. Mrs. Seeley smiled at their enthusiasm—until she saw the children selling their pictures in the parking lot for three cents each. The children brought the money to her and announced that it was for missions.

Then they made bookmarks to sell. After another parking lot selling spree, Mrs. Seeley realized the children were serious about raising money for missions and provided craft supplies to help them. The children decided they wanted to use their money to build a church in Papua New Guinea.

Mrs. Seeley had contacted a missionary in Papua New Guinea who knew of a group of believers who had no church. The missionary emailed pictures of "their" project to encourage the children toward their goal.

When school closed for the summer, the children had raised \$123 toward their goal. And when school resumed in September, the children were eager to continue their fund-raising. Some picked blueberries and donated proceeds; a home-schooled child painted rocks and sold them.

And the school sponsored a yard sale with earnings going to the church in Papua New Guinea. Primary children priced donations for the sale and helped at various tables during the sale. When the sales were tallied, the children had earned more than one thousand dollars in a single day. Their total earnings came to more than one thousand six hundred dollars, enough to build the church and provide a few extras, such as hand-cranked tape recorders, so the illiterate villagers can listen to the Bible.



Some of Mrs. Seeley's school children with their offerings. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of Mission.

Nebuchadnezzar's Judgment



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Daniel 4.

Memory Text: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37, NKJV).

Harry Truman was the caretaker of a recreation lodge on Spirit Lake, five miles north of Mount St. Helens' smoke-enshrouded peak in Washington State, U.S.A. Harry had been warned by rangers and neighbors that the mountain was going to explode. Warnings blared from loudspeakers on patrol cars and helicopters and blinked from battery-powered signs at every major crossroad. Radio and television announcers pleaded with their audiences to flee. Harry Truman ignored them all. He grinned on national television and said, "Nobody knows more about this mountain than Harry, and it don't dare blow up on him." On May 18, 1980, at 8:31 A.M., the mountain exploded, flattening everything for 150 square miles, including Harry, his cabin, and his cats.

Harry was warned but not forced. In a sense, it's the same with God and us: We're warned but not forced, even if those warnings can sometimes be very forceful. This week we'll take a look at one instance in which the Lord worked in a powerful way to get someone's attention.

The Week at a Glance: What was King Nebuchadnezzar's fundamental problem? What parallels exist between this chapter and Daniel 2?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 23.

A Royal Testimony (*Dan. 4:1-9*).

This chapter contains the remarkable testimony of King Nebuchadnezzar, the reigning monarch of the world, who now humbled himself before the King of the universe and acknowledged his dependence upon the Lord, “the Most High,” the One who “rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (*Dan. 4:25, NKJV*). Over the course of his long reign (605–562 B.C.) he had learned that the Hebrew God is a revealer of secrets (*Dan. 2:28*) and that He saves His faithful followers from the fiery furnace (*Dan. 3:27, 29*). Yet, his heart remained proud and independent. God, therefore, removed him from his throne and humbled him into the dust. After the recovery from his sickness, he submitted fully to God. The “once proud monarch had become a humble child of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 521.

Read carefully the king’s words in Daniel 4:3, where he talks about God’s kingdom as an “everlasting kingdom.” Contrast those words with what happened in Daniel 3 and with Daniel’s interpretation of the dream in chapter 2 (vs. 44). What did the king seem finally to learn about humankind’s futile attempts at immortality apart from God?

From the earliest times of the great controversy, when Satan first tried to be God (*Isa. 14:12-14*), up through the rise of the man of sin (*2 Thess. 2:3, 4*), and until the final crisis over worship (*Rev. 14:9-11*), humankind in one way or another, has wanted to be God. This trait was seen in Nebuchadnezzar, as well.

Go back through everything we’ve read about Nebuchadnezzar so far. In what ways was he trying to be God or, at least, playing the role of God?

You don’t need to be a proud, powerful monarch in order to fall into this trap of trying to be God. In what ways, often very subtle, can anyone, rich or poor, weak or powerful, be tempted to play God? Why is falling broken before the Cross the only sure remedy against this dangerous spiritual trap?

Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream (*Dan. 4:10-18*)

Nebuchadnezzar's second dream was not about an image but about a tree. This tree was so tall that it seemed to reach into heaven and could be seen from any part of the globe. Its immense size and spreading branches displayed its powerful influence.

Read Daniel 4:10-17. What was the dream about? What sequence of events happened in the dream? And what does the dream itself say about the purpose of the dream?

"The tree symbolism was not strange to Nebuchadnezzar. Herodotus tells of the case of Astyages, Nebuchadnezzar's brother-in-law, who had also dreamed of a tree symbolizing his dominion over part of the world. Nebuchadnezzar himself, in an inscription, compares Babylon to a great tree sheltering the nations of the world."—Quoted by J. Doukhan, in *Secrets of Daniel* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 63.

In Daniel 4 the reign of Nebuchadnezzar is symbolized by the tree in the midst of the earth (vs. 22), highlighting its importance. Babylon was approximately in the center of the then known world.

The king then sees "a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven" (vs. 13, *NKJV*). Throughout history God has been the Holy "Watcher" who cares for His people. The prophet Hanani reminded King Asa that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" (*2 Chron. 16:9, NKJV*). Nebuchadnezzar recognized that the Holy Watcher was "similar in appearance to the One who walked with the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace."—Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Feb. 1, 1881.

The stump and the band refer to Nebuchadnezzar's preservation, despite his humiliation. He was to be restored as king after he came to know God. During his madness, he also may have been bound with a bronze chain to restrict his movements. There is some evidence for a Mesopotamian custom of putting metal bands on trees, whether to prevent them from cracking or for some other reason that is not clear. Remnants of a tree with bronze rings or bands were unearthed at Khorsabad, at the entrance to the temple of [the sun god] Shamash. (See J. J. Collins, *Daniel* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], p. 226.)

Read Daniel 4:17. What do you understand those words spoken to the king to mean? Why must the "living" know these things? What comfort does knowing these things give you? At the same time, what difficult questions does this knowledge raise?

Daniel's Advice (*Dan. 4:19-27*).

Compare Daniel 2 with Daniel 4:1-9. What are the parallels between the two events?

Though they share much in common, a few crucial differences exist between the two stories. One of the most striking is that, in Daniel 4, the king doesn't threaten anyone with death. Though he has a long way to go spiritually, perhaps what we see here is a bit of the sanctifying process of God working on him. He no longer wants to kill those who don't satisfy his every whim.

How did the dream affect Daniel, and why was he so reluctant to speak? *Dan. 4:19.*

Daniel was troubled because of the gravity of the situation. How do you tell the king that he will become insane for seven years? Yet, he had to tell him the truth, whatever the consequences. The counsel that Daniel eventually gave indicates that the king could still avoid the threatened judgment. God intended the king to learn a certain lesson from this dream; or, if not from that, from the experience it forecast. Then, when the lesson was learned, his kingdom would be restored to him.

What was it God wanted the king to understand? *Dan. 4:25.* Why would the Lord want him to know this?

God's rulership was the lesson God had been seeking to teach the king from the beginning. Some thirty years earlier Daniel had told the king, “‘the God of heaven has given you a kingdom’” (*Dan. 2:37, 38, NKJV*), but Nebuchadnezzar had set up an image of gold to declare his independence from the Most High. In other words, he had refused to accept God's sovereignty. Now he was given another opportunity to learn this lesson, but again he failed.

The king was someone given great privileges yet who flouted those privileges, someone whom the Lord had touched in a miraculous way and yet who still continued to defy Him. And yet, in all this, God wasn't going to give up on the king (see *Dan. 4:27*). What does this tell us about our God (*Exod. 34:6; 2 Pet. 3:9, 15*)? What hope does this offer to you, who in your own sphere might be guilty of the same thing as Nebuchadnezzar?

The King's Humiliation (*Dan. 4:28-33*).

Why did God punish Nebuchadnezzar when he exclaimed, “‘Is not this the great Babylon I have built?’” (After all, it was true that he had built large parts of the city.) *Dan. 4:30, NIV.*

Babylon covered an area of approximately two square miles. The total length of its inner and outer walls was about thirteen miles long; the double wall fortifying the city measured more than ninety-six feet in width. (See *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 795.) It was a religious center without rival. “A cuneiform tablet of Nebuchadnezzar’s time lists 53 temples dedicated to important gods, 955 smaller sanctuaries, and 384 street altars—all of them within the city confines.”—Page 797. The center of Babylon’s glory was the famous temple tower Etemenanki, dedicated to the god Marduk, which was 300 feet square at the base and more than three hundred feet high. In ancient times it was only surpassed by the two great pyramids at Giza in Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar’s reputation as a builder has been preserved in the writings of the Babylonian priest Berossus. (See Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.19.)

As soon as the boastful words, “‘Is not this the great Babylon I have built?’” (*NIV*), had left the monarch’s lips, judgment was meted out, and he became insane. What do we know about the sickness with which Nebuchadnezzar was afflicted?

Nebuchadnezzar possibly suffered from a form of insanity in which a man thinks that he is an animal. It could have been lycanthropy, which is the wolf-man syndrome, or boanthropy, in which a person thinks he/she is an ox. A Babylonian cuneiform text, published in 1975, may refer to Nebuchadnezzar’s madness. The text states that the king gave contradictory orders, refused to accept counsel, showed love neither to son nor daughter, neglected his family, and no longer performed his duties as head of state. (See Siegfried H. Horn, in *Ministry*, April 1978, p. 40.)

Read carefully verses 28-33 of Daniel 4. The exact thing that Nebuchadnezzar boasted about was the exact thing that he lost. What spiritual principle is seen here? What lessons can we, on a smaller scale, learn from this incident? Contrast what happened here with the story of the rich young ruler (*Matt. 19:16-23*). What differences do you see here in how the Lord dealt with these two people?

Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion (*Dan. 4:34-37*).

Royal conversions are unusual but not unknown. King Agbar of Edessa in Mesopotamia, it is said, became a Christian when the gospel was preached to him.

What were the important points of Nebuchadnezzar's "sermon" after God restored him to his throne? *Dan. 4:34, 35, 37.*

The return of reason is said to have come to the king with his recognition of the true God. "The once proud monarch had become a humble child of God; the tyrannical, overbearing ruler, a wise and compassionate king. He who had defied and blasphemed the God of heaven, now acknowledged the power of the Most High and earnestly sought to promote the fear of Jehovah and the happiness of his subjects. Under the rebuke of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, Nebuchadnezzar had learned at last the lesson which all rulers need to learn—that true greatness consists in true goodness. . . .

"God's purpose that the greatest kingdom in the world should show forth His praise was now fulfilled. This public proclamation, in which Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the mercy and goodness and authority of God, was the last act of his life recorded in sacred history."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 521.

How does Nebuchadnezzar's hymn of praise indicate that he had experienced a true conversion? *Dan. 4:34-37.*

There are a number of indicators to show that this conversion was genuine. (1) His desire to give God publicly the glory at the expense of his own humiliation shows that the once proud monarch no longer thought himself to be the greatest king on earth. (2) In chapter 3 he had defied the God of the Jews; now he acknowledged Him as the true God of heaven who held the king's destiny in His hand. (3) His selfishness and self-glorification gave way to concern for the glory of God.

True repentance and sorrow for sin denote that inward change of mind, affections, convictions, and commitment that leads to the outward turning from sin to God and His service.

Notice carefully the language of Daniel 4:34-37. See the sense of the king's utter dependence upon God. Why is that attitude so crucial for anyone who seeks to serve the Lord? How does the Cross help us understand our total dependence upon God, especially for salvation?

Further Study: Read the chapter entitled "True Greatness" in Ellen G. White's *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 514–521.

"King Nebuchadnezzar, before whom Daniel so often honored the name of God, was finally thoroughly converted, and learned to 'praise and extol and honour the King of heaven.'"—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1170.

"God's judgments against men may be averted by repentance and conversion (see Isa. 38:1, 2, 5; Jer. 18:7-10; Jon. 3:1-10). For this reason God announced the impending judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar but gave him a full year in which to repent, and thus avert the threatened calamity (see Dan. 4:29). However, the king did not change his way of life, and accordingly brought upon himself the execution of the judgment. . . . God forewarns peoples and nations of their impending doom. He sends a message to the world today, warning of its rapidly approaching end. Few may heed such warnings, but because adequate warning has been given them men will be without excuse in the day of calamity."—The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 792.

Discussion Questions:

- ① In the eyes of humankind, Nebuchadnezzar was one of the greatest kings in the ancient world; but in the eyes of God, what really constitutes greatness?
- ② Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of individuals. Is there anything we can do to help a person who is under conviction to yield to God's Spirit?
- ③ A theme seen in this chapter, as well as in some preceding it, is the sovereignty of God. Why is this such an important topic to understand? What role does the Sabbath play in helping us understand this crucial truth?

Summary: The experience of Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter is an illustration of the truth of Proverbs 29:23, "A man's pride will bring him low" (NKJV). Yet, his public confession and his desire to give God the glory indicate that he had a true conversion experience.

My Father Knows, Part 1

Homer Trecartin

No! Michelle silently pleaded. You can't want to be baptized! The color drained from Michelle's cheeks, and tears formed in her eyes. What could she say to this young girl?

Sixteen-year-old Anna had matured so much in the three years since her mother had been—Michelle couldn't bring herself to form the word—since her mother had died. Anna had her mother's fine features and that same peaceful, determined look that her mother, Sofia, had shown when she told Michelle she wanted to give her life to Jesus.

Anna and her brother, Hans, had been attending Michelle's "English" classes for children. It was more like a Vacation Bible School, and forty or fifty children had come each week. They came from all backgrounds, and they enjoyed the singing and stories she shared with them.

When Anna and Hans didn't show up for two weeks, Michelle began to worry. Her translator seemed hesitant to share with her why the children weren't coming. Finally Michelle got impatient and said she would go to the home and talk with the parents herself.

A lovely woman met Michelle and her translator at the door. The woman introduced herself as Sofia and invited them in. Michelle noticed a Bible in the book shelf, and her hopes soared that Sofia was a Christian. But when Sofia excused herself and left the room, Michelle could hear angry voices in a heated argument.

Sofia seemed pale when she returned to the room with tea. Michelle realized her visit was awkward and not well planned. She had not asked her husband to go with her, and it had further alienated Sofia's Muslim husband.

Michelle told Sofia that she enjoyed having Hans and Anna at the "classes" and hoped they could return. Sofia made no promises, but the next week the children were at the meeting when the program began.

Several months passed, and Michelle felt her friendship with Sofia deepening. Sofia began attending the classes with her children. Then one day Sofia confided, "Michelle, I love Jesus. I want to give my heart to Him. I want to carry my Bible openly, not wrapped up in garbage paper. I want people to know I love Jesus!"

Tears of happiness filled Michelle's eyes as she hugged Sofia. She had made mistakes, but God had won the victory. But Michelle's happiness was short lived.

(continued next week)

Homer Trecartin is Secretary-Treasurer of the Middle East Union in Nicosia, Cyprus. This story took place in an undisclosed, predominantly Muslim country. All names have been changed.

Surprise Party



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Daniel 5.

Memory Text: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (*Proverbs 3:5, 6, NKJV*).

As this chapter opens, we see a great banquet hall with a thousand guests. The "thousand" is no exaggeration. Kings in the ancient world were known for their lavish banquets.

Throughout the chapter, Nebuchadnezzar is called the father of Belshazzar (*Dan. 5:2, 11, 13, 18, 22*), referring to the fact that his mother, Nitocris, was probably Nebuchadnezzar's daughter. The word *father* in the Semitic languages can refer to any ancestor or predecessor, not only to the immediate parent. Mephibosheth is called the son of Saul (*2 Sam. 19:24*), whereas he was really the son of Jonathan (*2 Sam. 9:6*). Christ was called the Son of David (*Matt. 9:27*), not because David was His immediate human father but because He was from the lineage of David (*Luke 2:4*).

The Week at a Glance: What was the king's sin? Why did he react as he did to the handwriting on the wall? Why was the king "without excuse" for his actions? In what sense are we all, as Romans 1:20 says, "without excuse"?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 30.

The Handwriting on the Wall (*Dan. 5:1-9*).

When in 539 B.C. Cyrus, the Persian king, marched against Babylon, King Nabonidus, of Babylon, met him with his forces at Opis, on the Tigris, in an attempt to prevent Cyrus from crossing the river. The Babylonians suffered a disastrous defeat, and the Persians pushed immediately through to Sippar, on the Euphrates. Cyrus captured Sippar without a fight in October of 539 B.C. According to the Babylonian chronicle, Nabonidus fled south. Belshazzar, his son, stayed in Babylon, about thirty-five miles south of Sippar, trusting in its strong fortifications.

Surrounded by the enemy, why would Belshazzar give such a banquet and send for the vessels from God's temple (*Dan. 5:1-4*)?

Was it an act of defiance aimed at the Persians and a show of confidence in the strong walls of Babylon? Or was it simply a festival that happened to fall on this particular date? Whatever the reason, Belshazzar's pride and reckless state of mind are shown by his command to bring the vessels from the house of Yahweh.

Read verse 4. Though they were praising the gods of the vessels, how was this an act of defiance against the God of the temple from which those vessels were taken? See *Exod. 20:4, 5; Isa. 45:5; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17*.

No matter how drunk the king and his guests were, they quickly sobered up when they saw the "fingers of a man's hand" writing something on the wall. All of a sudden, the revelry stopped, and a deathly silence filled the room.

What was the king's first reaction when he recovered from the initial shock? *Dan. 5:7*.

Belshazzar calls for an interpretation, but once again, as in the case of his grandfather, the wise men of Babylon are unable to help the king. The inscription was in Aramaic, which, like Hebrew, is written only in consonants, and it was so short that though they could read the individual words, they did not understand their meaning.

Look at the reaction of the king to the writing that he didn't understand (*vs. 6*). Without even knowing what the words meant, he was afraid. What does that reaction imply?

