## Contents

1. **“To Eat or Not to Eat—That Is the Question”—September 25–October 1** — 5
2. **Nebuchadnezzar’s Image—October 2-8** — 17
3. **The Fiery Furnace—October 9-15** — 29
4. **Nebuchadnezzar’s Judgment—October 16-22** — 41
5. **Surprise Party—October 23-29** — 53
6. **An Ancient Death Decree—October 30–November 5** — 65
7. **Daniel’s History Lesson—November 6-12** — 77
8. **The Pre-Advent Judgment—November 13-19** — 89
9. **The Sanctuary Attacked—November 20-26** — 101
10. **The Sanctuary Cleansed—November 27–December 3** — 113
11. **God’s Timetable—December 4-10** — 125
12. **When Kings Go to War—December 11-17** — 137
13. **The Time of the End (or the End of Time)—December 18-24** — 149

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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. And 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.
How to Use
This Teachers Edition

The teachers comments demonstrate different methods of teaching the Standard Adult Sabbath Schoool Bible Study Guide. Five parts make up the teachers comments:

► **Key Text, Lesson Aim, and Outline:** The key text is taken from the standard edition guide. The lesson aim is designed to: (a) help class participants understand and know about the lesson material, (b) evoke an appropriate feeling about the lesson material that complements the lesson content and helps to internalize it, and (c) help class participants apply the lesson material to their daily lives. The lesson outline may not always follow exactly the material that appears in the standard guide. It may reflect additional perspectives as it attempts to stimulate class discussion.

► **The Commentary** follows the traditional teaching methods of Sabbath School. It explains Bible passages and provides appropriate information leading to spiritual applications.

► **The Inductive Bible-Study Method** emphasizes careful, methodical discovery of the meaning in a text. The teacher encourages and supports the learner’s investigation and discovery, using distinctive approaches: (a) Study a text thoroughly and systematically before drawing a conclusion. (b) Look for textual meaning carefully and thoroughly; understand the passage in context; avoid misquoting the author. We must not develop opinions without biblical proof. (c) Share insights through group discussion as students examine a Bible passage together. (d) Apply the text to life today. (e) Allow the Holy Spirit to minister to class members during Bible study.

► **The Focus-on-Witnessing Approach** should be used in conjunction with other methods of Bible study to demonstrate how particular passages of Scripture can be used to encourage people to commit their lives to Christ and to nurture spiritual life once it has been awakened.

► **The Life-Application Approach** demonstrates how issues that grow out of Bible study can be shared in a small-group setting. This section uses an approach suitable for discussion in a small group in which interpersonal sharing and dialogue are key elements.

*Use a combination of teaching methods. Within one class period it is often possible to draw from all five methods demonstrated in the teachers comments. Some teachers will prefer to focus on one method of teaching, drawing heavily on the material in the teachers comments.*
LE S S O N 1  *September 25–October 1

“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?

1. **Babylon (Gen. 11:1-9)**

2. **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?
Key Text: Psalm 119:105.

Teachers Aims:
1. To understand that the battle against sin is a war between Christ and Satan.
2. To recognize the importance of the will, the influence of the body on the mind, and a consistent prayer life.

Lesson Outline:

I. A Tale of Two Cities (Dan. 1:1).
   A. Jerusalem represents the rule of righteousness.
   B. Babylon represents the rule of wickedness.
   C. The principles of the great controversy are illustrated in the book of Daniel.

II. The Innocent Suffer With the Guilty (Dan. 1:2-7).
   A. God gives the king of Judah into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar; many innocent young men are taken captive, including Daniel and his three friends.
   B. God loves us and is in control of our destiny.
   C. God turns Daniel’s captivity into a blessing that benefits not only Daniel’s people but the nation of Babylon, as well.

III. Dare to Be a Daniel (Dan. 1:9-16).
   A. Daniel and his friends refuse to compromise on matters of diet.
   B. Daniel understands the connection between health and holiness.
   C. Daniel remains committed to the meaning of his Hebrew name, even though the king renames him after a Babylonian deity.

