

The Hour of His Judgment



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 8, Daniel 9, Ezra 7, Matt. 3:13–17, Rom. 5:6–9, Mark 15:38, Lev. 16:16.*

Memory Text: “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (*Romans 13:11, 12, NKJV*).

Several years ago, *National Geographic* magazine described a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park in the United States. After it ended, forest rangers trekked up a mountain to assess the damage. One ranger found a bird literally burned to ashes at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick.

When he struck it, three tiny baby birds scurried from under their dead mother's wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. What a picture of the believer who is safe in Christ!

The fires of God's judgment burned themselves out on Him, at Calvary, and all who are in Christ are safe forever beneath His wings. At the cross, Christ was judged as a condemned sinner so that we could be judged as righteous citizens of the heavenly kingdom. He was judged as a criminal so that we could be set free from the destructive fires of eternal loss, both figuratively and, yes, literally, as well.

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

The Cleansing of the Sanctuary

As we have already seen, there must be a judgment before Christ comes. The angel announces in a loud voice that “ ‘the hour of His judgment has come’ ” (*Rev. 14:7, NKJV*). The book of Daniel gives us the time when this judgment begins.

Read Daniel 8:14. What specific timetable does Daniel give us regarding the cleansing of the sanctuary?

Each Jew clearly understood the meaning of the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary. It occurred on the Day of Atonement, which was the day of judgment. Although Daniel understood the concept of the cleansing of the sanctuary and the judgment, he was confused about the 2,300 days.

Read Daniel 8:27 and Daniel 9:21, 22. What was Daniel’s response to the vision of the 2,300 days, and what was God’s response to him?

At the end of Daniel 8, Daniel fainted and later exclaimed, “I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it” (*Dan. 8:27, NKJV*). That is, the vision of the 2,300 days (the rest of the vision already had been explained [*see Daniel 8:19–22*]). The next chapter, Daniel 9, records the angel Gabriel coming to explain to Daniel the 2,300-day prophecy. “ ‘O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand’ ” (*Dan. 9:22, NKJV*).

Gabriel amazes Daniel as he reveals an answer to his prayer much broader than he ever imagined. The angel Gabriel took Daniel down the stream of time and revealed the truth about the coming Messiah, giving the exact dates of the beginning of His ministry and His cruel death, events that tied directly to the cleansing of the sanctuary, in Daniel 8. In other words, Christ’s death and the judgment are inseparably linked.

Why is it significant that the death of Jesus, as revealed in Daniel 9:24–27, is directly linked to the judgment, in Daniel 8:14? What great truth is taught here by this link?

The 2,300 Days and the End Time

Read Daniel 8:17, 19, 26. What time period does the angel declare that the vision of Daniel 8 and the 2,300 days apply to, and why is that important to understand?

Some argue that the 2,300 days are literal days. They also believe that this little horn of Daniel 8 applies to the Seleucid military leader Antiochus Epiphanes (216 B.C.–164 B.C.), who attacked Jerusalem and defiled the Jewish temple, even though 2,300 days does not fit even his time frame. This interpretation, however, is contrary to the angel’s clear instruction that the vision applies to the “time of the end.” Antiochus Epiphanes certainly did not live at the time of the end.

In Daniel 8, Gabriel begins his explanation of the 2,300-day prophecy. He names the ram as representing Media-Persia and the male goat as representing Greece (*Dan. 8:20, 21*). Though not named, as are the two powers before it, the next entity, the little horn, is obviously Rome (*Dan. 8:9, 23, 24*). He then depicts a kind of religiopolitical phase of Rome, which would “cast down the truth to the ground” (*Dan. 8:10–12, 25*) and interfere with Christ’s heavenly ministry (*Dan. 8:10–12*). The cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14, the climax of the chapter, is God’s answer to the challenge of earthly and religious powers that have attempted to usurp the authority of God. It is part of God’s divine solution to the sin problem.