The Queen's Counsel (*Dan. 5:10-12*).

The confusion of Belshazzar and his nobles must have lasted for some time. The news of what had happened was carried throughout the palace and reached the ears of the "queen," who had not been present in the banquet hall. Her identity is uncertain. It was not one of Belshazzar's wives, because they and his concubines were already at the feast (*vs. 3*). Scholars are divided as to whether it was Belshazzar's mother or his grandmother, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar.

The importance of queen mothers is widely attested to in ancient Near Eastern sources. Often the mother of the reigning king held a more important position at the court of her son than his own wife. An inscription from Haran speaks of the influence Belshazzar's mother had on the career of her son, and the Greek historian Herodotus reports that Nebuchadnezzar's wife was renowned for her wisdom. He credits her with the development of the defenses of Babylon.

The king called in all the wise men but Daniel. What does this omission imply about how far removed the king was from the past and the spiritual lessons that he should have learned?

When the queen mother entered the banquet hall, she was able to calm the frazzled king. She remembered that on at least two prior occasions Daniel had been able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, and she must have concluded that if anyone could solve this riddle, it would be Daniel. He evidently was in retirement at that time, though he still lived in Babylon. At the right time, God had the right man ready.

What reasons did the queen give for her confidence that Daniel could decipher the handwriting on the wall? *Dan. 5:11, 12.*

Before urging her son to call Daniel, the queen mother sang the praises of the aged prophet. Her words remind us of Nebuchadnezzar's confession in Daniel chapter 4. The fact that she mentions the name of Daniel twice indicates that she was well acquainted with him. If she was Nebuchadnezzar's widow, it is possible that she shared her husband's conviction regarding Daniel's God.

What lesson do her words about Daniel suggest regarding the power of personal influence? Be honest with yourself: What kind of influence do your words project upon those with whom you come in contact? What do you need to change?

Without Excuse (*Dan. 5:13-24*).

From the way Belshazzar greeted Daniel, we may conclude that Belshazzar was not personally acquainted with Daniel, or he had not seen him for many years. It seems that when Nebuchadnezzar died more than twenty years earlier, Daniel retired from public service. However, the fact that Daniel, in his old age, entered the services of the Persian kings (*Dan. 6:1-3*) indicates that his retirement from Babylonian politics was not a result of ill health or old age. His public censure of Belshazzar (*Dan. 5:22, 23*) may have been one of the factors that led Darius to hire the services of Daniel.

Why could Belshazzar offer Daniel only the third place in the kingdom (*Dan. 5:16*)?

Officially, Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus, was still the king of Babylon. Belshazzar, as coregent, was second in command; therefore, he could offer only the third place to the person who could interpret the writing on the wall.

As we see later, Daniel had no difficulty interpreting the words; but before he did so, he wanted the king to know the reason for the impending tragedy. By recounting the history of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel reminded King Belshazzar that it was the Most High God who had granted Nebuchadnezzar, and by implication also Belshazzar, the authority to rule Babylon (*Dan. 5:18, 23*). He pointed out that at the end of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity, the king acknowledged that "the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses" (*vs. 21, NKJV*).

What was Belshazzar's great sin in the sight of God? *Dan 5:22, 23*.

Although Belshazzar knew firsthand what had happened to his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, he failed to learn from Nebuchadnezzar's experience. His grandfather had been proud, but he had repented and had become a child of God. Belshazzar, on the other hand, chose to defy God's law and authority and refused to humble himself. His sin, therefore, was great and the judgment speedy.

In a sense, Daniel was telling the king that he was "without excuse" (*Rom. 1:20*). Why, in the end, are we all "without excuse"? Even more important, why does the fact we are "without excuse" make the Cross even more crucial to us?

Weighed and Found Wanting (*Dan. 5:25-29*).

What was the message of the handwriting on the wall? *Dan. 5:26-28.*

In Aramaic, the inscription consisted of a series of four words. Because Aramaic, like Hebrew, was written only with consonants, the way in which the words were to be read depended on which vowels were supplied. To the wise men, the letters M N M N T Q L P R S N did not make sense. Some of them may have seen the names of three common weights on the wall, "a mina, a mina, a shekel, and a half-shekel," but translated into modern weights, what did "a pound, a pound, an ounce, and half an ounce" mean? Daniel read them out as "*mene, mene, tekel, upharsin*" and then gave the interpretation: "numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided." The repetition of the first word is a solemn emphasis, just like Jesus' words "verily, verily" in the New Testament (*John 3:11, 5:24*).

MENE means "numbered," because the days of Belshazzar's reign had been numbered, and God had decided to call a halt. *TEKEL* means "weighed." Belshazzar's life and actions were placed on one side of the scales, so to speak, and God's law on the other side. Belshazzar's side, unfortunately, was found wanting. *PERES* means "broken" or "divided." Belshazzar's kingdom was about to be broken and given to the Medes and Persians. There is a play on words here, because the consonants for the word *divided* are the same as for the name Persian (*paras*).

The message, then, was clear and specific. God had numbered or added up the crimes of the king and completed their tally. The period of Babylon's political supremacy was coming to an end. Besides the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and the deliverance of the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace, the mysterious handwriting on the wall was another example of God's direct intervention in human affairs.

If our lives, like Belshazzar's, were placed on a balance (our life on one side and God's law on the other), would we fare much better? And even if we fared better, would we fare well enough? After all, whose life—even that of the most saintly Christian—can stand before God's holy law (*Rom. 3:23*)? In that sense, we aren't all that different, really, from Belshazzar. However, we believe that there is a crucial and defining difference between us as Christians and this king: our faith in the God in "whose hand thy breath is" (*Dan. 5:23*). Read the following texts: Psalm 130:4, John 5:24, Romans 8:1, Ephesians 1:7. How do they explain what we have in Christ that makes all the difference between us and this king, who was doomed now and forever?

Babylon's Fall (*Dan. 5:30, 31*).

While at times God delayed judgment to give people the opportunity to repent (*Jonah 1*), in Belshazzar's case the time of probation was closed.

How the Persians were able to penetrate the seemingly impregnable defenses of the city is explained by the Greek historian Herodotus, who wrote some eighty years after the event happened. He writes that Cyrus diverted the river Euphrates by redirecting its flow, causing the river level to drop as it went beneath the city wall. When the water reached about midway up a man's thigh, the Persian soldiers entered the city via the riverbed. So sure the city could not be taken, the Babylonians grew careless. Thus, the Persians came upon them by surprise and so took the city.—Herodotus, *The Histories* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1954), pp. 90, 91.

From the Babylonian chronicles we learn that Babylon fell on the sixteenth day of Tishri, or on October 12, 539 B.C., in terms of our calendar. Belshazzar was slain, but his father, Nabonidus, who had fled south, surrendered and committed himself to the mercy of Cyrus. According to a Greek report, Cyrus spared his life and gave him a residence in Carmania, a Persian province located along the north shore of the Persian Gulf.

What are some parallels between the fall of literal Babylon in 539 B.C. and the fall of spiritual Babylon in the time of the end? *Jer. 51:8, 51:13, 51:45, 51:60-64; Rev. 14:8; 17:1; 18:4, 18:21-24.*

Around 597 B.C., when Babylon was at the pinnacle of its power, Jeremiah prophesied that Babylon would become “‘a heap, a dwelling place for jackals, an astonishment and a hissing, without an inhabitant’” (*Jer. 51:37, NKJV*). Yet, after its fall to the Persians, it remained an important city. Alexander the Great planned to make it the capital of his empire, but he died prematurely. One of his generals, Seleucus Nicator, chose Opis, to the north, as his capital, which he named Seleucia after himself. He used millions of bricks from Babylon to help build his new capital. Babylon, therefore, sank slowly into obscurity. As century succeeded century, it gradually fell into decay. By A.D. 200 the place was deserted. Covered by the shifting sands of the desert, it became a lost city until archaeologists uncovered it in the nineteenth century.

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 522–538.

"Belshazzar had been given many opportunities for knowing and doing the will of God. He had seen his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar banished from the society of men. He had seen the intellect in which the proud monarch gloried taken away by the One who gave it. He had seen the king driven from his kingdom, and made the companion of the beasts of the field. But Belshazzar's love of amusement and self-glorification effaced the lessons he should never have forgotten; and he committed sins similar to those that brought signal judgments on Nebuchadnezzar. He wasted the opportunities graciously granted him, neglecting to use the opportunities within his reach for becoming acquainted with truth. 'What must I do to be saved?' was a question that the great but foolish king passed by indifferently."—Ellen G. White, *Bible Echo*, April 25, 1898.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Belshazzar was acquainted with many of God's actions; yet, he deliberately chose to ignore them. Why do we all tend to do the same thing; that is, ignore what God has done in our life or in the lives of others? What's the main reason?
- ❷ What practical steps can we take when we weigh our lives in the balances and find that they are wanting? Why is the Cross the first place we must go if we want to change?
- ❸ What is the relevance of this chapter to the second angel's message, in Revelation 14:8?
- ❹ In Daniel 5:23, Daniel tells the king that he has ignored the God "in whose hand thy breath is." What does that statement mean? How does it fit in with the overall context of the previous chapters?

Summary: In spite of the experiences of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, with which Belshazzar was acquainted, the king chose to defy the God of heaven and suffered the consequences. It is a sad commentary on the fact that the wisdom of parents and grandparents cannot always be passed on to the next generations. The individual's eternal destiny rests on his or her own choice.

My Father Knows, Part 2

Homer Trecartin

Michelle was still rejoicing over the news that her friend Sofia wanted to follow Christ when neighbors came to tell Michelle that Sofia was in a coma. Michelle rushed to the hospital and found Sofia lying unconscious. Bruises and wounds covered her body.

Michelle wanted to run from the room. What had she done to her friend by sharing Christ? How could her husband do this to her? Michelle took Sofia's hand and began to pray. As she prayed, she felt Sofia's hand tighten in hers.

Sofia came out of the coma briefly when her brother visited. She begged him to give his life to God; then she slipped back into the coma and died.

Michelle was numb with grief and guilt. She agonized over what she could have done differently to prevent this senseless murder. During the week of mourning, Michelle visited Sofia's home and sat with the women every day. She did it for Hans and Anna, to let them know she cared. But her presence had an impact on others, as well. Even Sofia's husband seemed to soften.

One day Sofia's husband came to ask Michelle's forgiveness for what he had done to Sofia. Michelle nodded, but in her heart a battle waged. How could she really forgive a man who had murdered his wife, the mother of his children, her friend?

Two years later he again visited Michelle. He wanted to remarry and wanted her advice. Michelle listened in stunned silence to this man's description of the woman he now loved. Michelle encouraged him to marry the woman.

Hans and Anna seemed to adapt well to their new mother. Then, without warning, Anna came to Michelle and asked to be baptized. Images of a bruised and beaten Sofia flooded Michelle's mind.

"No!" she whispered fiercely. "Anna, don't you remember what happened to your mother?"

"Yes," Anna said, "but I want to be baptized."

"But Anna," Michelle protested, "you must ask your father."

"My father knows," Anna replied, "and he is happy for me. He wants me to follow my conscience."

Tears of joy streamed down Michelle's cheeks as she hugged Anna tightly. She prayed for the girl, for her father, and for those whose lives will be touched by Anna's decision to follow Jesus.

Homer Trecartin is Secretary-Treasurer of the Middle East Union in Nicosia, Cyprus. This story took place in an undisclosed, predominantly Muslim country. All names have been changed.

An Ancient Death Decree



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Daniel 6.

Memory Text: “ ‘My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him’ ” (Daniel 6:22, NKJV).

Daniel in the lions’ den: If it’s not the first story learned by children who have grown up in a Bible-oriented home, then it’s certainly one of the first.

At the same time, the issues it raises aren’t so simple. After all, history records many examples of Christians who, standing firm like Daniel (“Dare to Be a Daniel,” as a song goes), didn’t fare so well when tossed into the lions’ den. As we all know, even today, in a world where Christians still die for their faith, the endings aren’t so happy, at least the endings we see now.

Sure, this chapter raises a lot of questions. But that’s the nature of truth: The more we learn, the more we realize what we need to know. This week, let’s learn a little more and come away with a realization of how little we really know.

The Week at a Glance: What have we learned so far about the character of Daniel? What are the pitfalls of jealousy? What reasons would Daniel have had if he had chosen to pray in secret as opposed to doing what he had always done? What did the king learn about God after Daniel had been spared death? Why is forced obedience meaningless in the sight of God?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 6.

Daniel, the Characteristics of a Faithful Servant (*Dan. 6:1-4*).

"Ye shall know them by their fruits" (*Matt. 7:16*).

When Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians, God's hand was over Daniel, and he was not killed as were Belshazzar and his nobles. When the new king, Darius, put together his new government, he appointed Daniel as one of the three governors over the whole realm. He had obviously heard of Daniel's exceptional wisdom and ability, and to have such a qualified local administrator could only help the Persians in ruling the conquered nation.

Daniel exemplified in his life the type of people God had in mind when Ellen White wrote: "The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold; men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall."—*Education*, p. 57.

What were some of the qualities that made Daniel stand out as a leader of men? *Dan. 6:3, 4.*

Look up the following verses taken from previous chapters in Daniel. Write out what we can extract from the texts about Daniel's character.

Dan. 1:8

Dan. 2:20-23

Dan. 2:49

Dan. 5:11, 12

Dan. 5:17

The Plot Against Daniel (*Dan. 6:5-9*).

Read Daniel 6:4, 5. Does this mean Daniel was sinless? If not, why not? How do you interpret what was meant about his character?

Though the text itself doesn't say why they wanted to do Daniel in, more than likely they were jealous of this Jew, this foreigner, who was in a top place in the kingdom. Indeed, if you read verse 2, Daniel clearly was one of the most powerful and influential people in the court; second, it would seem, to the king himself. It's not hard to imagine someone coveting that slot. We see here another manifestation of the first sin, Lucifer's in heaven, when he coveted a position that was not his.

What part of Daniel's life did the governors and satraps select as the area of their attack, and why? *Dan. 6:5*.

Having failed to find anything in Daniel's character or professional activities that they could have used to discredit him before Darius, the governors and satraps turned to his religion. Because there was no apparent conflict between his religious life and the performance of his duties, they had to invent one.

Their claim before Darius that all the governors, administrators, satraps, counselors, and advisors had consulted together was greatly exaggerated. The majority of them probably were scattered across the kingdom and did not even know what was going on. But their flattery achieved its purpose. The bait was thrown out, and the king took it.

The decree stated no one could petition "any god or man for thirty days" (vs. 7, *NKJV*). Because the issue concerned worship, the reference to "man" most likely refers to the Babylonian priests who were the mediators between the people and their gods. In other words, during this period of thirty days, only the king was to be the priest for the people. This would be a humbling experience for the local priests and a test of loyalty to the new Persian government. "The suggested mode of compelling every subject in the former Babylonian domain to acknowledge the authority of Persia seemed a statesmanlike measure that would contribute to the unification of the Middle and Near East."—Frank E. Gaebelein, gen. ed., "Daniel"—"Minor Prophets," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1985), vol. 7, p. 79.

Who hasn't experienced the bonds that jealousy can wrap around us? Think about times when you've been trapped by this sin. Over what were you jealous? Why? (Doesn't it all seem so trite and trivial now?) How does death to self, at the Cross, provide the only escape?

The Matter of Prayer (*Dan. 6:10-18*).

To close the shutters of his window and to pray to God in the solitude of his room would have been an easy way out for Daniel. After all, from the Sermon on the Mount we know that Jesus said: “‘When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place’” (*Matt. 6:6, NKJV*). Maybe it would have been the easy way out, but would it have been wrong? Why make trouble when you don’t need to?

Write down any reasons why Daniel should have closed the door and not given his enemies any opportunity to do him harm. What biblical evidence can you find for your reasons?

Write down any reasons why Daniel should have done what he had always done, despite the trap he was knowingly stepping into? What biblical evidence can you find for your reasons?

After Sunday legislation was passed in California, A. T. Jones urged Adventists to defy the laws openly; that is, to do whatever work they would normally do. In contrast, Ellen White specifically told Adventists not to defy those laws: “To defy the Sunday laws will but strengthen in their persecution the religious zealots who are seeking to enforce them. Give them no occasion to call you lawbreakers. . . . One does not receive the mark of the beast because he shows that he realizes the wisdom of keeping the peace by refraining from work that gives offense, doing at the same time a work of the highest importance.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 232. In fact, in another place she wrote, in the context of Sunday laws, that instead of openly violating the law, Seventh-day Adventists should hold additional worship services on Sunday, as well as on the true Sabbath. (See page 233.) Why do you think she took this position, as opposed to A. T. Jones’s?

Whatever the reasons, Daniel chose to take the more difficult route. Suppose, however, that instead of being delivered from the lions, he had been eaten up. Would Daniel still have done the right thing? Justify your answer.

Daniel in the Lions' Den (*Dan. 6:19-23*).

The den of lions was probably an underground pit with perpendicular walls and an opening at the top. The condemned were lowered or thrown into it from above. In this particular case, a large stone was rolled over the opening and sealed with the king's signet ring and that of his nobles. The seal was a guarantee to Daniel's enemies that no attempt would be made to save him but also to the king that Daniel would not be harmed in any way if, as the king hoped, the God of Daniel should preserve him from the lions.

What does Darius's question next morning at the lions' den reveal about his acquaintance with Daniel's faith? *Dan. 6:20*. Read between the lines. What do those words teach us about the kind of witness that Daniel was for the Lord?

What's fascinating in Daniel's reply is his statement that God spared him because of his "innocency." What could Daniel mean by that? Certainly someone as closely connected to the Lord as Daniel had to understand his sinfulness. Indeed, it's hard to imagine anyone who has ever had any kind of genuine experience with God not being made acutely aware of his or her own moral shortcomings and sinfulness.

