

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.

TEACHERS COMMENTS

Key Text: *Daniel 8:13, 14.*

Teachers Aims:

1. To affirm that the heavenly sanctuary is to be cleansed.
2. To understand that the 2,300-day prophecy must be taken symbolically, applying the day/year principle, in order to be understood.
3. To emphasize the need for God's people to understand the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

Lesson Outline:

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

- A. The sacrificial service had two parts: the daily and the yearly service.
- B. Through the daily service, the confessed sins of the people of Israel were transferred to the sanctuary, thereby defiling it.
- C. Once a year, a special ceremony cleansed the sanctuary from the sins of the people.
- D. This was a type of the heavenly service.

II. For Two Thousand Three Hundred Days (*Dan. 8:14*).

- A. The 2,300 days mean 2,300 years.
- B. This time prophecy does not apply to Antiochus Epiphanes, who lived in the second century A.D.
- C. The cleansing of the sanctuary takes place in heaven.

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

- A. The cleansing of the sanctuary is the same event as the pre-Advent judgment outlined in Daniel 7.
- B. The saints will receive the kingdom from Christ.
- C. Recognition that Jesus began the second phase of His ministry in heaven at the end of the period of the 2,300 days explains why He did not return to earth on October 22, 1844.

Summary: “The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 488.

COMMENTARY

I. What's the Holdup?

Seventh-day Adventists, and most other Christians who maintain a living faith in Christ's second coming, expect a certain sequence of events prior to it. Adventists place particular emphasis on the time prophecies of Daniel.

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	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.

TEACHERS COMMENTS

The problem that faces us as believers in the Second Coming are the statements in the New Testament that seem to indicate that the end was at hand. For instance, Paul entertained the idea that the Second Coming could occur in what was then the near future: “After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (*1 Thess. 4:17, 18, NIV*).

On the surface, therefore, it would seem that the book of Daniel and the New Testament contradict each other on this matter. How can these seemingly opposing views be reconciled?

First, it appears that the apostles themselves were not unaware of the possibility that the Second Coming could be some time off. According to 2 Peter, in the end times people would say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (*2 Pet. 3:4*). Peter continues to write that nearness may have been a relative concept: “Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (*vs. 8*).

Second, Paul does not definitely say he will be alive when Christ returns (*1 Thess. 4:15-17*). In *1 Thessalonians 5:1-11* he expands upon his thoughts regarding the Second Coming by discussing its unexpectedness and the uncertainty that either he or the Thessalonians will be alive when it occurs. Furthermore, that the Thessalonians misunderstood Paul’s words about the nearness of the Second Coming is evident by Paul’s reminder that before this event occurs an apostasy must happen and the antichrist must appear (*2 Thess. 2:2, 3, 5*).

II. Useful Quotes About the Imminent Yet Seemingly Delayed Coming of Christ.

“Expressed in terms of time, the New Testament can describe the end as already present in one sense, yet future in another. The New Testament also expresses the same concept in terms of space—Christians live in heavenly places in Christ at the same time that they continue to struggle with the frustrations of this world. . . .

“In a sense ‘the last days’ of earth’s history had already arrived with the coming of Jesus (*Heb. 1:1, 2*). But although the cross ushers in the last days, even the ‘end of the ages,’ there is a sense in which the end is yet to come.”—Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End Time* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1994), pp. 77, 78.

“Yes, they [the apostles] did have the Old Testament with its time prophecies given to the prophet Daniel. . . . But God also told Daniel that the prophecies were ‘closed up and sealed till the time of the end’ (*Dan. 12:9*). In His mercy He did not unveil their meaning to Daniel, nor to many succeeding generations of Christians. Christians for nearly two millennia failed to discern the lapse of time before Christ’s second advent.”—Arnold V. Wallenkampf, *The Apparent Delay* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1994), p. 22.

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.

TEACHERS COMMENTS

“But does the New Testament really present a crisis or impasse or disappointment? Undoubtedly the fact that the Lord has not yet come plays a considerable role, and there are surely traces in the New Testament that indicate that His coming had been expected sooner. But it does not necessarily follow from this that a crisis is inevitable. A crisis will arise only if faith in God’s promises about the parousia [Second Coming] is lost.”—G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, p. 73.

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *Leviticus 16, Daniel 8, Hebrews 7–10.*

❶ The prophetic symbols and events described in Daniel 7–9 have cosmic, as well as personal, implications. On one hand, we can trace the great, supernatural issues at the center of the controversy between Christ and Satan. On the other hand, these events also demand our personal commitment. List at least three ways you are directly and personally affected by the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.