Gabriel is ready to explain the details in God’s prophetic timetable. At the end of Daniel 8, we can clearly see that Daniel did not understand the part of the vision about the 2,300 days (*Dan. 8:27*). The earlier part about the ram, the goat, and the little horn had all been explained, even with the first two powers outright identified by name (*Dan. 8:20, 21*). The cleansing of the sanctuary was, however, not explained.

The angel Gabriel, who appeared in Daniel 8, appears now in Daniel 9 and says to him: “ ‘At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision’ ” (*Dan. 9:23, NKJV*). What vision? As we will see tomorrow, it is the vision of the 2,300 days, the only part of the previous vision, in Daniel 8, that he hadn’t explained yet to Daniel.

Gabriel called Daniel “greatly beloved.” What does this tell us about the intimate link between heaven and earth?

The Angel's Instruction to Daniel

Read Daniel 9:23. What specific instruction does the angel give to Daniel? Why is this significant in understanding the meaning of the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14?

The angel plainly instructed Daniel to “ ‘consider the matter, and understand the vision’ ” (*Dan. 9:23, NKJV*). What matter, and what vision? Because there is no vision recorded in Daniel 9, the angel Gabriel must be speaking of the portion of the vision in Daniel 8 that the prophet did not understand—the vision of the 2,300 days (*Daniel 8:27*).

Gabriel continues in Daniel 9:24–27. What events in the life and ministry of Jesus is this about?

The first portion of this prophecy relates to God's people, the Jews. “ ‘Seventy weeks are determined for your people’ ”—the Jewish nation (*Dan. 9:24, NKJV*). In Bible prophecy, one prophetic day equals one literal prophetic year (*Ezek. 4:6, Num. 14:34*). In Daniel and Revelation, when you have symbolic imagery, you usually have a symbolic time prophecy, as well. One of the ways we can be certain that the day-year principle of prophecy applies here is that when we use it in Daniel's prophecy, each event on the time line comes out perfectly (see tomorrow's lesson). If we apply this principle, 70 weeks are composed of 490 days. Since one prophetic day equals one literal year, 490 days are 490 literal years.

Gabriel tells Daniel that 490 years are “cut off” (the literal meaning of the Hebrew word *chathak*, sometimes translated “determined”). Cut off from what? It only could be the other time prophecy alluded to here: the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14. These 490 years, which are a time prophecy, are directly linked back to the time prophecy of Daniel 8:14, the only part of the vision left unexplained in Daniel 8 and the only time prophecy in Daniel 8, as well. Thus, we can see that Gabriel with this prophecy is coming to help Daniel understand what he didn't understand in the previous chapter: the 2,300 days.

The Messiah “Cut Off”

Gabriel began this 490-year prophecy with an event that was extremely important to Daniel and to the Jews—the command to restore and build Jerusalem. Though various decrees had been passed regarding Jerusalem, in Ezra 7, we discover that the decree passed in 457 B.C. allowed the Jews not only to return to their homeland but also to establish themselves as a religious community (*see Ezra 7:13, 27*).

It is significant to note that Artaxerxes’s decree was issued in the autumn of 457 B.C. From this decree, in 457 B.C., to the Messiah, according to Daniel, would be 69 weeks, or 483 years. If we begin at 457 B.C. and move forward on history’s time line, we arrive at A.D. 27.

The word *Messiah* means “the anointed one.” In A.D. 27, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was baptized. (*See Matt. 3:13–17*.) Daniel predicted hundreds of years in advance the exact year for the baptism of Christ, the time at which Jesus would begin His three and a half years of ministry.

Read Romans 5:6–9 along with Daniel 9:26. What great truths are revealed here?

“ ‘And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself’ ” (*Dan. 9:26, NKJV*). The Messiah would be “cut off,” or crucified. The verse adds “ ‘but not for Himself.’ ” In other words, the death of Christ on Calvary’s cross was for us, not for Himself, which is why Paul could write: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (*Rom. 5:8, NKJV*).