Review Romans 3:9-20. What does that tell us about human nature?

Instead, and in marked contrast to Belshazzar (*see Dan. 5:6*), Daniel seemed to be operating out of a clear conscience; he knew that he was living in harmony with the Lord and that he had done nothing wrong that would have justified his being thrown into the pit with a bunch of ravenous carnivores. In other words, Daniel wasn't secretly stealing money from the king's treasury or secretly planning a revolt, something that could have made this punishment justifiable. In that sense, his conscience was clear, and that enabled him, no doubt, to have some sense of peace. Although Daniel probably did not know the end from the beginning, his clear conscience must have given him some courage in this situation.

Whatever you're doing wrong, sooner or later, it's going to come to light (*Matt. 10:26*)—you can be sure of it. Write a prayer, asking God to give you not only the will to discard this sin but the power to, as well. Repent and turn away before it comes back to haunt you, because you can be sure that it will.

Darius Honors God (*Dan. 6:24-28*).

Darius was “exceedingly glad” when he discovered that Daniel had survived the lions’ den. At the same time, he vented his anger on the men who had deceived him. However harsh and unjust the punishment might have seemed (after all, the men’s wives and children were thrown into the pit with them), it was a common custom of despots back then to kill whole families, along with the condemned men. From a purely practical standpoint, it should have given people pause before violating the laws; on another level, it’s a crude example of how our sins and wrongdoing can impact others.

Read carefully Daniel 6:25-27. What are the things about Daniel’s God that the king acknowledges? Is he correct? Compare what the king says with these following texts: Psalm 59:1, 2; Acts 2:22; Galatians 1:4; 1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 2:4; 10:31; James 1:17. How accurate of a portrayal of God did the king give?

The king clearly had somewhat of an accurate understanding of the character and power of God, especially after such a manifestation of the Lord’s power and character. At the same time, though, it was still a limited understanding. This is seen best, perhaps, in the decree that he issued.

Read Daniel 6:26. What about the king’s decree exposes his lack of understanding about God?

In a sense, the Lord wants us to “tremble and fear” before Him, but only because of who He is, holy and pure, and who we are, unholy and impure, in comparison. This is something, however, that never can be decreed or instituted by any person or government or even a church. A relationship with the Lord needs to be based on our own personal encounter with Him, with His love, His mercy, His power in contrast to our sinfulness, our helplessness, and our great need of redemption. Out of that alone we worship Him, a point lost on the king.

A man was studying the Bible with his young daughter. After he told her how much he wanted her to love the Lord, she asked, “Daddy, would you force me to love God if you could?” What would you answer, and why?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 539–548.

“Daniel, the prime minister of the greatest of earthly kingdoms, was at the same time a prophet of God, receiving the light of heavenly inspiration. A man of like passions as ourselves, the pen of inspiration describes him as without fault. His business transactions, when subjected to the closest scrutiny of his enemies, were found to be without one flaw. He was an example of what every businessman may become when his heart is converted and consecrated, and when his motives are right in the sight of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, p. 254.

“From the story of Daniel’s deliverance we may learn that in seasons of trial and gloom God’s children should be just what they were when their prospects were bright with hope and their surroundings all that they could desire. Daniel in the lions’ den was the same Daniel who stood before the king as chief among the ministers of state and as a prophet of the Most High. A man whose heart is stayed upon God will be the same in the hour of his greatest trial as he is in prosperity, when the light and favor of God and of man beam upon him. Faith reaches to the unseen, and grasps eternal realities.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 545.

Discussion Questions:

- ① What parallels can be drawn between Christ’s life and Daniel’s life? What are the differences?
- ② What is the relationship between a person’s devotional life and the ability to meet tests of faith? Is it simply a matter of how much time one spends in study and prayer?
- ③ Read over the last line in the second Ellen G. White quote above. What is she talking about? Rephrase in your own words what she said. How can you make this idea practical in your life?

Summary: From Daniel’s experience in the lions’ den, we learn that those who will inherit the kingdom of God are not necessarily the strongest physically or the brightest intellectually. Rather, they will be those who have fully surrendered to the Lord and committed their lives to Him, regardless of the consequences.

Modern-day Waldenses

J. H. Zachary

During the thirteenth to nineteenth centuries, young believers, called Waldenses, suffered religious persecution and were forced to flee to the safety of mountain homes. But they did not stay there; they left their mountain homes to scatter religious literature across Europe. When they found interested persons, they pulled hidden portions of scripture from their garments to share with the families they met.

Today the Waldensian history is repeating itself in Southeast Asia, where the church is sending out young people to share the gospel in unentered areas within their territory. Trained as literature evangelists and equipped with the skills of personal evangelism, the youth go out two by two to visit communities that have for years resisted the gospel. They earn their living selling literature, and the church provides for their housing.

Sam and a friend volunteered to serve for a year in this program and were assigned to a village that had once had a small Adventist congregation. Their task was to reopen the Adventist church that had been closed for months. They found the churchyard overgrown with weeds and bushes and spent several days clearing the yard so the church would be visible.

They began visiting villagers, but they were met with hostility. They could not find the backslidden members, and others did not welcome them. Discouraged, they prayed for God to open a way for them.

It was the rice harvest season, and every able-bodied family member was working in the rice paddies. Sam and his companion volunteered to help with the harvest. At first, families hesitated to let them help, but with sickles in hand, the boys began to cut the rice. They joined in the fellowship of working and eating together. They continued working until the fields were harvested. Grateful families gave them generous gifts of rice.

After the harvest when the boys returned to selling literature and contacting former members, the people of the community welcomed them into their homes and bought their health books. In time former members joined the young men for Bible studies, and small groups formed. Before their year was over, the boys were worshiping with a group of 25 Sabbath keepers.

Sam rejoiced to see God at work in his life. He has signed up again for his fifth year of service as a Waldensian volunteer.



J. H. Zachary (left) was coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour.

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Daniel's History Lesson



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 7.*

Memory Text: "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition" (*2 Thessalonians 2:3, NKJV*).

The vision in Daniel 7 (given about 553 B.C., the first year of Belshazzar's coregency with his father, Nabonidus) is largely parallel to the vision in chapter 2. Some reasons for this repetition may be:

1. Fifty years had gone by since Nebuchadnezzar had received his vision in Daniel 2.
2. To repeat important matters is a good principle of teaching.
3. Daniel 2 gave a general survey of the future from Nebuchadnezzar's days until the Second Advent. Daniel 7 enlarges on the time period between the fourth empire and Christ's return to earth.
4. Daniel 2 portrays the worldly empires from a political and military viewpoint. Daniel 7 includes the spiritual power that plays an important role in the great controversy. Whatever the reasons for the parallel to the earlier chapter, Daniel 7 is a powerful prophecy, one filled with important—and relevant—truth for our time.

The Week at a Glance: What is the essence of the vision in Daniel 7? What is the fourth beast? What is the little-horn power that arises out of, but is still part of, the fourth beast? How did the medieval church justify its persecution of heretics? What does the time prophecy in Daniel 7:25 represent?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 13.

The Vision (*Dan. 7:1-8*).

In his vision Daniel sees the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea. As a result of it, four wild beasts emerge from the water.

What explanations can we glean from Scripture for most of the symbols appearing in this vision?

Winds (Jer. 25:31-33) _____

Water (Isa. 57:20, Rev. 17:15) _____

The four beasts (Dan. 7:17) _____

Lion (Dan. 2:38) _____

Bear (Dan. 5:28, 8:20) _____

Leopard (Dan. 8:21, 11:2) _____

Any history book about the ancient world will confirm that the great world powers following Babylon were Media-Persia and Greece. But what about the fourth power, the dreadful and terrible beast? Though not specifically named in Scripture, history confirms that the power that defeated Greece was Rome, the only sensible identification for the fourth beast.

What are the similarities between the expressions used to describe the fourth kingdom in Daniel 2 and the fourth kingdom in Daniel 7?
Compare Dan. 2:40 and Dan. 7:7, 23.

World power may be said to have passed from the Greeks to the Romans at the battle of Pydna, in 168 B.C., where the Romans won a complete victory over Macedonia, which was divided into four confederacies that eventually became a Roman province. Thus, within another century of conquests, the world was united under Rome. History affirms, again, God's foreknowledge of world events.

The Little Horn (*Dan. 7:8, 23-25*).

The Roman Empire did not succumb to another world empire, as had the previous kingdoms; instead, it disintegrated. From A.D. 330 on, when Emperor Constantine moved the seat of government from Rome to Constantinople, a long decline began in the western half of the empire. Its authority slowly disappeared, its vitality evaporated, and its apparatus of government faded away. Into this void stepped the barbaric tribes from the north, who carved the empire up into many smaller pieces and in A.D. 476 deposed Romulus Augustulus, the last of the Western emperors.

What happens to the fourth beast, as depicted in Daniel 7:19, 20, 24?

The prophecy does not treat the horns of the beast independently; on the contrary, they are presented as a continuation of its activities. The horns correspond to the mingling of the iron with the earthenware in the feet and toes of the image of Daniel 2. As in Daniel 2, the fourth empire, as a single power, broke apart; this was depicted in Daniel 7 as the activity of the ten horns. They represent the European nations that emerged from the Roman Empire and, to a large extent, maintained her civilization.

What are the specific characteristics of the little horn, and what power does it represent? *Dan. 7:8, 24, 25.*

Historians tell us that “out of the ruins of political Rome, arose the great moral Empire in the ‘giant form’ of the Roman Church.” —Alexander Flick, *The Rise of the Mediaeval Church* (New York: B. Franklin, 1959), p. 150, quoted in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 9, article 1142, p. 878. Indeed, when the western half of the Roman Empire fell to the Germanic tribes, the Bishop of Rome became an important figure in the West, and soon he exercised not only spiritual but also political power. “*The Roman Church in this way privily pushed itself into the place of the Roman World Empire, of which it is the actual continuation;* the empire has not perished, but has only undergone a transformation.” —Adolf Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (quoted in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 9, article 1359, p. 841, author’s emphasis).

Again, don’t miss this point: The persecuting little-horn power arises out of the *Roman Empire*—it never ceases to be a *Roman* power. Why is this point especially important for us to remember, particularly in the context of last-day events, when all sorts of wild speculation is made about the identity of end-time players?

Persecution of the Saints (*Dan. 7:25*).

Jesus warned (*in Matt. 24:9*) that His followers would be persecuted. What do you read in Daniel 7 about the activity of the little-horn power that fulfills this prediction?

Christians were persecuted during the time of the pagan Roman Empire (the fourth beast itself), but the persecution mentioned in Daniel 7:25 is a persecution of the saints by the little horn, which arose only after the pagan phase had ended. The best-known example of this persecution is the Inquisition. In the Middle Ages, the growing threat of so-called heretical groups led the church to use secular authority to repress what it deemed heresy. In today's climate, with all the talk about Christian unity, these atrocities are not talked about much anymore, but untold numbers perished at the hands of the little-horn power, depicted in Daniel 7.

It is difficult for us to comprehend how people who claimed to be followers of Jesus could torture and kill other Christians. How did they justify this horrible action, all in the name of Christ? See, as an example of this kind of thinking, John 16:2.

The theological justification for the Inquisition was based on Augustine's (A.D. 354–430) understanding of Luke 14:23 where Jesus in the parable of the great supper, says, “ ‘ ‘Compel them to come in’ ’ ” (*NKJV*). Augustine took this to mean “Force them, if they do not come of their own free will.”

The great Roman Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1224–1274) responded to a question concerning the heretics by saying, “If forgers of money and other evil-doers are condemned to death at once by the secular authority, much more reason is there for heretics, as soon as they are convicted of heresy, to be not only excommunicated but even put to death.”

However horrendous, this thinking should serve as a warning: Those who believe that God is behind what they do are capable of great evil. Why, then, do we need to be so very careful in how we seek to justify our own actions, particularly when we do them in the name of God and for what we believe is His cause?

Changing Times and Laws (*Dan. 7:25*).

Compare Daniel 2:21 and Daniel 7:25. In what specific way does the little horn seek to take upon itself what belongs only to God? How does this action parallel with what is written in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4?

The word for “times” in this text is the same Aramaic word rendered “seasons” in Daniel 2:21. God as the Creator of the times can change them, but the little horn arrogantly claims this power for himself by the attempted change of the “time” of the Sabbath, the one commandment that points to the Lord in His role as Creator—the role that makes Him, and Him alone, God.

Read the following texts (*Gen. 2:1-4; Exod. 20:8; Isa. 40:28; 44:6-8; 45:5, 6*). Together, what message do they have for us, particularly in the context of today’s study?

As Adventists, we love to circulate all sorts of quotes from early Catholic sources mocking Protestants—who claim the Bible as their rule of faith—for keeping Sunday, a day not commanded in the Bible but, instead, was formally instituted by the authority of the Roman Church.

What was the reason for this change? Both external pressures and internal pressures on the church forced many Christians to break radically with the Jews. The conflict between the Jews and the empire caused many of these Christians to develop a new identity, one that helped them avoid the repressive measures applied to the Jews under Roman dominion. Meanwhile, the Judaeo-Christians who insisted on the literal observance of certain Mosaic regulations helped push many others to sever their ties with Judaism in every way possible.

Christians of the first four centuries never confused Sabbath with Sunday but for a time celebrated both, as indicated in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (pseudonymous work, c. A.D. 375). “Keep the Sabbath, and the Lord’s day festival; because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 9, article 1414, p. 878.

The change of the Sabbath didn’t happen overnight. Slowly but surely, with one small step at a time, the apostasy from God’s law began. But it can happen only as individuals, one by one, allow it to happen. Had the masses stayed faithful, the changes never would have come. What lessons are in here for us?

A Time Prophecy (*Dan 7:25*).

This time period of three and one-half times, or three and one-half years, is again mentioned in Daniel 12:7 and in various ways in the book of Revelation. Though space doesn't allow for us to show why, all the texts below are talking about the same time period.

Look up these texts and write down the time prophecies given in each one. What can we learn by comparing them with one another?

Dan. 7:25

Dan. 12:7

Rev. 11:2

Rev. 11:3

Rev. 12:6

Rev. 12:14

Rev. 13:5

A comparison of these texts shows that a prophetic year has 360 days, and thus three and one-half years is the same as 1,260 prophetic days, or 42 prophetic months. As Adventists, we have long believed, and rightly so, that these prophecies demand the day/year principle. Among the biblical reasons for the day/year principle are the following: (1) The visions are symbolic, hence the times indicated should also be symbolic. (2) As the visions extend over long time periods, the times specified, therefore, should also be seen as extending over long periods of time. (3) The peculiar way in which the time periods are expressed also indicates that they must apply symbolically; i.e., the fact that the word *years* is never used in any of the time expressions can be explained only on the basis of the year/day principle. (4) The pragmatic test of this principle in Daniel 9:24-27 indicates that, indeed, years are intended.

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 51–55.

Notice the parallel between Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. We clearly can see how the two chapters are dealing with the same events, though from different perspectives.

| Daniel 2 | Daniel 7 |
|---------------|---------------|
| Babylon | Babylon |
| Media-Persia | Media-Persia |
| Greece | Greece |
| Rome | Rome |
| Second Coming | Second Coming |

Discussion Question:

As mentioned earlier in the week, Adventists love to quote Roman Catholic sources that blatantly boast of Rome's authority in changing the Sabbath to Sunday. In most cases, however, those are older quotes. Rome, today, appears to be taking a different tack on this issue. The best example is the apostolic letter, issued by Pope John Paul II in 1998, called *Dies Domini* (the Lord's Day), in which the pope admonishes the flock to be more faithful in keeping Sunday. What's interesting, however, is that instead of boasting about the church's authority to change the Sabbath day, as apologists for Rome and Sunday so frequently did in the past, the letter in some places sounds like our defense of the seventh-day Sabbath. The pope even goes back to the Genesis Creation account as part of the reason for keeping Sunday, even quoting Genesis 2:2. Why do you think Rome has changed its approach to its defense of Sunday? How does this change fit with our understanding of last-day events?

Summary: God granted Daniel a preview of world history from the days of Babylon down to the time when the saints will receive the kingdom. After the four world powers (Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome), there was to come a religio-political power that would continue until the time of the end.

One Good Accident

Jin Long*

Brother Lee* is a Global Mission pioneer. He had been working in southern China for several months without any apparent success, in spite of his best efforts.

Then one day Brother Lee was involved in a serious accident that also involved another man. Both victims were sent to the hospital and placed in the same room. During their lengthy recuperation Brother Lee had plenty of time to become acquainted with his roommate. By the time the men were released from the hospital, the two men had become good friends, and Brother Lee had led his roommate to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior. In fact, the two men decided to work together for God.

Brother Lee learned that his new friend's wife had been paralyzed by a stroke and was confined to their home. She could not walk or take care of herself. Brother Lee asked a kind Adventist woman to visit this man's wife. The Adventist woman gave her massage and other natural treatments. Before long the woman could stand and move slowly around using a cane.

This woman's healing created interest in knowing more about God, and before long several people were meeting in a small group with Brother Lee. They meet for worship in a small room that they have rented. The little group is growing.

Brother Lee is happy that the Lord has used an unfortunate situation to bring him in contact with someone whose heart was searching for a better life. Through this unfortunate incident God continues to work in the lives of this family. Even his friend's mother-in-law, a lifelong Buddhist, began warming to the gospel as she saw the power of God to heal her daughter.

The wife's healing continued through patient massage and natural treatments, and eventually she was able to throw away her cane and even resume working. Her mother has accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior and removed the idols from her home. A white sheet covers the wall where they once were encased, and today the little group of 11 believers meets in her home.

Recently Brother Lee informed church leaders that the local religious authorities have given his group of believers permission to build their own church. With permission to build a legal church, surely the group will continue to grow. Brother Lee thanks God for keeping His promise that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (*Rom. 8:28, NIV*).