Summary: “In the history of Joseph, Daniel, and his fellows, we see how the golden chain of truth may bind the youth to the throne of God. They could not be tempted to turn aside from their course of integrity. They valued the favor of God above the favor and praise of princes, and God loved them and spread His shield over them.”—Ellen G. White, Messages to Young People, p. 27.

COMMENTARY

I. The Remnant.
   Seventh-day Adventists are not alone in considering themselves the remnant church, nor are many Adventists alone in finding this classification somewhat embarrassing. If you claim to be part of the remnant, then by definition most other people are not. So you are being exclusive, and exclusivity can be bad. At least most people with an opinion on the topic say it is bad, and they can recite the usual catalog of horrible examples: inquisitions, genocides, com-
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?

1. 2 Kings 21:10-16

2. 2 Kings 24:18-20

3. 2 Chron. 36:15-17

4. 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.
munal warfare—all based on the assumption of one group that it was superior to another group. The Hindu philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti expressed the queasiness many people feel toward what he saw as exclusivism when he wrote: “When you call yourself an Indian or a Muslim or a Christian or a European, or anything else, you are being violent. Do you see why it is violent? Because you are separating yourself from the rest of mankind.”—*Freedom From the Known* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 51, 52.

Do we as Adventists sometimes consider ourselves separate from, and better than, other people because we are “the remnant”? If we do, we are going against the true meaning of the remnant message.

The remnant message is not primarily about our worthiness as people. In fact, a look at the use of the term in the Bible reveals that it primarily means *survivors*, people who—perhaps through dumb luck or perhaps because someone cared enough to save them—managed not to die in an overwhelming disaster. In this case the someone is God, and the overwhelming disaster is life on earth as we know it.

So, our status as remnant is about God first and foremost and only incidentally about us. To put it grammatically, God is the subject and we are the object. As soon as we forget that and start believing that God is secondary in the equation, we risk becoming separatist and/or “violent,” if only metaphorically.

The example of Daniel in the Bible is an excellent model for anyone who is or wants to be part of God’s remnant today. Daniel did not act or perceive of himself as naturally better than the people surrounding him, even though in some sense that might have been the case. All his greatness and goodness came from God, and he apparently never lost sight of the fact. When his obedience brought him into conflict with prevailing customs, he seized the opportunity to show God’s love and grace. Not even his enemies would have mistaken him for a violent zealot.

**II. Useful Quotes About the Remnant.**

“The ‘Constantinian era’—when church and society shared similar ideals—has come to an end. As a result Christians find themselves part of a community of believers who, by virtue of a personal, free, and explicit decision of faith, dissociate themselves from the current views of their social environment. The church of the future will have the characteristics of a ‘little flock,’ a true remnant, living in a pluralistic world in which God and the Scriptures will at best be merely one alternative among many others.”—*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 565.

“It is an established fact that the remnant motif appears at crucial turning points in history when man’s life and existence are threatened with extermination. The lasting contribution of the
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.
prophetic movement in ancient Israel, which herself faced ruinous disaster, is to have provided a basis for the survival of the remnant in its urgent call to return to God. . . . The urgent prophetic call to turn to God in faith, confidence, and trust is ultimately also the only basis for the survival of modern man whose existence is threatened with global ruin at the present crucial turning point in history.”

“God has His children in all churches; but through the remnant church He proclaims a message that is to restore His true worship by calling His people out of the apostasy and preparing them for

**Inductive Bible Study**

**Texts for Discovery:** Genesis 3:1-7; Daniel 1; Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 10:31.

1. The great controversy between Christ and Satan is not an abstract struggle; it is a conflict in which everyday choices and situations demonstrate either our loyalty or our disloyalty to God’s kingdom and His principles. Yet, as this week’s lesson points out, Daniel and his friends chose to cooperate with their captors as much as their consciences allowed. What does that teach us about choosing our battles with conformity? How did Daniel’s choices demonstrate his loyalty to God?