In Daniel 9:27, we read that in the middle of the week, the last seven years, Christ would “ ‘bring an end to sacrifice and offering’ ” (*NKJV*). In the middle of this seventieth week, in A.D. 31, Christ confirmed the everlasting covenant with His blood by dying on the cross, and the sacrificial system lost any and all prophetic significance.

These prophecies reveal that Christ, the Messiah, would be crucified and cause the sacrificial system to cease its prophetic importance in the spring of A.D. 31. These predictions were fulfilled in every detail. Exactly at Passover, when the high priest was offering the Passover lamb, Christ was sacrificed for us.

With what has been written above in mind, read Mark 15:38 and Matthew 3:15, 16. How do these verses help us understand the prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27?

The Year 1844

The first 490 years of the 2,300-year prophecy were designated especially for the Jewish nation of antiquity and the coming of the Messiah. The last part of the 2,300 years has to do with God's people, both Jew and Gentile, along with the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, and, ultimately, the second coming of Christ.

The first 490 years applied to the first advent of the Messiah and ended in A.D. 34. Subtracting 490 years from 2,300 years leaves us with 1,810 years. These second 1,810 years apply to God's people. If we begin at A.D. 34 and we add 1,810 years, we come to A.D. 1844.

In the light of the cleansing or restoration of the truth about the sanctuary and heaven's end-time judgment, God makes His final appeal to all humanity in Revelation 14:6, 7 to respond to His love; accept His grace; and live godly, obedient lives.

Read Leviticus 16:16. What was the reason for the cleansing of the sanctuary, and what does this teach us about the gospel?

Because of the people's sins, the people's iniquities, the sanctuary had to be cleansed, which happened only with the blood of animals. It's the same with us. We need a Savior, whose life is symbolized by the animals slain on the Day of Atonement, as the only way to make it through the judgment.

Read Leviticus 23:26–29. What did God command His people to do on that day of judgment, and what should that mean for us today?

The Israelites were to "afflict their souls." This expression indicates that they were to humble themselves and examine their hearts, confess their sins, repent, and ask God to cleanse them as the high priest was cleansing the earthly sanctuary.

The prophetic chapters of Daniel 7–9 and Revelation 14 focus especially on the judgment-hour urgent appeals to prepare. Since 1844, we have been living in the judgment hour, and Revelation's message of the first angel proclaims, "The hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7, NKJV). How, then, do we today "afflict our souls"?

Further Thought: Here's a quick and easy way to look at the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27.

First, there are the 70 weeks (*Dan. 9:24*),

Next, there are the seven weeks and 62 weeks, or 69 weeks (*Dan. 9:25*) of the 70 weeks.

There's the last week, the seventieth (*Dan. 9:27*).

And, finally, that last week is divided—"in the middle of the week" (*Dan. 9:27*)—into two three-and-a-half-year sections.

That's it. Seventy weeks, which are composed of sixty-nine weeks and one week. And that one week is divided in half. Just plug in the date, 457 B.C., at the beginning, and with simple math—yes, we come to 1844 on the time line.

Also, in describing the 2,300 days, Daniel 8 never said when the 2,300 days began. "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (*Dan. 8:14*). "Unto two thousand and three hundred days"—from what time? Why not from the time when Daniel had the vision itself, the "third year of the reign of King Belshazzar" (*Dan. 8:1*)?

That doesn't work. The vision in Daniel 8 didn't include Babylon. It started with kingdoms after it (i.e., Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome, up to "the end"). Why date an event, the cleansing of the sanctuary, which is in the vision, from an event, the reign of the kingdom of Babylon, which is not? The starting date for the climax of the vision should come from within the vision itself, which started with Media-Persia and extends to "the end." That's a lot of years.

Which one began it? We are not told in Daniel 8. We are told in Daniel 9.

Discussion Questions:

1 In class, discuss the close relationship between the gospel and judgment as seen in these two parts of what is, really, one prophecy. Why is the link between the two such good news for us? How should this link help alleviate the fear that many have had regarding the idea of judgment?