* Jin Long (all names in this story have been changed) is a Global Mission pioneer working in China.

The Pre-Advent Judgment



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Dan. 7:9-14, 21, 22, 26-28.*

Memory Text: "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (*1 Peter 4:17, NKJV*).

During the closing days of World War II, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a young German theologian, was escorted from his prison cell and hanged for high treason. In 1996, a court in Berlin officially declared Dietrich Bonhoeffer innocent of the charges that led to his execution.

Something similar happens in the pre-Advent judgment. Though God's people are accused and maligned by Satan and his followers here on earth, before the universe they will be exonerated in the judgment. Indeed, the judgment is given in behalf of God's faithful people. The heavenly court will rehabilitate God's people and pronounce a judgment in favor of the saints (*Dan. 7:22*). This pre-Advent judgment is, then, part of the good news. Far from being a relic of Adventist history, the pre-Advent judgment is a vital part of God's plan of salvation—and only by understanding it can one fully appreciate the good news of the gospel.

The Week at a Glance: Why would an omniscient God need an investigation? How does the great-controversy motif help us understand the need for a judgment? How does the idea of a pre-Advent judgment appear in the Old Testament? In the New? What is the purpose of the judgment? What kind of assurance can we have in it? What is the link between the judgment and the Second Coming?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 20.

Investigative Judgments in the Old Testament (*Gen. 3:9-19*).

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Daniel 7 teaches what has come to be known as the pre-Advent or investigative judgment. Interestingly enough, the concept of an investigation prior to judgment is found early on in the Bible.

What do the following passages teach us about the concept of an *investigative judgment*? *Gen. 3:9-19; 18:20, 21; 19:24, 25.*

From God's handling of the first sin, a pattern of judicial procedure emerges. First comes the inquiry, or investigation: " 'Where are you?' " " 'Who told you?' " " 'Have you eaten from the tree?' " " 'What is this you have done?' " (*Gen. 3:9-13, NKJV*). Only after this investigation is completed is the verdict announced (*vss. 14-19*).

The way Scripture depicts God's handling of Sodom and Gomorrah is also significant. Most of Genesis 18 and 19 describe God's deliberations prior to His punitive act.

When Moses writes that God said "I will go down now and see . . ." (*NKJV*), he is simply describing God's investigation of the actual facts before punishment is inflicted.

A natural question is Why would God, who knows all things (*see Job 37:16; Prov. 5:21; Isa. 46:9, 10; 2 Tim. 2:19*), need to conduct an investigation? Didn't He already know exactly what was going on in those two cities? Plus, why did He have to ask Adam and Eve what they had done? Certainly, He knew what they did.

First, at least in the case of Adam and Eve, it seems that He required an account from the perpetrators, and the process of inquiry heightens the awareness of the transgressors of the sinfulness of their actions.

Second, it's crucial to keep in context the idea of the great controversy. We are not alone in the universe; the whole question of sin and evil and rebellion involves more than just humans (*see Job 1; 2; Eph. 3:10; Rev. 15:4; Rom. 8:22, 23*). Other intelligent beings, not omniscient (as is the Lord), are watching (*1 Cor. 4:9*). With this context and background in mind, we can better understand the need of an open investigation prior to judgment.

How does the concept of the great controversy, with other intelligent life watching what is happening, help you understand the need for an investigation prior to the execution of a sentence? Why wouldn't it be fair to punish or to exonerate anyone in a trial without first presenting all the facts?

The Pre-Advent Judgment in the New Testament (*Matt. 22:1-14*).

The concept of an investigative, pre-Advent judgment appears also in the New Testament. The parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22 is a prime example.

Read Matthew 22:1-14. Where do you see the concept of an “investigation” here prior to the execution of a judgment?

The king’s inspection of the guests represents a process of investigation. The result of this investigation determines who may remain and who may not. In this sense it is a picture of the pre-Advent judgment in heaven going on now.

Read carefully John 5:28, 29 and Revelation 20:4-6. Where in these verses do you see the idea that a judgment has already taken place prior to the events depicted in these texts?

Many Bible interpreters admit that Revelation 20 teaches two literal resurrections, separated by one thousand years. Inasmuch as only the “blessed and holy” come up in the first resurrection, a prior judgment must have taken place to determine who will take part in the first one.

The Lutheran theologian Joseph A. Seiss writes, “The resurrection, and the changes which pass ‘in the twinkling of an eye’ upon the living, are themselves the fruits and embodiments of antecedent judgment. They are the consequences of adjudications then already made. Strictly speaking, men are neither raised nor translated, in order to come to judgment. Resurrections and translations are products of judgment previously passed upon the dead as dead, and upon the quick as quick. ‘The dead in Christ shall rise first,’ because they are already adjudged to be in Christ.”—*The Apocalypse, Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1973), p. 181.

Meanwhile, in Revelation 14 the harvest of the earth (*vss. 14-20*) is preceded by the first angel’s message, “‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come’” (*Rev. 14:7, NKJV*). When we look at the sequence of events portrayed in this chapter, we conclude that the judgment spoken of in verse 7 precedes the execution of the judgment at Christ’s second advent.

Read again the parable and focus on one point: the desire of the host to have people attend his son’s wedding feast. What does that tell us about the character of God and His desire to save all those invited to the feast?

The Son of Man and the Pre-Advent Judgment

As Daniel watched the heavenly court scene, he saw “‘One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven’” to the Ancient of Days (*Dan. 7:13, NKJV*). The phrase “‘like the Son of Man’” simply means that this figure was in human form.

Who is this “Son of Man,” and what is His role in the pre-Advent judgment? *Mark 10:45, John 5:22, 1 Tim. 2:5.*

The “Son of Man” was Jesus’ own favorite title for Himself. Others called Him *Prophet* or *Messiah* or *Son of David* or *Son of God*, because these terms meant to them a glorious conquering king who would immediately fulfill their personal and national hopes. But Jesus used this title about forty times to emphasize His connection with humanity (*Matt. 8:20, 9:6, 10:23, 11:19, 12:8, etc.*). At the same time, it was a Messianic title (based on this text in Daniel), and the chief priests recognized it as such (*Matt. 26:64, 65*), which explained their reaction. Thus, one thing we can be sure of: Jesus is at the center of this heavenly judgment scene in Daniel 7.

What verdict is rendered in this heavenly judgment? See *Dan. 7:22.*

What’s crucial to understand is that this judgment ends with good news for God’s people. First, verse 22 says that “judgment was given in favor of the saints of the most High” (*NKJV*); that is, judgment was rendered in favor of the saints, of God’s people. This is a chapter depicting, among other things, more of God’s work in behalf of His “saints.”

Read Daniel 7:18, 22, 27. Whatever the differences in the texts, all refer to one common element. What is it, and what hope does it promise for God’s people?

In Daniel 7, we see the Lord working in behalf of His people amid the turbulence, the persecution, and violence depicted in the chapter. We are in the midst of a great controversy; Daniel 7 focuses on one aspect of that controversy. Even more so, He shows us how it will ultimately end, and that end is good news for His people.

Vindication and Condemnation: the Little Horn, the Saints, and the Pre-Advent Judgment

If the judgment in Daniel 7 is really about the saints, why is it depicted in the context of the persecuting little horn?

Good question, and the answer, very briefly, can be found in the Hebrew concept of justice and judgment, which involves not only the vindication of the innocent but the punishment of the guilty. The little horn does its evil against God's people; ultimately, there is a judgment that not only vindicates the Lord's people—"and judgment was passed *in favor of the saints'*" (*Dan. 7:22, NASB, emphasis supplied*)—but that brings the wicked little horn to final justice: "But the judgment shall sit, and they [the saints] shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end" (*vs. 26*).

In other words, in the context of the pre-Advent judgment, the depiction of the demise of the little horn, the symbol of evil, makes perfect sense. It's no mystery that they are linked. It's typical in the Hebrew understanding of justice, judgment, and vindication: All occur together.

Read Deuteronomy 25:1 and 1 Kings 8:32. How do we see the concept expressed above manifested in these two texts?

In both verses we see the principle shown in Daniel 7: the wicked punished, the righteous justified. This is judgment, and it's why Daniel 7 depicts in the context of the judgment the demise of the anti-Christian horn power. In the final judgment, not only are God's people vindicated, but the persecutor is punished.

No question that the *result* of the judgment brings about the final demise of the little horn (after all, it brings about the end of all earthly kingdoms). The judgment, which leads to the Second Coming, is simply not limited only to the end of the little horn. It's a much grander, broader event that leads to the vindication of the saints, as well as the demise of their (and God's) enemies.

"If there is a court case," wrote Roy Gane, of Andrews University, "that results in one party winning and the other losing, it is because the two parties are opposed to each other. Through investigation, one is found to be right and the other wrong. The 'horn' is opposed to Christ. It speaks arrogant words against 'the Most High,' oppresses His people, and intends to change God's law. The horn power is a rebel who claims control instead of Christ."

"When Christ wins in the judgment, His loyal people win with Him."—*Altar Call* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Diadem, 1999), p. 241.

The Time of the Pre-Advent Judgment

While Daniel 7 itself does not provide us with a precise date for the commencement of the pre-Advent judgment, it does give us a time frame within which the judgment takes place.

What does Daniel 7:8-10, 21, 22, 25, 26 tell us about the time of the investigative judgment?

In all three depictions of the judgment, it is shown to begin *after* a specific phase of the little-horn power. In each case, the little-horn power and its activities are mentioned; and then the judgment scene begins in heaven.

Meanwhile, we are given more details in Daniel 7:25, where the “time and times and the dividing of time” (or 1,260 years; see last week’s lesson) is mentioned in regard to the little horn, with the judgment scene occurring *after* that time period is depicted. And to repeat what we studied earlier: That 1,260-year period was linked with the little-horn power that arose out of the fourth beast, pagan Rome. This means that this judgment scene begins at least 1,260 years *after* the rise of the little-horn power (we use the dates A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798 to depict the beginning and the end of that 1,260-year period). The crucial point is that by the sixth century A.D. this entity had established itself as the great power in that part of the world.

If the little horn became a great power about the sixth century A.D., and the judgment occurs at least 1,260 years after, what approximate time do the texts show that this heavenly judgment began?

What’s important to understand about this judgment is that it is pre-Advent; that is, it occurs before the second advent of Christ. Indeed, verses 22 and 25 show not only that the judgment precedes the Second Advent but that the judgment is what leads to the Second Advent. As a result of the judgment, the saints possess the kingdom.

Thus, what we see in Daniel is a powerful presentation of a judgment that occurs after the 1,260 years and before the Second Coming.

Study carefully Daniel 7 until you can see for yourself the sequence of events: little horn, heavenly judgment, Second Coming. Know it well enough to share with someone in a clear and convincing manner.

Further Study: "All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life."—Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 212.

"Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying: I know them by name. I have graven them on the palms of My hands. 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.' Psalm 51:17. And to the accuser of His people He declares: 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' Zechariah 3:2. Christ will clothe His faithful ones with His own righteousness, that He may present them to His Father 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' Ephesians 5:27. Their names stand enrolled in the book of life, and concerning them it is written: 'They shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.' Revelation 3:4."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 484.

Discussion Questions:

- ① Read the above quotes by Ellen White. How do you see in them a balance between grace and works? When she talks about those whose lives are found "in harmony with the law of God," is she talking about salvation by works or a faith that works? Explain the difference.
- ② The judgment in Daniel 7 leads to the Second Coming, an event of momentous importance. How should the realization of this importance help us to understand better our work as Seventh-day Adventists?

Summary: Following the three and a half times of the little horn's dominion here on earth, a tribunal is being set up in heaven. In this pre-Advent judgment, the sins of God's people are blotted out, the little horn is condemned, and the saints are given an everlasting dominion that will never be destroyed.

Five Friends

Alex Leupin

Five Adventist friends worked together in a woodworking company in southern Chile. Times were tough, but the company had plenty of work. One day the five men were called into the supervisor's office and told that the company was going to work six days a week to meet orders.

The Adventist men already were working extra hours every weekday in order to avoid working on Sabbath. But the boss pressured them to agree to work even more. When the supervisor saw that the men would not budge in their refusal to work on Saturdays, he asked the five Adventists to resign.

The friends talked it over and decided to trust God to provide work. They agreed to quit. "God will provide for us," they said. "We are not worried."

The men applied for work at a similar company in town and were hired as sub-contractors. Their work continued for two years, until that company began having financial trouble, and they were laid off.

The friends built furniture to earn a living, but eventually this, too, did not adequately support them. So the men found various jobs—one as a bus driver, another as a chauffeur, and one continued making furniture.

Alex, one of the friends, had long resisted an impression he felt to become a pastor. He worried that he could not support his family and attend college. But his wife urged him to follow his calling, so the couple sold their car, and Alex went to school. It was tough, but God provided. Today Alex is a pastor working two hours from his hometown.

Jerman [Herman] found work as a carpenter. But he loved talking to people about God's love. He began working longer and longer hours as a Bible instructor. He works without pay because the mission has no budget for a Bible worker, but Jerman does not care; he is doing the work he loves.

Jerman says, "I have grown in my faith over the years of trials. God has helped me in the past; I trust Him for the future."

One of the five men has stumbled in his walk with God, but the other four are supporting him to strengthen his faith.

Alex sums up the men's experience this way: "Losing our jobs was a blessing, as well as a trial. It made us trust in God, and God never fails."



Alex Leupin pastors a congregation in southern Chile.

The Sanctuary Attacked



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Daniel 8.

Memory Text: "Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down" (Daniel 8:11).

The vision in Daniel 8 is the climactic conclusion of the symbolic presentations in the book. Daniel 8, of course, is also where we have the seminal verse, "And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed," the verse that forms the climax of the chapter and that played a key role in the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As we begin, one point must be made clear: The historical context of the chapter shows that it's talking only about the sanctuary in heaven, where Christ is now our High Priest (*Heb. 8:1, 2*). The key issues revealed here don't revolve around some military battle in which pagan armies defile the earthly sanctuary. The scope of the chapter goes way beyond any localized, earthly, political, or military struggle. The issues, instead, are spiritual; this chapter is a different view of the great controversy, one involving a massive religious system that has set itself up in opposition to the work and ministry of Christ and against His people.

And, as we'll see, God's judgment is not only in favor of His people but against the little-horn power.

The Week at a Glance: How was the earthly sanctuary defiled? What do the symbols in Daniel 8 represent? Who is the little-horn power that arises after the breakup of the Grecian Empire? What is the nature of his attack against God's people and sanctuary?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 27.

The Defilement of the Earthly Sanctuary (*Ezek. 5:11*).

How did the sin offerings defile the Old Testament sanctuary? *Lev. 4:1-7, 27-31.*

When a priest or the whole congregation had to bring a sin offering, the blood of the slain animal was taken into the sanctuary (*Lev. 4:6, 17*). The blood of the sin offering presented by a ruler or a common Israelite was placed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard (*vss. 25, 30*), but the priest had to eat a portion of the sin offering (*Lev. 10:17*). In this way, the priest symbolically bore the guilt of the sinner. When the priest then offered his own sin offering, he carried the blood that now represented the people's, as well as his own, sins into the Holy Place. In this way, everyone's confessed and forgiven sins were carried into the Holy Place, and the sanctuary was thereby "defiled." This is clearly implied in the language of Leviticus 16:16, when on the Day of Atonement the priest had to make an "atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins" (*NKJV*). This type of "defilement" was allowed by the Lord in order to atone for the sins of the repentant sinner. (*See also Lev. 15:31, Num. 19:20.*)

In what other ways could the earthly sanctuary become defiled? *Pss. 74:3-7; 79:1; Ezek. 23:37, 38.*

In the Old Testament, God's temple was desecrated when foreign armies came in and looted the temple treasures. Scripture says that God's enemies also defiled the sanctuary by destroying it (*Ps. 79:1*). Yet, even prior to the destruction of the temple, the Hebrews themselves defiled the temple, not by their confessed sins but by setting up detestable things "in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it" (*Jer. 7:30; see also Jer. 32:34*).

Thus, the Old Testament sanctuary could be defiled or polluted in different ways: (1) by the confessed sins of the people for atonement purposes, (2) through the illegal contact of ceremonially unclean persons, (3) through the desecration or destruction of the sanctuary by God's enemies, and (4) by the Israelites themselves in setting up idols and foreign altars in the temple. With this background in mind, let us now study Daniel 8.

Dwell a bit on this notion of defilement. What are some things that you, perhaps, by your own actions, might be defiling? How do you understand the concept of defilement? Does defilement always have to be physical? If not, why not?

The Vision of the Ram and the Goat (*Dan.*

8:1-8, 20-22).

Daniel 2 presented in broad outline the political kingdoms that would dominate world history. Daniel 7 presented the same outline with different symbols and introduced us to the political activities of the little-horn power. In Daniel 8 we meet some of the kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7 again, but the focus is on the religious activities of the little-horn power.

According to the angel interpreter, what is represented by the ram, the goat, and the “great” horn that arises from the goat? *Dan. 8:20, 21.*

Alexander the Great (symbolized by the horn) first drove the Persians out of Asia Minor. Following his victories at Granicus (334 B.C.) and Issus (333 B.C.), he marched his armies down through Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine to Egypt, taking time to destroy the kingdoms along the way, including the great sea-power of the island city of Tyre (332–331 B.C.). After defeating Egypt, he turned east and did not rest till he had reached India. He marched his soldiers 10,000 miles in approximately ten years. When he returned to Babylon he was only 32 years old, and the world was at his feet. Yet, in 323 B.C., at the height of his glory, he died of fever and exhaustion.