2. Daniel 1:8 describes the choice Daniel made to remain loyal to God. But notice this verse: “Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel” (vs. 9, NIV). Was this miracle performed in a vacuum? If not, what part did Daniel and his friends play in winning the official’s favor? *Read Matt. 5:43-48.*

3. Paraphrase the principle described in 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Philippians 4:8, 9. Short of totally removing oneself from society and its influences, how can we minimize the negative and nurture the positive in our lives?

4. Read Daniel 1:17-20. Think of the people you know who “stand for principle.” In what ways are they the type of people you would like to emulate? How is their behavior unusual? Reconcile their behavior with the description of Jesus found in Luke 15:1, 2. Into which group would you place Daniel and his friends—the type of people you would like to emulate or the type of people who are unusual? Explain your answer.

5. At this point in his experience, was Daniel’s primary influence on others religious, practical, or both? Explain your answer.
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?**
Witnessing

Our lesson this week witnesses powerfully to the virtues of embracing and living a healthy, Christian lifestyle—a lifestyle taught early in life by parents who accepted, practiced, and closely adhered to God’s design for building strong bodies, superior intellectual capabilities, and loyal hearts. Ellen White tells us “Daniel and his associates had been trained by their parents to habits of strict temperance. They had been taught that God would hold them accountable for their capabilities, and that they must never dwarf or enfeeble their powers.”—Prophets and Kings, p. 482.

No fast-food, carry out, or junk food for Daniel during his growing-up years—he knew that oatmeal was good for you millennia before television commercials proclaimed it to the world. It is doubtful he required calorie-laden dips in order to down his vegetables; no french fries and a soda for lunch; no alarming growth of obesity or sluggishness due to a poor diet. Instead, Daniel adhered to the earliest of diet plans—plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, wholesome grains, and pure water. As a reward for his faithful adherence to God’s early prescription for healthy living, he grew in mental, emotional, and spiritual stature. Through the grace of God, he excelled in all he did, and he always gave glory to his heavenly Father for his accomplishments.

In a world that desperately needs positive role models, we have found one in Daniel. He is an “action hero” for the ages!
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?*
Application

Icebreaker: Have you ever found yourself directionally challenged—a time in which you temporarily lost sight of your destination? In other words, lost? It is at this precise moment that we need to have available to us the means to get back on course. This may entail asking directions or using a map to locate where we are and where we want to go.

Our conscience is like that—it’s our directional needle, so to speak. Is it possible to be going in the wrong direction in life and not even be aware of it? Are you, like Daniel, firmly on course with God? If not, what are you doing to bring about much-needed course correction?

Thought Questions:

1. Henry Louis Mencken has said that conscience is the inner voice that warns us somebody may be looking. Do you agree with this statement? Is fear of getting caught the underlying concept of doing the right thing for the wrong reason?

2. Satan never misses an opportunity to zero in on our weaknesses. He encourages our appetites and addictions to such things as food, stimulants, alcohol, inactive lifestyles, etc. Why is this so? What does he hope to gain by doing this?

3. On New Year’s Day each year, millions of people make resolutions that they believe will bring positive changes in their lives during the next 12 months. A relatively small number actually stick to these new goals beyond the first few weeks—even fewer continue these into the next new year. What defeats these attempts to do right? Identify a key component to staying the course that Daniel possessed that many may be lacking.

Application Questions:

1. In our lesson this week we learned how Daniel and his friends were faced, time and again, with the pressure to compromise. Yet, each situation resulted in their remaining faithful to God and His teachings. Share an experience of yours in which you were faced with the temptation to compromise, and describe the process you went through to reach your final decision. What would you change, if anything, if you had it to do over?

2. The Bible is full of examples in which conscience and compromise played major roles in the ultimate outcomes. Share a favorite example of yours with the members of your class and help them relate it to a contemporary situation.

**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?

1. **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.

2. **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.

3. **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.
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).

Y ears 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 Hammar-skjöld 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?
Teaching Comments

Key Text: Daniel 2:21.