❷ In most countries, blood sacrifices are a foreign concept. Think of some ways in which the concept of justice and reconciliation between God and humanity can be described without seeming ancient and barbaric. What twenty-first-century images would be useful in describing the cleansing process that takes place in the heavenly sanctuary?

❸ Human experience is measured in units of time, such as months, years, and centuries. The prophecies of Daniel 7–9 would be useless if they could not be linked to some recognizable historical events. Are time prophecies more valuable for validating our faith in God’s promises, or for persuading others of their credibility? Explain your answer.

❹ The dates connected to the prophecies of Daniel 8 remind us that the major prophetic events leading up to Christ’s second coming already have occurred, and we have been living in the “time of the end” for 160 years. What practices have you found useful in keeping the promise of Jesus’ return a present reality?

❺ Generations of Seventh-day Adventists have seen in the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary a significant signpost pointing toward the fulfillment of God’s purposes in the plan of salvation. Yet, this teaching is virtually ignored by Christians of every other persuasion. What can be done to change that reality?

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.

TEACHERS COMMENTS

III. What the Bible Says About the Imminent Yet Seemingly Delayed Coming of Christ.

“ ‘I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom’ ” (*Matt. 16:28, NIV*).

“Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, ‘If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?’ ” (*John 21:23, NIV*). (Read verses 18-22 for the context of verse 23.)

Witnessing

Are you looking for a good object lesson to describe the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment in your witness to nonbelievers?

Consider using the old orchard test: “Have you ever seen an old apple tree, gnarled, twisted, broken, yet bearing as sweet apples as ever? You don’t know whether to pity it in its age and decrepitude or to admire it for its faithfulness in bearing fruit in spite of all its scars. Then have you ever seen another tree covered with luxuriant green foliage but just as unfruitful as a post? So may it be with human beings in the judgment of God. We remember that Jesus cursed the barren fig tree, and no fruit ever grew on it thereafter. It had passed its judgment. Its day of destiny had come. Its probation had ended. And certainly God will judge a man not by the mere profession of his lips, but rather by the occupation of his soul; not so much by his faults as by his fruits.”—H. M. S. Richards, *What Jesus Said* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1957), p. 269.

A wealth of related references abound in the Bible. For instance: “ ‘By their *fruits* ye shall know them’ ” (*Matt. 7:20*); “The *fruit* of the righteous is a tree of life” (*Prov. 11:30*); “ ‘I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the *fruit* of his doings’ ” (*Jer. 17:10*); “ ‘But I will punish you according to the *fruit* of your doings, saith the LORD’ ” (*Jer. 21:14*); “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the *fruit* of their doings” (*Isa. 3:10*).

More of the same can be found throughout Scripture. Spend time this week in Bible study. Reflect on the clear message of the following: The final judgment will reveal, or uncover, our decision for or against Christ. We are saved by the blood of Christ alone, but our thoughts and actions will reveal to the universe our choice to accept or deny His saving grace. Help others to see that time still remains to live life in harmony with God’s plan for salvation. Bear good fruit in laboring for Him.

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*).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Caricaturists create humorous portraits of famous people by distorting or exaggerating their features. George Crookshank, a famous caricaturist of the nineteenth century, drew caricatures of the Prince of Wales, exaggerating his paunchy stomach and his bulbous nose to outrageously huge and satirical proportions. While facial resemblance to the person is readily visible in a caricature, the likeness is not intended to be true to life.

In our lesson this week we learn how papal Rome (the little horn) begins open war against God's plan of salvation, a war that continues to grow in strength through distortion of biblical truths, in much the same way that a caricature distorts a portrait—a resemblance to the original is still there, but it is not an exact or true likeness. One of the techniques used by the papacy is substitution: the Mass for the Lord's Supper, the priest in place of Jesus our Mediator, the Eucharist in place of the Communion act, and the worship of Sunday in place of the Seventh-day Sabbath, to name a few. What portrait of God do these substitutions paint? Is it true to life or a caricature of Him?

Thought Question:

Daniel 2, 7, and 8 (incorporating different symbolisms) repeat and expand on the same prophetic messages: the rise and fall of nations, the last great world empire fragmenting, and the rise of a mighty force that wages war against God's plan of salvation. Why do you think God has outlined the message in this way? Is it to emphasize the critical nature of the warnings, thereby alerting us that we must pay close and special attention to what He is telling us? Explain.

Application Question:

This week's lesson uses the word *counterfeit* when speaking of the little horn's alternative to God's plan of salvation. Read the final paragraph on page 581 of *The Great Controversy*. Ask your heavenly Father to help you remain strong against the imitation of salvation offered by any other than the God of the universe.

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.