What was symbolized by the four horns that in vision Daniel saw replacing the notable horn? *Dan. 8:22.*

Horns in Scripture, at times, represent political powers (*Dan. 8:21, Zech. 1:18-21*). Daniel predicted that the empire of Greece would be divided into four kingdoms—exactly what occurred. When Alexander died, power passed to his generals; yet, as the generals began to fight among themselves, the empire fell apart. The decisive battle among these generals was fought at Ipsus in Phrygia (301 B.C.). The victors divided the empire among themselves. Thus, the four horns represent the four kingdoms (*Dan. 8:22*) that arose from Alexander's empire: Ptolemy took Egypt, Seleucus took Syria and the East, Lysimachus took Asia Minor, and Cassander took Greece. In his explanation, Gabriel also stated that these four kingdoms would not be as powerful as Alexander's kingdom (vs. 22).

Look at how accurately Daniel predicted events that occurred years, even centuries, after his death. How should prophecies like this help increase our faith?

The Rise of the Little Horn

Daniel 8:8, 9 says when the large horn was broken, "in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came a little horn" (*NKJV*).

Most commentators assume that the little horn came out of one of four horns, but Hebrew grammar implies something else, that the "little-horn" power came from one of "the winds of heaven," not from the four horns.

However, the last part of verse 8 says, "four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven." Thus the phrase "the four winds of heaven" is the nearest antecedent to "one of them," not "the four horns." The little horn, therefore comes out of one of the four winds (the directions of the compass) rather than from one of the four horns. Furthermore, the little horn grows toward three geographic entities, "the south," "the east," and "the Glorious Land." This second activity of the little horn suggests that the first activity, "the coming out," also belongs to the geographic plane, the four points of the compass.

From history we know that the power that came after the four Grecian empires was Rome, which arose from a point westward of these empires.

Look at the chart below. How do the parallels between the three chapters help us see why Rome must be the little-horn power in Daniel 8?

| Daniel 2 | Daniel 7 | Daniel 8 |
|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Babylon | Babylon | |
| Media-Persia | Media-Persia | |
| Greece | Greece | |
| Rome | Rome | |

The crucial point to remember is that, in Daniel, not a lot of distinction is made between pagan and papal Rome. Both are viewed as one power. This is seen clearly in Daniel 7, for instance, where the little horn (papal Rome) that arises out of the fourth beast is still part of the fourth beast, which was Rome, only in its pagan phase. The little-horn power in Daniel 8 arises after Greece and exists until the end time, when it is cut off without hand (*Dan. 8:25*). Pagan Rome rose after Greece and still exists, now, though, in the papal phase.

Take time to study the parallels presented above until you could give someone a Bible study on this crucial topic.

The Activity of the Little Horn

The power that followed the Grecian kingdoms in history was Rome, pagan and then papal. The fact that prophecy says the little horn was to become exceedingly great, in contrast to Media-Persia, which “became great” (*Dan. 8:4, NKJV*), and Greece, which became “very great” (*vs. 8*), rules out the identification of the little horn with the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes, who was not greater than either Media-Persia or Greece. Rome—in both its pagan and papal phases—was. It’s clear, however, that Daniel 8 focuses mostly on the papal phase.

Read Daniel 8:9-12. Write down the activities of the little-horn power. What do you think this is talking about?

Notice, first of all, the spiritual nature of the little horn’s attack. He goes after “the host of the heavens” (*vs. 9, NIV*); he magnifies himself against “the Prince of the host” (*vs. 11, NIV*), and the “daily” is taken away. Whatever else the little-horn power does, it certainly seems to be a spiritual power doing things against God’s truth. In fact, verse 12 says it cast “the truth to the ground.”

What are some of the objects under attack by the little-horn power?

1. The “Prince of the host.” In Joshua 5:14 the Prince is Christ. The Prince of the host of God’s people must be the One called “‘Messiah the Prince’” (*Dan. 9:25, NKJV*), “‘Michael, your prince’” (*Dan. 10:21, NIV*), and “Michael . . . , the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people” (*Dan. 12:1, NKJV*), or Christ.

2. The “daily.” The Hebrew word *tamid* (“continual,” “perpetual,” or “daily”) appears 103 times in the Old Testament. It is frequently used in connection with the “daily” service in the sanctuary. This text shows that Christ’s daily ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is coming under attack by the little horn.

3. “The place of His sanctuary.” There are two sanctuaries in Scripture. The earthly (*Exod. 25:9, 40*) and the heavenly (*Heb. 8:1-6*). The Old Testament sanctuary was destroyed in A.D. 70. Yet, even at that time it was not “His [God’s] sanctuary” anymore (*Matt. 23:37-39; 27:50, 51*). The only sanctuary functioning as “His sanctuary” at the time of the little horn (the papacy) was the heavenly sanctuary. Thus, the attack of the little horn is an attack on the heavenly sanctuary itself.

Attacks don’t always have to be physical. By distorting something, we can attack it, as well. Dwell on this idea in the context of the week’s lesson. (See *Dan. 8:12*.)

The Little Horn and the Daily (*Dan. 8:11, 12, 24, 25*).

How did the little horn take away the daily sacrifice and cast down the place of Christ's sanctuary? *Dan. 8:11.*

By placing the intercession for humans into the hands of the priests through the confessional and by sacrificing Christ anew in every Mass, the papacy has removed Christ's heavenly ministry from the thinking of humanity.

Daniel also saw that “an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground” (*vs. 12, NKJV*). What “army” was given over to the little horn (*Dan. 8:12*)?

In the Old Testament, the sanctuary had an “army” of ministering Levites. The little horn has its own army of ministers who serve the system.

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist [Mass] are one *single sacrifice*. . . . ‘In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.’”—*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), no. 1367, p. 381.

It is through this kind of teaching that the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary has been overthrown in the minds of many Christians and its place effectively taken by misleading substitutes. Through the Mass and the confessional, the minds of Christian believers are drawn away from a continual dependence upon the mediatorial ministry of the Savior in His sanctuary. By elaborate ceremonies, all in the name of Christ, the ministry of Christ is obscured and lost sight of.

The complete forgiveness that Christ wants to give to those who put their trust in His free and perfect righteousness has been usurped by a system that, in effect, takes the place of Christ Himself. Instead of relying directly on Christ and on what He has done for us, believers are taught to depend upon a church as the vehicle through which everything that Christ offers us is dispensed.

Imagine if you were taught that no matter what Jesus has done for us, if you want the benefits, you must receive them only through the mediation of the Adventist Church itself. In other words, all that Christ has done for us comes to us only through the vehicle of the church, which alone has the power to dispense God's saving grace. Why must all Christians reject such a notion, not just for our church but for any church?

Further Study: To understand better the issues of this week, here are quotes, all taken from the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In each place where the word *Church* is used, replace it with *God* or with *Christ*. This should give us a better understanding of what's happening in Daniel 8. As you read these quotes, think of 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

"It is in the *Church* that 'the fullness of the means of salvation' has been deposited."—*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 824, emphasis supplied.

"Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the *Church*, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation."—No. 846, emphasis supplied.

"The *Church* . . . bears in herself the totality of the means of salvation."—No. 868, emphasis supplied.

"There is no offense, however serious, that the *Church* cannot forgive."—No. 982, emphasis supplied.

"Were there no forgiveness of sins in the *Church*, there would be no hope of life to come or eternal liberation."—No. 983, emphasis supplied.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Why must Seventh-day Adventists—in this ecumenical age, when most churches work toward Christian unity—stand firm on its view regarding the identity of the little horn?
- ❷ It must be remembered that the word antichrist doesn't mean merely "against Christ" but, in fact, means "in place of Christ." With this definition in mind, go back over those statements quoted above from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. What conclusions must one, then, draw regarding Rome?

Summary: The vision of the ram (Media-Persia) and the goat (Greece) form the backdrop to the rise of the little-horn power (pagan and papal Rome). The focus, however, is on the religious activities of the little horn. By substituting the confessional and the Mass for Christ's ministry in heaven, the little horn took away the daily and cast down or defiled the place of His sanctuary.

Saying Yes to God

Agness Nhyama

I come from a family that worships gods of stone and wood. When my elder sister began attending the Adventist church, my parents saw the positive changes in her life and permitted the rest of us to attend church too. When we attended church, an hour's walk from our village, we stayed all day.

Some people objected to Christians living in our village. When the village elders told my father that we should not attend the Christian church, my father told us to stop going. My sister was afraid to disobey my father and stayed home to work on our family farm. But I got up early and went to church. When I returned that evening, Father was angry. "If you are my daughter, then do not disobey me," he said.

But the next Sabbath I again went to church. And when I returned home, my father was waiting. "You said you are my daughter, but you do not obey me," he said. "Leave this house. Go and find someone who will keep you. You are no longer my daughter."

I stayed with my brother that night. But the next day my father sent for me. "You can attend church as you like," he said.

I wanted to attend secondary school, but my parents objected. They wanted me to marry and refused to pay my tuition. So I began selling literature to pay my way through school. They were so proud when I graduated; but when I told them I wanted to attend college, they thought I was crazy!

I learned about Tanzania Adventist College and applied to attend. I have sold books to pay my way through college. I was determined to learn as much as I could about God's will for me.

Saying Yes to God has changed my life. When I think of where I came from, the challenges God has brought me through, and the joys I've experienced serving God, I do not worry about my future. I know God has a work for me to do. I love Him and want to serve Him all of my life.

I pray that one day my parents will give their lives to God. That will be the greatest day for me!



Agness Nhyama (left) has recently completed her studies at Tanzania Adventist College in Tanzania, East Africa.

The Sanctuary Cleansed



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Daniel 8:9-14.

Memory Text: “‘How long will the vision be . . . ?’ And he said to me, ‘For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed’” (Daniel 8:13, 14, NKJV).

Many Christians believe that Daniel 8 was fulfilled in the days of the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes (second century B.C.) whom they identify with the little horn. Some see this king also as a type of a future antichrist. As Seventh-day Adventists, we must forcefully reject these interpretations for numerous reasons, one being that, historically, Antiochus does not fit the description of the little-horn power at all. Instead, on the basis of the historicist principle of interpretation, which sees prophecy fulfilled throughout history (the interpretation that the texts in Daniel themselves demand), we believe that Daniel 8:9-14 refers to the great controversy between Christ and Satan, in particular, the spiritual battle between God's plan of salvation and the counterfeit system of the little horn, all of which will end at the second coming of Christ.

The Week at a Glance: Why does the sanctuary need cleansing? Why must the 2,300 days be understood as prophetic time? Why do we believe that the judgment in Daniel 7 is the same as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8? Why must the sanctuary depicted in Daniel 8 be the sanctuary in heaven and not one on earth? What happens when that sanctuary is cleansed?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 4.

The Old Testament Tabernacle Is Cleansed (*Lev. 16:29-33*).

The Old Testament—sacrificial service had two parts: the daily service—and, once a year, the yearly service (the Day of Atonement). In the daily, the priests every day presented the required burnt sacrifices. The Israelites could then bring their own offerings, which—with priestly help and under their supervision—would be sacrificed. By the daily service throughout the year, the sins of the people of Israel were transferred to the sanctuary, and it, thereby, became defiled.

Read Leviticus 16:16, 19. What is being cleansed, and what is it being cleansed from?

How was the Old Testament sanctuary cleansed from the defilement of the sins of the people? *Lev. 16:15-19.*

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, a special ceremony cleansed the sanctuary from the peoples' sins that had accumulated through the year. On that day, the high priest first brought a sacrifice for himself and his family. Then he cast lots over two goats—one for the Lord and one for the scapegoat. Next, he killed the Lord's goat and carried its blood into the Most Holy, where he sprinkled it on and before the mercy seat. On his way out, he put blood on the horns of the altar of incense, as well as on the altar of burnt offering. Through this ceremony, he cleansed the sanctuary from the accumulated sins of the people.

What was symbolized by the goat for the Lord? *Heb. 9:11, 12.*

The Old Testament sacrifices were types (symbols) of the sacrifice of Christ. When God looked at the altar in the old covenant, He did not see the death of the animals. Rather, He saw the Lamb of God on the cross at Golgotha, the bloody sacrifice of His Son, and on the basis of this atonement He forgave the sinner. The Day of Atonement ritual is another expression of how God saves His people on the basis of Christ's blood shed for them.

Study the ritual in Leviticus 16. Notice the emphasis on blood. How many times is blood mentioned in the chapter? What does that tell us about how cleansing and forgiveness were accomplished? See also Matt. 26:28; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7.

For Two Thousand Three Hundred Days

(Dan. 8:14).

Many interpret the 2,300 days as literal days and apply them to Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C., despite the fact that Antiochus cannot be made to fit the 2,300 days, no matter how tortuously they contort the text. How can we show that the 2,300 days mean 2,300 years and that the prophecy reaches a time period long after Antiochus?

Though there are numerous proofs that the 2,300 days here mean "years," today we will look at only two. (See Friday's section for more.)

First, Gabriel gives the prophecy an end-time interpretation, which wouldn't fit if it applied to events that were finished prior even to the birth of Jesus.

Second, when we compare the historical events in Daniel 2, 7, and 8, we find that all three chapters begin with the ancient kingdoms of Babylon or Media-Persia and continue to the end:

| Daniel 2 | Daniel 7 | Daniel 8 |
|--|--|---|
| Babylon | Babylon | Media-Persia |
| Media-Persia | Media-Persia | Greece |
| Greece | Greece | Pagan Rome |
| Pagan Rome | Pagan Rome | Papal Rome |
| Papal Rome | Judgment in heaven | Cleansing of the sanctuary |
| — | — | — |
| Stone cut out without hand (Second Coming) | Saints get the kingdom (Second Coming) | Destroyed without hand (Second Coming) |

The parallelism between these chapters proves that Daniel 8 cannot be limited to the second century B.C. For instance, the little-horn power is "broken without hand" (Dan. 8:25), just as the stone that was "cut out . . . without hands" (Dan. 2:45); both are end-time events. The 2,300 days, then, could hardly be literal and extend that far into the future. Hence, the need to apply the day/year principle.

Then there's the parallel between the judgment in Daniel 7 (*vs. 26*), which leads to the Second Coming and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. Because they are the same event and because that judgment occurs prior to the Second Coming, the cleansing of the sanctuary is also an end-time event, something that it could not be if the 2,300 days were literal.

The Heavenly Sanctuary (*Heb. 8:1, 2*).

Yesterday's study showed why the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 weren't literal days, but years, which placed the cleansing of the sanctuary in the end times. We proved this by showing that the cleansing of the sanctuary was the same event as the pre-Advent judgment in Daniel 7.

Indeed, in Daniel 7—after the 1,260 years of dominance of the little horn—the next great event is the judgment. In Daniel 8, after the attacks of the little horn on God's people and on Christ and His sanctuary, the next great event is the cleansing of the sanctuary at the end of the 2,300 years. The cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14, therefore, is the same event as the judgment in Daniel 7:9-14 (see the chart in previous day's study).

Daniel 7

Little horn (*vss. 24, 25*)
Judgment (*vs. 26*)

Daniel 8

Little horn (*vss. 9-12*)
Sanctuary cleansed (*vs. 14*)

Take the time to study the above chart, and the chart from yesterday, until you can see this crucial point: that the judgment in heaven in Daniel 7 is the same thing as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8.

Two points need to be looked at here. First, we saw from lesson 8 that the judgment in heaven in Daniel 7, which occurs after the 1,260 years, is an event that comes down to the last few centuries. The judgment, then, begins sometime in this time frame (remember, it's this judgment that leads to the Second Coming). Second, because the cleansing of the sanctuary is the same event, it, too, is something that has happened in more recent times, as opposed to something prior to the life and death of Jesus (which was when Antiochus Epiphanes had defiled the sanctuary in Jerusalem).

Given the time frame of the judgment, which occurs long after the earthly temple was destroyed, what's the only possible sanctuary being referred to here? *Heb. 8:1, 2.*

The answer, of course, is the sanctuary in heaven; it couldn't be any other one.

How Long?

Read Daniel 8:13, carefully. What question is being asked?

What's crucial to see in the question is that the word *concerning* or the word *about* does not appear in the Hebrew, nor does Hebrew grammar allow for it. Thus, the question isn't just about the activity of the little horn. Instead, the question is about everything depicted in the chapter, which includes the vision about the ram and the goat (Media-Persia and Greece), as well as the activity of the little horn (pagan and papal Rome). A literal translation would read, "How long the vision, the daily, and the transgression of desolation to give the sanctuary and the host a trampling?" In other words, the question only lists key events that happened in the vision. In fact, the word for "vision" in verse 13 is *hazon*, which deals with the ram and the goat; that is, Media-Persia and Greece.

The question, then, could be paraphrased this way: *How long will all these things, from the rise of Media-Persia, the rise of Greece, and finally to Rome's attack on Christ's heavenly ministry, be allowed to go on?*

The answer, then, is that the sanctuary in heaven will be cleansed (or that the judgment in heaven will sit) beginning at the end of the 2,300 years. And, of course, as a result of that judgment, the saints receive the kingdom (*Dan. 7:26-28*).

The crucial point to see is that prophecy covers all the events of the chapter, which deal with the history of God's people from Media-Persia until the end of the age.

How does the parallel between the judgment in Daniel 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 help us to understand better both the meaning of the judgment and the cleansing of the sanctuary?

Daniel 7 clearly shows that the pre-Advent judgment leads not only to the demise of the little horn but to the vindication of the saints and the establishment of God's kingdom. Daniel 8 introduces the heavenly sanctuary into the judgment equation, showing that the judgment in heaven parallels the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Indeed, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary from the sins of the faithful corresponds to the cleansing of the Mosaic tabernacle on the Day of Atonement once each year (*Lev. 16:30*), which was also a day of judgment. At the same time, the judgment scene helps us see the cleansing of the sanctuary in the terms of the final judgment. Together, both reveal not only the reality of the heavenly judgment but the centrality of the sanctuary to that judgment.

The Sanctuary Shall Be Cleansed

Daniel 8:14 says that the sanctuary needs to be cleansed. Why?