Teachers Aims:
1. To behold how God works through His faithful people to bless and to save others.
2. To understand where we are in Bible prophecy and the need to be faithful to God.
3. To recognize that God may call us to stand before rulers as His mouthpiece.

Lesson Outline:
I. God Reveals the Future to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1-13).
   A. God alone knows the future.
   B. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, though forgotten, leaves him feeling disturbed.

II. Daniel’s Prayer and Testimony (Dan. 2:14-20).
   A. Daniel and his friends pray to God to reveal the king’s dream and to spare their lives.
   B. Daniel praises and thanks God for revealing the meaning of the dream.
   C. Daniel publicly acknowledges God before the king.

III. The Interpretation of the Dream (Dan. 2:28-45).
   A. Daniel gives sole credit to God for the wisdom to understand the dream.
   B. The time period represented by the image spans from Babylon to earth’s latter days.
   C. The stone that destroys the image symbolizes that God will destroy all other kingdoms and establish an everlasting kingdom.

Summary: “The power exercised by every ruler on the earth is Heaven-imparted. . . . In the word of God only is this clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations, as of individuals, is not found in the opportunities or facilities that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. It is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God’s purpose.” —Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 502.

Commentary

I. Prophecy and Prophets in the Bible.

Prophecy is commonly regarded as being about the foretelling of future events. Indeed, the prophets of the Bible almost always predicted what was and is to come as a result of certain patterns of behavior.

The Bible states that fulfilled predictions are one of the criteria by which we may judge the truth and accuracy of a prophet’s claim to speak for God (Deut. 18:21, 22; Jer. 28:5-9).

However, a close look at biblical prophecy reveals that its primary focus is not on future events but on the God who inspired the prophets and who is ultimately determining the course of the world. One is still
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?
a false prophet even if one predicts with startling accuracy but fails to
direct the hearer’s attention to the source of true prophecy, God
Himself. As The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology states:
“True prophecy consists of a revelation from God and the proclama-
tion of what has been revealed. Counterfeit prophecy always will
include proclamation, but there will be no revelation that it has its ori-
gin with God” (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 621.
It is informative to know the meaning of the word *prophecy*. Its Greek
roots mean literally to “speak out” on behalf of God, or in the case of
false prophets, gods. In ancient times, prophets made predictions to
establish the superior knowledge or omniscience of their deities.

From this we can see that the accuracy of a particular prophecy is
necessary, but not sufficient, for it to be considered of divine origin.
Daniel and other Old Testament prophets can be relied upon not only
because their predictions can be verified but also because of the har-
monious picture of God’s character they present.

II. Useful Quotes About Prophecy and
Prophets.

“Prophets stood before the people as representatives of the Lord.
Their very presence showed the people that God was sufficiently
interested in them and close enough to them to choose men from
among them to represent Him. They were men ‘subject to like pas-
sions’ as their neighbors; not visitors from another world, but men
among men. While the plan was subject to dangers because of the
weakness of humanity in the person selected, yet it possessed inherent
possibilities for success not present in any other method.”—T. Housel
p. 24.

“The chief function of Old Testament prophecy was to prepare a
race and a world for the coming of Christ. In the fullness of Christ
there was gathered and united all the virtues and efficacy [capabilities;
usefulness] of divine prophecy. In His ministry on earth there was pre-
sented the highest service and benediction of the prophetic gift.”
—Paul E. Quimby, *Messages of the Prophets* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific

“The idea that every prophecy uttered by a true prophet will come
to pass, and that unfulfilled prophecy shows a prophet is false, will not
stand in the presence of Scripture. The very fact that predictions made
by prophets who have proved to be true have not come to pass forces
the consideration of at least two categories of prophecy: conditional
and unconditional.”—*The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist
Theology*, p. 626.