1 Dwell more on the truth, revealed in Daniel 9:26, that the Messiah was cut off, but "not for Himself" (*NKJV*). What is this about? For whom was He cut off, and why?

3 Read again Leviticus 16:16 and Leviticus 23:26–29. Talk about the reason for the cleansing of the sanctuary (*Lev. 16:16*) and how the people were supposed to act when it happened (*Lev. 23:26–29*). What is the relationship between what happened then and what it should mean for us today?

Ukrainian Miracle

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Ten-year-old Anas struggled in his classes amid an ongoing torrent of bullying in public school in Odessa, Ukraine. His skin was darker than the other children's, and his classmates made fun of him. He lived with his Ukrainian grandmother after being left at her home by his mother, a former Seventh-day Adventist. His father wasn't a Christian and lived far away in Iran.

Grandmother didn't like the way that Anas was being treated at school. Upset over the bullying, she finally transferred the boy to the local Seventh-day Adventist school.

At first, Anas was withdrawn and spoke little. But he loved the Bible classes so much that he tried to remember the teacher's words by whispering them as he heard them in the classroom. As the days and weeks passed, he began to open up and make jokes. The other children enjoyed his wit, and he soon became the class clown. He received his very own Bible.

His mother was furious when she learned that Anas was attending the Adventist school, and she took him away from Grandmother to live with her. She refused to speak with Grandmother, and she taught Anas at home.

Grandmother prayed for God to intervene. She prayed every day for a year. After some time, Mother began speaking to her again. They became friends again.

One day, Mother agreed to Grandmother's suggestion to meet with an Adventist pastor. Anas listened in on their conversation, and he learned to his surprise that three of his friends from the Adventist school were going to be baptized. "I also want to be baptized!" he exclaimed.

Mother was surprised. The pastor was surprised. They asked Anas some questions. It turned out that he had been studying his Bible on his own during the year that he had been living with Mother. More than anything, he wanted to be baptized. His fervent desire to give his life to Jesus touched Mother's heart. She gave her consent. Two weeks later, Mother and Grandmother watched as the 11-year-old boy was baptized with his three friends from the Adventist school.



It was a miracle facilitated by God and Adventist education, said Ivan Riapolov (pictured), education director for the Euro-Asia Division, whose territory includes Ukraine.

"There was not only a reconciliation of the family, but also a reconciliation with God," he said.

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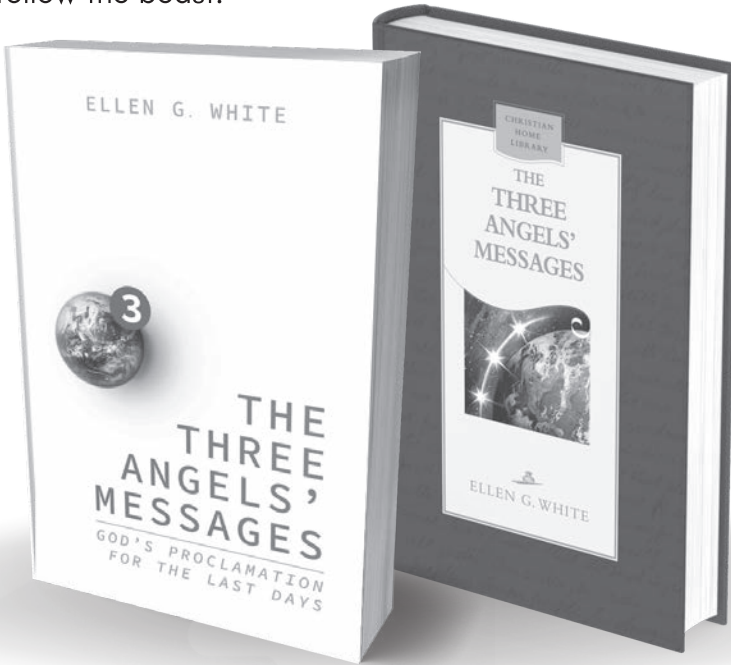


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