In previous lessons, we learned that both the little horn and the saints defile the heavenly sanctuary.

1. In the Old Testament, the enemies of God's people could defile the sanctuary by destroying it (*Pss. 74:3-7, 79:1*). In Daniel 8:11 the little horn symbolically casts down the place of the sanctuary and thereby also profanes it.

2. In the Old Testament, the sins of the people defiled the sanctuary here on earth through illegal contact (*Lev. 16:16; 20:3; Ezek. 23:37, 38*).

3. In the Old as well as in New Testament times, confessed sins also defiled the heavenly sanctuary for the purpose of atonement, of which the earthly sanctuary was but a shadow.

Thus, the cleansing of the sanctuary deals with two issues here: the vindication of God's people and the demise of the little horn. In the judgment, the little-horn power is destroyed, and the saints—whose sins have been forgiven by the blood of Jesus—stand vindicated, thus receiving the eternal kingdom, as shown in Daniel 7.

Daniel 7 and 8 reveal what we talked about earlier: Judgment involved not only the vindication of the righteous but the punishment of the wicked. This concept helps explain the prevalence of the little horn in these prophecies. The judgment in favor of the saints leads to the demise of the little-horn power.

What is the importance of the doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment?

1. Its historical importance lies in the fact that it provides an explanation for the disappointment in 1844. The recognition that Jesus in 1844 began the second phase of His ministry in heaven explained why He did not come to this earth on October 22, 1844 (*Rev. 10:9, 10*).

2. It is theologically important in the sense that the pre-Advent judgment serves as the final review for the lives of those who will enter the kingdom. From time to time some of these saints have been adjudged guilty of various crimes by earthly tribunals when actually they were serving God and man faithfully. In the pre-Advent judgment these unjust sentences by earthly courts will be reversed by the court of heaven. In this way God will vindicate His saints.

3. Finally, through the pre-Advent judgment, the righteousness, justice, and mercy of God will be proclaimed throughout the universe (*Rev. 15:3, 4*). Thus, the character of God, which has been in dispute through the controversy with Satan, will be vindicated (*Rom. 3:4*).

Further Study: More reasons the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 demand the day/year principle:

1. The vision itself is symbolic, not literal. Daniel 8 is not about rams, goats, and little horns. These are symbols. Thus, the time frame given in it should be viewed as symbolic, as well.
2. The expression “‘2,300 evenings and mornings’” (*NIV*) is not a common way to express time, evidence that a literal time is not meant.
3. As shown on Wednesday, the question in verse 13 was about everything in the vision, which included Media-Persia, Greece, and the activity of Rome (pagan and papal), an expanse of time covering thousands of years. The 2,300 days, if taken literally, span just over six years, an impossibility considering the events involved in the question. The only way, then, to make sense of the answer in the context of the question is if the day/year principle were applied to the 2,300 days. Only such a great length of time ever could begin to cover the events depicted.

Discussion Question:

In Daniel 8:14, the Hebrew word for “cleansed” (*nisdaq*) comes from a common Old Testament word meaning “to be right,” “to be righteous.” This refers, first of all, to cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary from the sins of God’s people, but it also addresses the restoration of the truth about Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. That which was symbolically cast down—the daily sacrifice, the truth, and the place of His sanctuary—will be restored at the end of the 2,300 years. Through the proclamation of Christ’s high-priestly ministry in heaven in the first angel’s message (*Rev. 14:7*), the truth about God’s intercessory ministry in heaven, which for centuries was obscured through the confessional and the Mass, has again been restored. Discuss the implications of this understanding in light of our mission and message as Seventh-day Adventists.

Summary: Chapters 7 and 8 of Daniel enhance each other, revealing to us not only the reality of the pre-Advent judgment but how that judgment is directly linked to the work of Christ as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. When the sanctuary is cleansed, not only is evil eradicated but God’s people are vindicated, and truth is restored. Clearly we are dealing with an event of stupendous importance.

Home at Last!

J. H. Zachary

Alex Schlussler was born into a conservative Jewish family, but he did not practice his Jewish faith. Just before his 30th birthday Alex decided that his life was going in the wrong direction; he needed God. He began attending a Messianic synagogue, where he eventually filled leadership positions. But Alex felt hungry for a deeper knowledge of God.

Some Protestants encouraged him to enroll in a Protestant Bible seminary, where he eventually earned a degree in pastoral ministry. Upon graduation he became an associate pastor of a large Protestant church. There he helped plant several new churches. While he enjoyed his work, he missed his Hebrew roots. Over the months his burden for his Jewish heritage grew.

He and his wife started a Messianic synagogue. It was good to sing the Hebrew songs, preach from the Torah, and use his knowledge of Hebrew. Then during a vacation to Florida, Alex and his wife decided to return to their native state. They resigned their jobs, sold their home, and moved back to Florida.

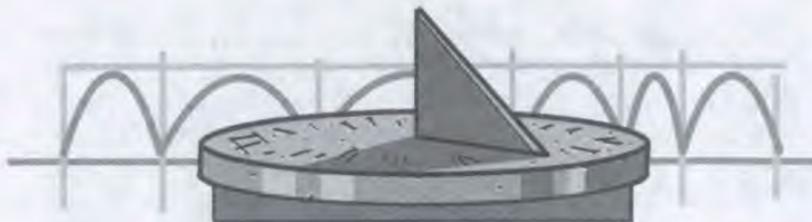
One day a friend invited Alex and his wife to attend the Adventist synagogue in town. Alex new nothing about Seventh-day Adventists, but he accepted the invitation. He was thrilled to learn that there were Christians who loved the Sabbath, followed God's Ten Commandments, and practiced the same dietary guidelines that Jews hold dear. Alex and his wife joined the Bible class and eventually were baptized.

"I was thrilled to learn that Adventists follow the Bible teachings about death and the second advent while rejecting the secret rapture," Alex said. "We have found a people who truly follow the Scriptures. I did not go looking for Jesus," Alex smiles. "But when my life was crumbling, Yeshua [Jesus] came looking for me. I was deeply touched when I read the New Testament record of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. This presents a very different picture of the Messiah than any notions I had ever heard. We have found God, and best of all, we have found Jesus. I know that I am home, at last!"



Alex (left) leads the music ministry in the Adventist synagogue he attends in Port Richey, Florida. J. H. Zachary was coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour.

God's Timetable



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 9.*

Memory Text: "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (*Jeremiah 25:11*).

Daniel, though "greatly beloved" (vs. 23) in heaven, identifies himself with his sinful people and asks God to bless them. He intercedes with the Lord for his countrymen still in Babylon.

While Daniel is praying, Gabriel appears and delivers what has been called "the crown jewels" of Old Testament prophecy. Sir Isaac Newton described Daniel 9:24-27 as "the foundation stone of the Christian religion," because it predicted almost five hundred years in advance not only the time at which the Messiah would appear but also the duration of His public ministry, as well as His atoning death for sin.

In studying this chapter, it is important to remember the links between Daniel 8 and 9. (1) The same angel revisits Daniel (*Dan. 9:21*). (2) Daniel recalls the former vision (vs. 21). (3) The command to Gabriel in Daniel 8:16 to give Daniel understanding of the vision is repeated in Daniel 9:23. (4) The time element not explained in Daniel 8 is now the topic of Daniel 9:24-27.

The Week at a Glance: What is the essence of Daniel's prayer? How does Gabriel link what he says to Daniel with the previous chapter? Why is the day/year principle operating here? What is the starting date for the decree? What is the 70-week prophecy all about? What did Jesus accomplish for us at the Cross?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 11.

Daniel's Prayer (*Dan. 9:1-19*).

The first year of Darius was the year 539/538 B.C. Ten years had passed since the vision of chapter 8. During that time, Babylon, the conqueror of Israel, had fallen to the Medo-Persians, but the Jews were still in exile in Babylon.

Read through Daniel's prayer. Where are all the places in the prayer where we can see the need for obedience? As you read, keep in mind James 2:9 and 1 John 3:4. What does this prayer also tell us about the fruits of disobedience? Is disobedience any less serious today than it was in Daniel's time?

One thing that comes through clearly in Daniel's prayer is that Daniel made no attempt to excuse or hide the sins of his people. His confession didn't seem to water down anything; he expressed it as it was. In fact, the chapter is filled with various Hebrew verbs, all denoting different kinds of sin and rebellion. There's an important lesson there for us regarding our prayer life: We must never downplay the seriousness of sin. Hell will be filled with those who did.

If you read Daniel's prayer, you will see that he is asking earnestly for God's mercy for His people. Does he express anything at all that would indicate that God's people deserve this mercy? If not, on what basis does he ask God for it?

Daniel has nothing to offer the Lord for His mercy and forgiveness. All he can do is plead for it "for the Lord's sake" (*Dan. 9:17*), or because of the Lord's "righteousness" (vs. 16). This reminds us of Ellen White's words that "our great need is our only claim on God's mercy."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 317. We have, as sinners, nothing to command us to God. Our only hope is in mercy and grace, as revealed to us at the Cross. Here, and here alone, is our only hope, that which Christ has wrought out for us by His life and then His death. If we could earn God's mercy, or God's grace, in any way, then Christ wouldn't have had to die in order to save us. We could have worked our way out of the sentence of eternal destruction. His death proves our utter inability to do anything to save ourselves.

Keeping in mind the above paragraph, go back through Daniel's prayer. In what ways do you see the gospel expressed there?

A Heavenly Visitor (*Dan. 9:20-24*).

Before Daniel finishes his prayer, the Lord sends an answer. The angel Gabriel, whom Daniel calls “the man Gabriel” (*vs. 21, NKJV*) because he appeared in human form, makes a second visit to Daniel. He first appeared to him ten years earlier, in Daniel 8:16.

What was Gabriel’s mission at this time? *Dan. 9:22, 23.*

When Gabriel says in verse 23, “‘Consider the matter, and understand the vision’ ” (*NKJV*), he does not use the general word *chazon*, which refers to the vision as a whole, as in Daniel 8:1, 13 and in Daniel 9:21. Instead, he uses the verb *mareh*, which is used specifically for the vision of the 2,300 days—the only part of chapter 8 that Daniel did not understand. In chapter 8, Gabriel tells Daniel specifically that the vision, the *mareh*, of the 2,300 days was “true” (*Dan. 8:26*), but Daniel says that he didn’t understand that *mareh* (*vs. 27*); that is, the *mareh* about the 2,300 days. An Orthodox Jewish commentary—referring to Gabriel’s words in Daniel 9:23, *NKJV*, “understand the vision [mareh]”—points right back to Daniel 8:14, saying that “this refers to Daniel’s vision in chapter 8 in which the part which disturbed him so (v. 14) is characterized in vs. 16-26 as a [mareh].”—Hersh Goldwurm, *Daniel* (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1979), p. 258.

“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city” (*Dan. 9:24*). How long a time period is indicated through the seventy weeks, and what does the phrase “seventy weeks are determined for your people” mean?

What we have here is more internal proof of the day/year principle. The command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem occurred many centuries before Christ. If taken as literal time, 70 weeks is just a year and a few months, hardly enough time to reach down to Jesus. Application, however, of the day/year principle solves the problem: It covers the time span from the rebuilding of the city to the first advent of Jesus. In short, Jesus proves the validity of the day/year principle.

Meanwhile, the root meaning of the Hebrew word *chatak*, here translated “determined,” is “to cut” or “divide.” The extended meaning is “to determine” or “allot to.” This is the only occurrence of this root in the Hebrew Bible, though it appears in later Jewish writings predominantly as “to cut off.”

The Purpose of the 70 Weeks (*Dan. 9:24*).

What was to be accomplished in the 490-year period? *Dan. 9:24.*

Six purposes are mentioned in this verse. They describe primarily the results of Christ's life and work here on earth:

1. *To finish the transgression.* Transgression refers to the break in relationship between God and humankind. Through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus brought to an end the broken relationship and restored us to God.

2. *To make an end of sins.* Gabriel here announces that the Messiah would take care of humankind's failures. He would take their sins on Himself and thereby make an end of them.

3. *To make reconciliation for iniquity.* "Iniquity" is sin as in a perversion of what is right. Through the atoning sacrifice on the cross, Jesus Christ took care of sin in all its forms.

4. *To bring in everlasting righteousness.* Through the Fall, humanity has become unrighteous. The Messiah, says Gabriel, will bring in a righteousness from God that will be everlasting for those who make it their own through faith that results in obedience.

5. *To seal up vision and prophecy.* The idea of sealing here doesn't mean "in the sense of 'shutting up,' but of 'confirming,' or 'ratifying.' The fulfillment of the predictions connected with the first coming of the Messiah at the time specified in the prophecy gives assurance that the other features of the prophecy, notably the 2300 prophetic days, will be as precisely fulfilled."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 852.

6. *To anoint the Most Holy.* Temples were anointed to inaugurate their services (see *Exod. 40:9*). The anointing foretold in this verse points to the inauguration of Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly temple after His ascension (*Heb. 9:21*).

Thus, what we see here is clearly a prophecy, not only about the time of Jesus but about what His work will accomplish. And though this is a prophecy about His first coming, and though this prophecy applies in a direct manner to the Jewish nation as a whole, it gives inklings of the Second Coming, as well, because all that Jesus did at the First Coming finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Second. Perhaps that's also why this prophecy is so clearly tied to the cleansing of the sanctuary, an event that leads directly to the second coming of Christ.

Look up the texts below, in light of this prophecy regarding the Cross. What do they, along with Daniel 9:24, teach us about what Jesus has done for us at Calvary? After reading all the texts, write out a paragraph that explains what Christ did for us. Isa. 53:5; Rom. 5:11, 17; 2 Cor. 5:19; Phil. 3:9; Heb. 2:9.

Messiah the Prince (*Dan. 9:25*).

Daniel 9:25 states that from the “‘decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince’” (*NASB*) would be 69 weeks, or 483 years. What date do we apply to this decree, and why?

Various dates have been given for this decree, including 538 B.C., 520 B.C., and 457 B.C. Let’s look quickly at all three.

For starters, suppose someone were to accept the 538 B.C. date as the starting point. From the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (538 B.C.) unto Messiah the Prince, Jesus, would be 483 years (we’re using the day/year principle, because the text demands it). Going 483 years from 538 B.C. reaches to what? 55 B.C.—a date that in no way fits the time of Christ’s earthly ministry.

Try 520 B.C. If that’s the starting point of the decree, and we go 483 years later, what date do we arrive at, and why is that date unworkable?

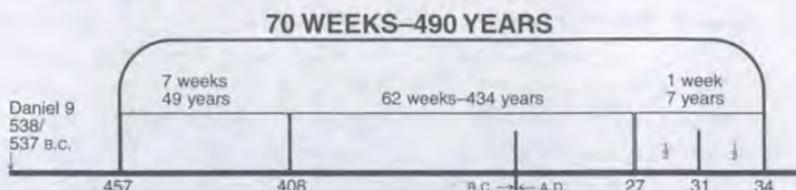
If, however, we go with the 457 B.C. date, the numbers bring us right to the time of Christ. This decree was given by Artaxerxes I, and it provided for the restoration of complete civil, judicial, and religious authority of Jews in their homeland (*see Ezra 7:11-28*).

It’s obvious that both the Jews and their enemies understood the decree to mean the rebuilding of the city. In Ezra 4:7-13 (the events in Ezra are not in chronological order), a group of Persian officers wrote to King Artaxerxes, complaining about the Jews who were rebuilding Jerusalem. In the letter, they stated two important points: (1) that the city was being rebuilt (*Ezra 4:12*) and that (2) the Jews who were rebuilding had come there because of the king. Said the letter, “the Jews which came up *from thee* to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city” (*vs. 12, emphasis supplied*). In other words, the Jews who were rebuilding the city had come there because of King Artaxerxes, and the only decree issued by the king that sent the Jews back to Jerusalem was issued in the seventh year of his reign, the one shown in Ezra 7, a date that can be established as 457 B.C.

Starting with year 457 B.C., what date will you come to 483 years later? (Remember: There is no such thing as “A.D. zero”! so, when you reach zero in the time line of history, continue counting from A.D. 1.) Answer: A.D. 27. Why is 457 B.C. the only date that works? Dwell on this amazing prophecy. It would be equivalent to someone in the time of Martin Luther predicting the exact year Gerhard Schroder would be elected chancellor of Germany. What does this prophecy tell us about the power of God?

“In the Midst of the Week” (*Dan. 9:24-27*).

Review the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27. Look at the chart below while you study:



From the “‘command to restore and build Jerusalem’” (457 B.C.) to “‘Messiah the Prince’” (vs. 25, *NKJV*) was 483 years, or 69 weeks (7 weeks and 62 weeks; *see verse 25*). This comes out to A.D. 27 (eliminate the year zero, which will extend the number one year later), when Jesus began His earthly ministry.

Thus, this covers 69 of the 70 weeks. All that remains is the 70th week, the final seven years.

Meanwhile, in A.D. 31, “in the midst of the [last] week,” Jesus died, and the veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (*Matt. 27:50, 51*), indicating the end of the earthly ceremonial system. All those countless animal sacrifices for all those long centuries, from Adam and Eve onward, now found their complete fulfillment in Jesus (*Heb. 10:4*). Here, in human flesh, the Lord took upon Himself the sins of the world, in order that every human being, no matter how sinful, could find forgiveness, healing, and the promise of eternal life (*Rom. 6:23, 1 John 5:11*).

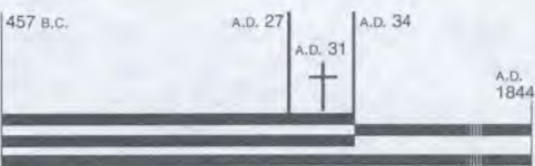
The prophecy says that the Messiah will “confirm the covenant with many for one week.” What does that mean, and when does it end?