“The word [*nabi*, the Hebrew word usually translated as
‘prophet’] can be traced to an Akkadian root, and the choice is
between the prophet as one who is called, or one who calls, *i.e.* [that
is], to men in the name of God. Either of these will admirably suit the
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?
nature of the prophet as found in the Old Testament. The possibility that the prophet is one who calls to God, in prayer, has not been canvassed, but that too, and apparently from the start (Gen. 20:7), was a mark of a prophetic man.”—The Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Leicester, Eng.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), part 3, p. 1278.

III. What the Bible Says About Prophets and Prophecy.

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him... But the prophet, which shall

Inductive Bible Study


1 For decades Daniel 2 has been used to kick off the Adventist evangelistic series. It gives a quick outline of historical events from the kingdom of Babylon to the second coming of Christ, proving the credibility of Bible prophecy. Is prophecy still an effective evangelistic “hook”? What other subthemes in this chapter could be used evangelistically to tell people about God’s character and power?

2 Daniel and his friends were not initially consulted about the king’s dream, yet they were directly affected by the astrologers’ failure to interpret it. What gave their request to Arioch credibility? What gave Daniel influence in Nebuchadnezzar’s court? What are the implications for us in our spheres of influence?

3 In broad terms, list at least three things Daniel and his friends might have prayed for as they faced their imminent execution. Compare the prayer they might have prayed with the example Jesus gave in Matthew 6:9-13.

4 God’s answer to Daniel’s prayer saved him, his friends, and other individuals in Nebuchadnezzar’s court. How are our lives a saving influence in our homes, churches, work places, and communities? Read Matthew 5:13-16. List three ways that you, as an individual, are salt and light in your community. List three ways your congregation makes a difference in your town.

5 Read Matthew 7:24-27. In what ways is this rock similar to the stone Daniel saw in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision? In what ways is it different? List the things in your life that would survive a rock that breaks “the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces” (Dan. 2:45, NIV).
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.
In his book *Planet in Rebellion*, George Vandeman shares the story of Kaiser Wilhelm, who, at the height of his power and influence, was faced with the formidable task of understanding and accepting the explanation of a certain prophecy. For some time, Wilhelm suffered difficulty in fully grasping the prophecy’s meaning. Finally, after he began to understand the full significance of it, and as he began to see what its fulfillment would mean to him personally, he called out, “I can’t accept it! It doesn’t fit in with my plans!” (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1960), p. 128.

What arrogance, we say; how egotistical and self-serving. Yet, are we not sometimes guilty of the same arrogance? How often do we refuse to accept God’s leading and His counsel simply because it doesn’t meet our expectations, timing, desires, or needs?

For instance, the prophetic light and counsel regarding Christian living practices as revealed by Ellen G. White, whom the Seventh-day Adventist Church believes to have been given the gift of prophecy, have, at times, been ignored or dismissed. Often, this is because her writings are perceived by some to be overly restrictive, out-of-date, or irrelevant. Yet, her revelations on healthful living are consistently echoed by leading secular experts around the world.

Similarly, Daniel received prophetic revelations that have been confirmed by historical events. Biblical prophecy outlines for us specific world events that foretell the closing of earth’s history. Daily news reports and political analysis affirm that these events are taking place at this very time around the globe, all of which confirm the end time is near—very near. Yet, many continue to pretend that the darkening religious, economic, and political climate that swirls around us is temporary, that things will soon improve. Quite simply, this is just not going to happen.

Knowing what we know, don’t you feel the urgency to tell *everyone* about Christ’s soon coming? Are you doing *everything* you can to share this message with others you meet?
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?
this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).
“Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10).

**Life-Application Approach**

**Icebreaker:** In this age of mass communication via cell phones, pagers, instant messaging, and so forth, isn’t it comforting to know that communion with our Best Friend, our Lord and Savior, is only a thought away? Electricity, satellites, or microwaves are not required in order to send Him a silent cry for help or to breathe a “Thank You” to Him for His protection. We can whisper His name any time, any place. Gifted neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson says that for him, prayer is not only something he needs every day but all through the day.

Do you take full advantage of this open-communication life-line with your heavenly Father? Ask others in your class the same question.

**Thought Question:**
We are told to “come boldly unto the throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16). What exactly does this mean? Describe a personal situation during which you did this very thing—approached God boldly. What was God’s response? What does this say about the way God answers prayers? Are our prayers always answered?

**Application Questions:**

1. Daniel was prepared to address his earthly king’s questions regarding the king’s dream because he had fully communicated first with his heavenly King. How can you apply the same principle to your daily-life activities? We are told we must be completely dependent on God. Does this mean that it is always necessary to counsel with God before we undertake anything in life? God has provided His children with intelligence and the ability to use it, so doesn’t He expect us to proceed on that basis? How do we know when to ask for guidance?

2. While Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was apocalyptic in meaning and heaven sent, most dreams do not fall into that category. So, how are we to discern the difference? What wisdom in the Bible can we turn to for guidance?

“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:

1. 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?
2. 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.
**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 Caesar . . . 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.*
Key Text: Isaiah 43:2.

Teachers Aims:
1. To affirm that God requires our faithfulness and obedience to Him.
2. To understand that believing in God is not enough; we must know Him as our Lord and Savior.
3. To know that at the end of time, Michael, the great Prince, shall deliver His people.

Lesson Outline:
I. Nebuchadnezzar’s Pride (Dan. 3:1-7).
   A. King Nebuchadnezzar defies Daniel’s interpretation of the dream.
   B. The king constructs a golden statue to symbolize Babylon as an eternal kingdom.
   C. The king exalts temporal Babylon above God’s eternal kingdom by commanding all his subjects to bow down to the statue.

II. The Three Hebrews Defy the King (Dan. 3:8-18).
   A. Officials of all ranks attend the ceremony on the plain of Dura to worship the statue.
   B. Daniel’s three friends refuse to bow down to the golden image.
   C. Their refusal is seen as an act of treason against the power and the authority of the king.

III. Trial by Fire (Dan. 3:16-23).
   A. The Hebrews obey Nebuchadnezzar as far as their consciences permit them to obey.
   B. The three Hebrews determine to obey God rather than humanity and are thrown into the furnace.
   C. Nebuchadnezzar sees a fourth person, the Son of God, in the furnace too.
   D. Miraculously, the fire singes neither their hair nor their clothes.

Summary: It is a wonderful comfort to know that our God is able to deliver us both physically and spiritually from any danger. However, no matter how threatening the circumstance, He gives us the strength to remain faithful to Him.

Commentary

1. The Cost of True Worship.
   The world regards worship as something one does on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or whatever one’s chosen day of worship is. If the worshiper is motivated to be nicer to people or to be vaguely ethical, that too is acceptable so long as one does not go to extremes.
   However, the Christian attitude toward worship is quite different
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?
in that worship has something to do with the real world and how one behaves in it, and that occasionally it will cause inconvenience, even serious consequences to life and limb.

Worship, as exemplified by Daniel and other biblical figures, can be risky. It is not a harmless activity to either the worshiper or the society that witnesses it. Not only will it change the way you conduct the rest of your life; it is exclusive. There is only one God who should be worshiped, and the Bible teaches us that the specifics matter, most notably the specific day of worship (Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Deut. 5:15; Ezek. 20:20; Mark 2:27, 28; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14; 16:13; 17:2). It is not a case of one option being slightly better than another. Having faith in and falsely worshiping counterfeit gods does not make one slightly holy. However, having faith in and properly worshiping the true God can make one extremely holy. Only the latter is acceptable. The comparison of Christianity with consumer goods is wrong. Imagine telling someone that their soap, unlike yours, does not make them clean but dirtier.

Presently, many of the conflicts that could be caused by the proper worship of the true God lie so far beneath the surface in many places of the world, they seem not to exist. However, one of God’s prophets informs us that in the not-too-distant future, true worship once again will be physically dangerous: “Those who honor the law of God have been accused of bringing judgments upon the world, and they will be regarded as the cause of the fearful convulsions of nature and the strife and bloodshed among men that are filling the earth with woe. The power attending the last warning has enraged the wicked; their anger is kindled against all who have received the message, and Satan will excite to still greater intensity the spirit of hatred and persecution.”—Ellen G. White, Cosmic Conflict (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1971), p. 539.