Our basic understanding of this, the end of the final week, is the covenant relationship between the Lord and national Israel. After that week (which comes to A.D. 34, and which we tie to the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7), the new covenant promises (*Jer. 31:31-34*) went to the church, which—composed of Jews (the natural branch) and Gentiles (the wild branch)—became an extension of Israel (*Rom. 11:17-21*) and continued with the work of teaching the world about the true God, the Creator and Redeemer.

The prophecy (vs. 26) says that the Messiah shall be cut off, but “not for himself.” For whom, then, was He “cut off,” and how does that answer capture the essence of the gospel?

Further Study: Read the chapter entitled “The Kingdom of God Is at Hand” in Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 231–235.

In Daniel 8, the only part of the vision that Daniel didn’t understand was the *mareh* of the 2,300 days (*vs. 26, 27*). In Daniel 9, the same angel interpreter who appeared to him in Daniel 8 (*vs. 16*) appears to him again (*Dan. 9:21*) and promises to give him “skill and understanding” (*vs. 22*). The last time Daniel needed skill and understanding was in regard to the *mareh* of the 2,300 days (*Dan. 8:26, 27*). Gabriel, then, in Daniel 9:23 says to Daniel: “consider the [*mareh*]”—obviously the *mareh* of the 2,300 days that he didn’t understand. The *mareh*, of course, was a time prophecy, and the first thing that Gabriel gives to Daniel is another time prophecy, one that is “cut off.” Cut off from what? Obviously the larger time prophecy, the *mareh* of the 2,300 days.



- 457 B.C. Persian King Artaxerxes commands rebuilding of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25, Ezra 7:11–16).
- A.D. 27 Baptism of Jesus; Jesus begins to preach and teach.
- A.D. 31 Messiah “cut off in the midst of the week” after 3½ years of ministry (Daniel 9:26, 27; Matthew 27:60, 61; Mark 16:33–39).
- A.D. 34 Stoning of Stephen; Gospel introduced to the Gentiles (Daniel 9:34, Acts 7:54–60, 9:15).
- A.D. 1844 End of the 2,300-year prophecy; investigative judgment begins.

rebuild Jerusalem in 457 B.C., we arrive 2,300 years later at 1844.

Discussion Question:

We saw in lesson 8 that the judgment scene in Daniel 7 (which is the same thing as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8) came after the 1,260-year period of the little-horn persecution. Because the little horn first came to prominence in the sixth century, 1,260 years would come to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The judgment would begin after that. How do these numbers fit in with the date 1844, arrived at from Daniel 8 and 9? How does the answer help confirm that our understanding of the prophecy is correct?

Summary: Daniel in his prayer identified himself with his people and petitioned God for them. In response God sent the angel Gabriel, who explained to Daniel that the Messiah would come at a specified time to reconcile humanity with God. How interesting, too, that this—the most crucial prophecy concerning Jesus—is just part of the larger prophecy, the one about the 2,300 years.

Newspaper Editor Finds Peace

Ch. Victor Sam

Abanidas (AH-bah-nee-DAHS) bounced along in the bus from Calcutta to Arambagh (AH-ram-BAHG), India, enjoying the passing scenery. Suddenly, he had an impression that the bus was going to be involved in an accident. He closed his eyes and prayed, "Lord Jesus, please protect us."

Minutes later the bus collided with another vehicle, throwing passengers out of their seats. When all the passengers were safely out of the bus, Abanidas looked at the weeping, bleeding passengers. Everyone had been hurt except him. He was the only one without a single scratch, cut, bruise, or broken bone. Abanidas whispered a prayer of thanks to the Lord, who had saved him, the God he had just come to know and love a few months earlier.

Abanidas was a newspaper editor living in a village about one hundred kilometers (60 miles) north of Calcutta, India. For 32 years he had been a teacher; then he settled down to the quieter life of an editor. However, the change of job did not bring him the peace and satisfaction that he had expected.

"I had many severe difficulties in my life," says Abanidas. "I had family problems, village problems, political problems, and work problems. I could find no solution to my problems and was in deep distress of mind. I had hoped to find peace, but it eluded me. I felt adrift in an ocean of despair with no hope for the future."

It was at this time that Abanidas discovered a small group of people worshiping in a nearby house each Saturday morning. He noticed that the worshipers seemed to have a peace about them that he was longing to find for his own life. He began to attend and to listen to the teachings of the Bible.

"Finally, in God's Word I found the peace and solution to all of my problems," Abanidas testifies. "I found salvation and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. I decided to keep the Sabbath, be baptized, and to prepare for Christ's coming." He was baptized with some 2,000 other new believers in a mass baptism in Calcutta in 1999.

Shortly after his baptism, Abanidas felt called to serve God full time. He resigned his job to become a Global Mission pioneer, and today he is helping others find the peace that he had searched for, the peace that only Jesus Christ can bring.

Ch. Victor Sam is director of the South Bengal Region, in Calcutta, India.

When Kings Go to War



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Daniel 10 and 11.

Memory Text: “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream” (Numbers 12:6, NKJV).

Daniel 10–12 forms a unit with three elements. The first part is chapter 10, the second part is the vision proper in 11:2–12:4, and the third (*Dan. 12:5–13*) concludes not only the chapter but the book of Daniel. The last vision given to Daniel occurred two years after the return of the Jews from Babylon. In this vision, God lifted the veil of history and showed Daniel some realities of the unseen world—the conflict between the forces of good and evil. Revelation 12:7–9 reveals a similar picture: Michael and His angels fighting the prince of evil and his angels. Yet, the outcome in both books is the same—Michael, the great Prince, overcomes Satan and delivers His people, those “found written in the book” (*Dan. 12:1*).

This, the last vision of Daniel, covers basically the same ground in history as chapters 2, 7, and 8, while giving us a glimpse of the great controversy being played out behind the scenes of human history.

The Week at a Glance: What happens to Daniel in the beginning of chapter 10? What does Daniel mean when he talks about “the latter days”? How is the great controversy revealed in these texts? How does Daniel 11 parallel Daniel 2, 7, and 8? What texts reveal the role of Rome as depicted in these chapters? What is the “abomination of desolation” referred to in the book of Daniel?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 18.

Daniel in Vision (*Dan. 10:1-9*).

At the beginning of this chapter, Daniel has been mourning and fasting for three weeks (*vss. 2, 3*). Why?

Though no apparent reason is given in the chapter itself, the historical circumstances in Palestine at the time may yield answers. The third year of Cyrus (535 B.C.) was most likely when opposition was incited by the Samaritans against the Jews, as recorded in Ezra 4:1-5. Daniel must have heard about the opposition of the Samaritans, and he fasted and prayed for his people in Palestine.

"I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen" (*Dan. 10:5, NKJV*). A day vision is here distinguished from a night vision or prophetic dream such as Daniel records in chapter 7.

What were the physical effects of the vision on Daniel and his companions? *Dan. 10:8, 9, 17*.

The effect of the vision on Daniel's companions was the same as when Jesus appeared to Saul on the Damascus road (*Acts 9:3-7*). The physical effects on the prophet himself were similar to that of the apostle John (*Rev. 1:17*). He was in a trance, like Peter (*Acts 10:9-11*) and Paul (*2 Cor. 12:1, 2*), unconscious of his immediate surroundings for the duration of the vision. His attention was so fully absorbed in the things he was shown that he seemed to take part in them (*Dan. 12:5-9*).

Compare Daniel's experience with Ellen G. White's: "Sometimes while I was in vision, my friends would approach me, and exclaim, 'Why, she does not breathe!' Placing a mirror before my lips, they found that no moisture gathered on the glass. It was while there was no sign of any breathing that I kept talking of the things that were being presented before me. These messages were thus given to substantiate the faith of all, that in these last days we might have confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy."—*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, pp. 38, 39.

"The testimonies either bear the signet of God or that of Satan. A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. By their fruit ye shall know them."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 98.

Suppose someone were to arise in our midst today, having visions and manifestations similar to what happened to Daniel, Ellen White, and other prophets. How should we approach this person and his or her claims?

The Latter Days (*Dan. 10:14*).

“Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days” (*Dan. 10:14, NKJV*). What were the “latter days” for Daniel?

A study of the twelve Old Testament references to the *latter days* outside of the book of Daniel shows that the expression *latter days* can refer to various time periods in history. In Genesis 49:1, NRSV, where the phrase appears for the first time, Jacob says to his sons: “‘Gather around, that I may tell you what will happen to you in days to come.’” Here Jacob, at the end of his life, looks into the future, and under prophetic inspiration he predicts major developments in the history of his sons and their descendants. He sees them settled in Canaan, notes the two leading and prominent figures in their history—Judah on the one hand (*vs. 8*) and Joseph or Ephraim on the other (*vs. 22*) and predicts that the Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah (*vs. 10*). Because Jacob is primarily describing the future history of his descendants; that is, Israel, the latter days refer to the future that began with the conquest of Canaan and continued until the first advent of Christ.

In Deuteronomy 31:29, Moses predicts that after his death the children of Israel would become utterly corrupt and that evil would befall them in “‘the latter days.’” This prophecy was fulfilled in the time of the judges (*Judg. 2:11-16*) and kings (*Jer. 7:28-34*), when Israel repeatedly apostatized on a large scale. Hence, “the latter days” in this text were the times of the judges and kings. In Jeremiah 23:20 and 30:24 the phrase refers to the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

In Jeremiah 48:47 and 49:39 the time of the Persian restoration is in view. In other texts—notably Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1, and Hosea 3:5—the time of the Messianic kingdom is referred to as “the latter days.”

Thus, “the latter days” in the Old Testament outside the book of Daniel can refer to: (a) a specific future period in the history of Israel (*Deut. 4:30, 31:29, Jer. 23:20, 30:24, 48:47, 49:39*); (b) the future history of Israel beginning with the conquest (*Gen. 49:1*) or the monarchy (*Num. 24:14*) and reaching down to the time of the Messiah; and (c) the Messianic age (*Isa. 2:2, Hos. 3:5, Mic. 4:1*) or the time immediately preceding it (*Ezek. 38:16*).

In Daniel 10, “the latter days” refers to the future, which began at the time of Daniel and ends with the second advent of Christ. We know this, because many of the prophecies, such as Daniel 2 and 7, unambiguously extend to the end of this present world.

What does it mean to be living in the “latter days”? What danger is there of hearing that phrase so much that it loses any meaning for us?

The Great Controversy (*Dan. 10:12, 13, 20, 21*).

Read Daniel 10:13. What kind of battle is it describing? Where is this battle taking place? What forces are involved?

"While Satan was striving to influence the highest powers in the kingdom of Medo-Persia to show disfavor to God's people, angels worked in behalf of the exiles. The controversy was one in which all heaven was interested. Through the prophet Daniel we are given a glimpse of this mighty struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus; and before the contest closed, Christ Himself came to Gabriel's aid."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 571, 572.

Who is the "prince" of the kingdom of Persia (*vs. 13*)? See Ephesians 6:12 for some help. Contrast the prince of the kingdom of Persia with the Prince in Daniel 10:21. Who is the Prince depicted there?

As we see here in Daniel 10, although Satan and Christ were moving upon the mind of the Persian king, neither could force him. Human free will—though one of the greatest gifts we have been given—has come with a terrible price: Jesus on the cross. If we didn't have free will, we couldn't have sinned, and if we didn't sin, there would have been no Cross, because there would have been no need for it. Thus, in many ways, the Cross is the greatest example not only of the reality of human free will but of the consequences of our abuse of that free will. How crucial, then, that we do everything in our power to keep our will on the side of Christ and His holy law.

The bottom line is that we are all, indeed, in the midst of the great controversy. Which side we wind up on, and which "prince" we ally ourselves with, is, in the end, our own choice and no one else's.

If the veil between the seen and the unseen were pulled aside, what do you think you would see going on around you? Imagine the battle for your soul that's going on right now. What can you do to help place yourself securely on the winning side?

Kings From the North and the South (*Dan. 11:1-28*).

The visions in Daniel 2, 7, and 8 mention a succession of kingdoms from the Babylonian kingdom to the kingdom of God at the end of time. We should expect, then, that the last vision in Daniel (*11:1-12:4*)—which also deals with a succession of political kingdoms—would cover approximately the same time span as the previous visions.

Which kingdoms are mentioned in Daniel 11:1-4? See also *Dan. 8:2-22*.

Daniel 11 has brought out a variety of interpretations, even within our own church. Most modern interpreters see the wars between the successors of Alexander the Great in this chapter. Though there is certainly some of this fighting referred to in the verses immediately following Daniel 11:1-4, it cannot be (as we will discover) the subject of the whole chapter.

Verse 22 mentions a king who shall break the “prince of the covenant.” Who is the “prince of the covenant” according to Scripture, and what is the meaning of His being broken? See *Dan. 9:25-27*.

In Daniel 9:25-27 Messiah the Prince confirms the covenant, which God established with Israel on Mount Sinai. Isaiah calls the Messiah “Prince of Peace” (*Isa. 9:6*), and Daniel refers to Michael as “the great prince” (*Dan. 12:1*). “The prince of the covenant,” then, is the Messiah, Jesus. What we have here, in verse 21, is a reference to Jesus’ death at the cross, and this helps us follow the time line in Daniel 11 and 12.

The Messiah was broken when, under the Roman Emperor Tiberius (A.D. 14–37), He was nailed to the cross. The “vile person” in Daniel 11:21 is, most likely, Tiberius. This means that somewhere between verse 4 (which depicts the breakup of the Grecian Empire after the death of Alexander the Great) and verse 21 (the death of Jesus), pagan Rome enters the picture. Most Adventist interpreters see the change from the Grecian kingdoms to Rome in either verse 14 or verse 16.

No matter how difficult in places, Daniel 11 provides us with more evidence of God’s ultimate control over human affairs. In what ways, when you look back on your own experience, have you seen such powerful evidence of God’s leading, even though at the time things were happening you might have wondered where the Lord was? What lessons should you draw from those experiences that could help you with future trials?

The Abomination of Desolation (*Dan. 11:31*).

In our study of Daniel 7 and 8 we saw that the succession of worldly powers was in each case succeeded by “Christian” Rome. In yesterday’s study we saw that political Rome was in power when the “prince of the covenant,” Jesus Christ, was “broken.” This depiction of the death of Jesus gave us a powerful historical marker to help us trace the flow of historical events in Daniel 11.

What indicators do we find in the second half of chapter 11 to show that “Christian” Rome follows the succession of the political powers also in this chapter? *Dan. 11:31, 36.*

While the rapid change of events in this chapter may seem confusing, certain phrases in verses 31 and 36 provide a link to chapters 7 and 8, and these help us to identify the main power in view in the second half of this chapter. These phrases are:

1. “Forces shall be mustered by him [king of the north], and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress” (*Dan. 11:31, NKJV*). In Daniel 8:11 the little horn casts down (profanes) the place of God’s sanctuary.
2. “They shall take away the daily sacrifices” (*Dan. 11:31, NKJV*). In Daniel 8:11 the little horn takes away the daily sacrifices.
3. “He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god” (*Dan. 11:36, NKJV*). In Daniel 8:11 the little horn exalts himself as high as the “Prince of the host.”
4. “He shall . . . speak blasphemies against the God of gods” (*Dan. 11:36, NKJV*). In Daniel 7:25 the little horn speaks pompous words against the Most High.

The textual evidence, then, indicates that the main power in the second half of chapter 11 is again the little horn. What is the significance of the “abomination of desolation,” which the little horn puts in place of the “daily”? *Dan. 11:31.*

Daniel 12:11 has another reference to the taking away of the “daily” and the setting up of the abomination of desolation. In Daniel 8 the taking away of the “daily” referred to the obscuring of Christ’s high-priestly ministry in heaven through the work of usurpation by the little horn. In Daniel 11:31 and 12:11, the “daily,” Christ’s ministry in heaven, is usurped by a false system of worship—“the abomination of desolation.”

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, "Daniel's Prayers," in *The Sanctified Life*, pp. 46–52.

"In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 173.

In Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, Jesus refers to the "abomination of desolation" spoken by "Daniel the prophet." In both cases, Jesus places this "abomination of desolation" in a time future to Him. What this should tell us is that this "abomination of desolation" isn't some event prior to Jesus (such as during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes) but occurs later than even His time, a fact that helps us understand better what it is.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Three times Daniel was told that he was greatly beloved in heaven (*Dan. 9:23; 10:11, 19*). Few of us ever have an angel tell us directly that we are greatly beloved in heaven. How can we know that we are? What are other ways that God lets us know that we are indeed loved?
- ❷ Daniel 11 has been the subject of endless and wild speculation. From what we have studied so far, what parameters are found within the book of Daniel itself (such as in Daniel 2, 7, 8) that can help us, in our study of Daniel 11 and 12, keep from stepping outside the correct bounds for understanding the chapters?

Summary: In Daniel 10 the prophet was given a glimpse of the spiritual battle between Christ and Satan. He was assured of God's love and esteem and was shown that heavenly forces are at work in the halls of earthly governments for the sake of God's people. In Daniel 11, detailed prophecies are given concerning the history of nations from the Persian Empire until the end of time.

Touching Lives in Kosovo

Roy Richardson and Marija Trajkovska

In a refugee camp in Macedonia, excited Roma [Gypsy] children waited in the December cold for the ADRA van. The children had prepared a program of folk music and dances and had been promised a holiday gift, something new and nice. Most of the children had never owned something new.

When the van arrived, the older children hurried to help unload the gifts that ADRA-Germany had sent for the children in Macedonia, gifts that had been collected from churches and schools throughout Germany. While the older children arranged packages and refreshments on tables, the younger children talked excitedly about their dreams and wishes for Christmas and New Year.

Emran, 10, and his brother Redzep, 9, stared at their unopened packages. "To see a package so nicely wrapped is an exciting event for us," Emran said. "I have never had such a nice toy in all my life," said Redzep. Twelve-year-old Robert exclaimed over his new shoes. "I have never had new shoes in my life!" And 7-year-old Sarah sighed happily, "A minute ago I was drawing my dream. Now I am holding my dream," as she proudly held up her new cap, gloves, and shawl. A little girl held up her new doll and exclaimed through tears, "When I grow up, I will have a baby. It will be clean, nice, and healthy, just like this baby doll! It's so nice, I do not want to hold it with my dirty hands."

"At last some happiness has come to our camp," a grateful parent said as she looked at the happy faces of the children.

When Jesus walked on earth, He delivered people from trouble, sometimes with just a touch. This project has touched the lives of thousands of poor children and allowed ADRA to reach out to the needy. And the happy faces of children said Thank you better than any words ever could. "This is what God's love does for others," said Roy Richardson, ADRA Trans-Europe Regional Director.



Roy Richardson is executive director of ADRA Trans-Europe. Marija Trajkovska (bottom left, with children), is ADRA-Macedonia country director. Above right, Serdjana and her doll.

The Time *of the End* (*or the End of Time*)



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Daniel 11:40–12:13.

Memory Text: “‘Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever’” (Daniel 12:3).

The final chapter of Daniel sketches the events of world history at the concluding portion of “the time of the end,” when “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was” (Dan. 12:1). After receiving the last vision, Daniel still had questions, but God reserved a full understanding of the visions to the time of the end, when those who would study Daniel’s prophecies would understand their tremendous messages (vs. 4). We are, we believe, among those who have been called to understand.

In chapter 12 we stand at the edge of eternity. Behind us, the great events of salvation history have unfolded: the Flood, in which only eight people were saved; the Exodus from Egypt, which gave birth to the nation of Israel; and the Cross, which brought deliverance from sin to all humankind. The climax of salvation history, however, is still to come—the great exodus of the redeemed from this sin-filled planet.

The Week at a Glance: What is meant by the phrase “the time of the end”? Why do we believe that Michael is Jesus? Why was the book of Daniel sealed until “the time of the end”? What does Daniel teach about the resurrection of the dead?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 25.

The Time of the End (*Dan. 11:40-45*).

The expression “time of the end” appears only in the book of Daniel (8:17; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9). The context in each case indicates that it refers to the final period in history prior to the Second Advent. Seventh-day Adventists have generally identified the year 1798, the end of the 1,260 years, as the beginning of the time of the end. Because the final verses of Daniel 11 seem to be unfulfilled prophecy, we need to be careful how we interpret them.

Which powers could be referred to by the terms “king of the north” and “king of the south” in the time of the end? *Dan. 11:40*.

The king of the north. At the time of the end for the kingdom of Judah, Babylon was the enemy from the north (*Jer. 1:14, 15*). In the book of Revelation, Babylon is the code name for spiritual Rome—the papacy. Thus, the king of the north in the time of the end is the papacy. This harmonizes with Daniel 11:36-39, where the king who exalts himself is also the papacy.

The king of the south. Some view the earlier use of the phrase “the king of the south” (*in Dan. 11:5*) as the Ptolemies, who ruled in Egypt after the demise of the Grecian Empire. Because this latter prophecy (*Dan. 11:40*) applies to the time of the end, the phrase “king of the south” can no longer refer to literal Egypt. Revelation 11:8 uses Egypt to signify that which is opposed to true religion. These two powers are engaged in some sort of warfare.

Who in the time of the end could be symbolized by the nations of Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites? *Dan. 11:41*.

These nations no longer exist, which indicates that this passage is not intended to be construed as literal. In ancient days these nations were the enemies of God’s people, but God in His grace has promised to save many who were once His enemies. The church will be used of Him to conquer spiritually “Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.” Many will come out of groups once opposed to the truth of God and join God’s people in the time of the end.

Though not easy to understand, these texts reveal that the world will be in chaos and turmoil right up through the “time of the end.” What this should help us understand is that strife and toil, far from proving there is no God, help affirm His existence, because He has warned us about these things in advance. How should this realization help strengthen us to face future struggles?

Michael the Prince (*Dan. 12:1*).

Read Daniel 12:1. It depicts two major events. What are they? From what we know as Adventists, describe what events it is talking about:

Who is Michael, this great Prince, who delivers God's faithful people?

Adventists are about the only Christians who see "Michael" as Jesus. Consider the following evidence:

1. The Hebrew word *Michael* means "Who is like God?" The only One who is like God is Christ (*John 1:1*).
2. The "prince of the host" or "Prince of princes" (*Dan. 8:11, 25*) is also "Messiah the Prince" (*Dan. 9:25*). He is the same as "Michael your prince" (*Dan. 10:21*) or "Michael . . . the great prince" (*Dan. 12:1*).
3. The word *archangel* appears only twice in Scripture, once in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, where Christ comes with the voice of the archangel, and once in Jude 9, where Michael is called an archangel.

What is implied in the phrase "those found written in the book"? What book? See also *Exod. 32:32; Dan. 7:10; Luke 10:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 22:19*.

Even the most cursory survey of these texts implies judgment, even for those who serve the Lord. Those "found" written in the book of life are saved, those "found" not written in there are lost. If this isn't some sort of final judgment, final reckoning, final separation between the righteous and unrighteous—what is?

"The Lord desires us to appreciate the great plan of redemption, to realize our high privilege as the children of God, and to walk before Him in obedience, with grateful thanksgiving. He desires us to serve Him in newness of life, with gladness every day. He longs to see gratitude welling up in our hearts because our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, because we may cast all our care upon Him who cares for us."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 299. Why do you believe that your name, right now, is written in the book of life? On what basis do you make this claim?

The Resurrection (*Dan. 12:2*).

One of the most powerful and dramatic texts in all inspiration is Daniel 12:2—the promise and warning of the resurrection from the dead. Here is a great truth that all the science, philosophy, and worldly wisdom could never unearth for us. We know it only because we have been told it, and we believe it because we have been told it by the Lord in His Word.

Read Daniel 12:2. What principle, what concept, do we see here in the text? See the following texts for some answers: *Deut. 32:4; Eccles. 12:14; Acts 24:15; Rom. 2:5, 6.*

Who hasn't at times been outraged at the lack of justice among us? All around, and every day, injustice taunts at us, mocks us, makes us angry and even doubtful. The devil, for sure, loves injustice. In so many ways, injustice and corruption seem to rule the day.

Yet, implied in this one simple text is the promise and the warning of God's final justice. The righteous will be rewarded, the unjust will be punished, and not by human beings' fickle, fleeting, and often perverted notions of justice and punishment but by a perfect, all-knowing, merciful, and just God who rewards and punishes. Hence, for those who will claim it by faith, the text offers us something that no human can: the promise of final, and perfect, justice—something not seen in this world.

What does this text tell us about death?

"The Christian will make no mistake about it: death is an enemy. But at the same time it is a defeated enemy. This means that we can fight it with confidence, knowing that its temporary victories will not prevail. We can be on the side of health, peace, and all else that promotes life without being discouraged and fearful that the enemy we fight will finally win."—"Resurrection and Glorification," in *The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, p. 364.

Why is the promise of the resurrection of the dead so important to us, particularly as Seventh-day Adventists? How does our understanding of the state of the dead help us see even more clearly just how fundamental this teaching is? See also what Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 says about how crucial this doctrine is. Why do Paul's words make sense only if we understand that the dead now sleep?

The Sealed Book Is Opened (*Dan. 12:4, 9, 10*).

Read Daniel 12:4, 9, 10. Taken together, what are these texts saying about the book of Daniel?

For long centuries, many of the prophecies of Daniel were hidden in obscurity. This is not surprising, either, considering the contents of the book, particularly in regard to what it says about Rome, the one power that for centuries controlled access to the Bible.

However, since the time of the Protestant Reformation, and especially in the past few hundred years, more and more students have come to understand better the book of Daniel. The closed is now, more and more, opened. What makes it easier, too, is that living after many of these events unfolded, Bible students are able to look back over history and see just how these things happened, as predicted, an advantage that only those living at “the time of the end” could have.

“Since 1798 the book of Daniel has been unsealed, knowledge of the prophecies has increased, and many have proclaimed the solemn message of the judgment near.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 356. Of course, not everyone will understand. It’s sad that so much of the Protestant world applies key prophecies of Daniel to Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C., which is rather ridiculous, considering Daniel’s emphasis on “the time of the end.”

Read John 14:29. What did Jesus say that helps us understand why Daniel was told to shut up the book until the end?

In so many ways, the book of Daniel is a faith-affirming book. We, today, can look back and see how, just as predicted, nations came and went, one after another. The book appeals to our rational thought processes in ways that other books don’t. After all, the Lord, through the book of Daniel, has given us prophecies based on something as large and unchangeable as world history. We can be as sure of the prophecies as we can be of world history. In short, for those who will, by faith, let Daniel speak to them, the book will give them powerful assurances of God’s power and promises.

What’s your favorite prophecy in the book of Daniel? Which one does the most to help strengthen your faith? If you had the opportunity to give a non-Christian a Bible study from only one prophecy in the book, which one would you choose, and why?

Blessed Is He Who Waits (*Dan. 12:11-13*).

At the end of the book we find two time prophecies (the 1,290 and 1,335 days), which some Adventists set as literal days in the near future. What evidence in Scripture shows that these time prophecies are past?

First, we need to recognize that the angel's long discourse in Daniel 11 concludes in Daniel 12:4. Daniel 12:5-13 is an epilogue to the long vision in Daniel 11 and, in a sense, to the whole book, as well. It is not a new vision with a different topic but an explanation of certain elements in the visions contained in "the book," which is to be sealed. This is evident from the question in Daniel 12:6, "'How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?'" (*NKJV*). The expression "these wonders" refers to the things Daniel saw in chapter 11, which itself is simply an elaboration of the issues in chapter 8.

Second, the phrase "time and times and half a time" (*NKJV*), in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, refers to one event, not two. In Daniel 7:25 the saints are given into the hand of the little-horn power "'for a time, times and half a time'" (*NIV*), and in 12:7 the holy people's power is shattered for "'a time, times and half a time'" (*NIV*). These phrases refer to the same thing, the persecution of God's people during the 1,260 years.

Third, there's the taking away of the daily in Daniel 8:11, 11:31, and 12:11. Because in Daniel 8:11 and 11:31 the taking away of the daily refers to a past historical reality, the taking away of the daily in Daniel 12:11 is surely talking about the same thing.

For these reasons, and others, such as Ellen White's statement that after 1844, "there can be no definite tracing of prophetic time" (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 59*, 1900), we reject attempts to give these time prophecies a future fulfillment. They belong to the past.

One interpretation common among Seventh-day Adventists is this: A.D. 508 was the year in which Clovis, king of the Franks, stepped into the strategic position of the first civil power to join up with the rising Church of Rome. This laid the foundation for that centuries-long union of church and state, the abomination of desolation in Daniel 12:11. This was also the time in which many doctrines and practices that obscured Christ's high-priestly ministry became established in the church. Adding 1,290 years to 508 leads to 1798. Meanwhile, the 1,335 years starts from the same point (508), which then leads to 1843, "a significant date in the relationship to the great advent awakening"—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 881; see also Friday's section.

Read Daniel 12:13. Look at the assurance Daniel was given about his eternal destiny. What Bible texts give you just as much assurance as Daniel was given here?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 112–119.

"I saw that God was in the proclamation of the time in 1843. It was His design to arouse the people and bring them to a testing point, where they should decide for or against the truth. Ministers were convinced of the correctness of the positions taken on the prophetic periods, and some renounced their pride, and left their salaries and their churches to go forth from place to place to give the message."—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 232.

"Again they were led to their Bibles to search the prophetic periods. The hand of the Lord was removed from the figures, and the mistake was explained. They saw that the prophetic periods reached to 1844, and that the same evidence which they had presented to show that the prophetic periods closed in 1843, proved that they would terminate in 1844. Light from the Word of God shone upon their position, and they discovered a tarrying time—"Though it [the vision] tarry, wait for it." In their love for Christ's immediate coming, they had overlooked the tarrying of the vision, which was calculated to manifest the true waiting ones. Again they had a point of time. Yet I saw that many of them could not rise above their severe disappointment to possess that degree of zeal and energy which had marked their faith in 1843."—Page 236.

Discussion Questions:

- ① What dangers do we face by setting dates for future end-time events? What happens to the faith of many when these predicted events fail to come to pass?
- ② Daniel ends with the promise of victory for God's people. How, by dwelling on these prophecies, can your faith and hope be strengthened?

Summary: Though some parts of the book of Daniel remain a mystery, we have been given enough to trust in God who, through Jesus Christ, has assured us that, along with Daniel, we, too, will stand in our "lot at the end of the days."

Called to Fail?

N'drin Charles

I joined the Adventist Church while studying at a university in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. Soon after my baptism I began having Sabbath problems, and I could not complete one of my classes; I would have to take the class again the next year.

My parents were upset that I had let my faith get in the way of my studies, and they refused to pay my school fees after that. But I was determined to return to school and show my parents that my faith had not made me fail. The Lord blessed me, and I remained in school even without my parents' support.

As final exams approached, I prayed that God would help me do well and bring glory to His name. But just before exams the faculty went on strike and school closed. Some weeks later we were called back to take our exams.

The exam schedule indicated that my exams began on Tuesday, so I spent Monday reviewing. But Monday evening a friend came and asked why I had not attended two of my exams that day. To my dismay, I learned that the exam schedule had been revised after I had checked it. Missing the exams meant I had failed my courses.

"I have failed again!" I told God. "How can this bring honor to Your name?"

Later my pastor visited me and asked whether I would consider studying for the ministry. Other church members had asked me the same question, and I began to understand that perhaps God was opening another door for me.

I prayed to know God's will, and some weeks later, to my surprise, the church agreed to sponsor me to study at the Adventist seminary.

Before leaving to study, I asked God for two things: to continue providing throughout my studies, and to sustain me morally and physically to God's glory. God answered both of these prayers, and I graduated cum laude in three years instead of the usual four.

God fulfilled His promise that says, "If you put your trust in Me and walk before me, you will not be the last, but the first. You will not be the tail but the head." My parents, who once refused to pay my school fees, witnessed my graduation and gave honor to God for what He was doing in my life.

I urge believers to look to God when facing problems in their lives. Trust Him; He will never fail.

N'drin Charles is the coordinator of Global Mission and Gospel Outreach programs for the Cote d'Ivoire-Guinea Mission.

The main focus of this Bible Study Guide, *His Wondrous Cross: The Story of Our Redemption*, by Brian D. Jones, will be on the final week of Christ's life, which culminated in His death and resurrection. Next, we focus on the meaning of the Cross, on what happened there, and what it offers us, who claim it as the foundation of our salvation.

Lesson 1—The Provocation and Provision

The Week at a Glance

SUNDAY: To Love God (*Matt. 22:37*).

MONDAY: Satan's Defection (*John 8:44*).

TUESDAY: Satan's Earthly Exile (*Rev. 12:4-9*).

WEDNESDAY: "Ayechah"? (*Gen. 3:6-23*).

THURSDAY: God's Intervention and Gospel Foreshadowed (*Gen. 3:15*).

Memory Text—*Genesis 3:9*.

Sabbath Gem: "Why, in order to love God, must we be free? Why must freedom entail the possibility to do wrong? How did God respond to the fall of Adam and Eve?"

Lesson 2—His Glorious Purpose Foreshadowed in Types

The Week at a Glance

SUNDAY: The Sin Crisis.

MONDAY: The Sin Crisis, Continued (*1 John 5:19*).

TUESDAY: Cain and Abel (*Gen. 4:1-8*).

WEDNESDAY: Abraham and Calvary (*Gen. 22:1-19, Gal. 3:8*).

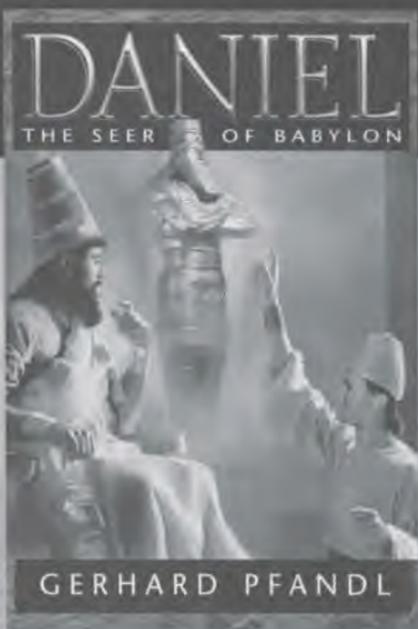
THURSDAY: The Serpent in the Wilderness (*Num. 21:4-9*).

Memory Text—*Genesis 22:8*.

Sabbath Gem: This week we look at those who were living in the shadows that were created only because the light was there to begin with. Before Calvary, the Lord was teaching His people truths about what God would do to save the world from sin.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 68506-0097.

Daniel: The Seer of Babylon



Here comes the Judge! That's the message of Daniel in this new commentary by biblical scholar Gerhard Pfandl. The author sets us down in once-mighty Babylon. We survey the ruins of the large banquet hall of Belshazzar and the remains of Nebuchadnezzar's statue on the plain of Dura. We relive Daniel's immortal stories of heroic faith and remember God's promise: "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you."

But more important, Pfandl provides the keys to unlock Daniel's prophecy of the 2300 days, the 70 weeks, and the 1260/1335 days. The author champions the historicist year/day principle, showing how Daniel unfolds the future in symbol. He explains how the medieval apostasy predicted by Daniel birthed a persecuting power whose false teaching obscures the atoning sacrifice of Christ. He cites non-Adventist scholars who affirm that Daniel 8 teaches a pre-Advent judgment, and refutes Adventist innovators who project the 1260 days into the future.

As the end rushes toward us, Daniel points forward to the day when David's prayer "Judge me, O Lord" is answered, and trial and trouble are swallowed up in glory.

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