II. Useful Quotes About Worship.

“Human beings bring worship and honor and glory and praise to God. . . . This is not a onetime occurrence: The psalmist promises to carry on this activity as long as life lasts. The praises of the Lord are on the lips of the psalmist continually.”—The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 431.

“God’s creatorship distinguishes Him from all other gods (1 Chron. 16:24-27; Ps. 96:5, 6; Isa. 40:18-26; 42:5-9; 44). We should worship the God who made us, and not the gods we have made. By virtue of His creatorship He deserves our total allegiance. Any relationship that interferes with this allegiance is idolatry and subject to divine judgment. Thus, faithfulness to the Creator is a life-or-death matter.”—Seventh-day Adventists Believe (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1988), p. 73.
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?
“The New Testament takes over the concern of Old Testament prophets that worship be integrated into the life of faith. Thus, passages that prioritize mercy over sacrifice (Hos. 6:6) or decry worship with lips but not heart (Isa. 29:13) are quoted in new contexts (Matt. 9:13; Mark 7:6, 7). Genuine worship is not merely for show (Matt. 6:1-18) but involves surrender of the self to God in faithful obedience (Rom. 12:1).” —The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), p. 1392.

Inductive Bible Study


1. Daniel and the Israelite princes were probably in their mid to late teens when they were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. The events of this chapter may have taken place a dozen years after that; when the idealism of youth is often replaced with the reality of compromise made for the sake of career or financial gain. The three Hebrews stood to lose everything if they refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s image. What did they hope to gain?

2. Every society puts a premium on conformity. Nebuchanezzar became a symbol of religious oppression when he demanded conformity from his subjects on pain of death. What does God use to inspire our obedience? In our religious practice, is self-expression encouraged or repressed? Should it be either? See Rom. 2:1-4, 5:6-11.

3. With what words did the three Hebrews state their intention to be faithful to God? (Dan. 3:16-18). Compare their statement with Job 13:15. What was the practical effect of such a statement? What modern situations in everyday life might call for the same response?

4. The three Hebrews would have been lost to history had they not chosen to obey God. Their courageous stand made them role models for persecuted believers through the centuries. How did Nebuchadnezzar describe the three when he called them out of the fire? (Dan. 3:26).

5. The most shocking lesson from Daniel 3 is that the three Hebrews had to feel the heat from the flames before they could experience the fellowship of walking (literally) with Christ in the furnace. What is the implication for those of us waiting to see Jesus? Read Phil. 3:7-11.
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?

Verses 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?
III. What the Bible Says About Worship.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them” (Exod. 20:3-5).

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

“I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being” (Ps. 104:33).

Witnessing

Our lesson this week focuses on a particularly critical component of the Christian life: faithfulness to God’s guiding principles no matter the circumstances and no matter the pressure to compromise.

This is an age of finding middle ground at any cost. We make no secret that we are willing to negotiate just about anything and everything. How difficult would it really be to follow the example set by the three Hebrews who refused, absolutely refused, to compromise, who would not betray their heavenly Father even if it meant accepting a hideous death by fire rather than ignoring God’s admonition to worship only Him?

As members of God’s remnant church, we refuse to have graven images or similar symbolism found in, on, or around our church buildings. We do not pray to any god other than our heavenly Father. Yet, is it possible that, in our personal lives, we are guilty of a form of idolatry when we spend 60-plus hours a week at work or spiral deeply into debt in order to buy the newest audio system, a summer place at the beach, a brand-new Land Rover . . . you get the picture! Are we in danger of becoming so enamored with material things and acquisitions that we gently but persistently shove God aside in order to “worship” the good things found in this earthly life? Material things are meant to bring comfort and ease to life, but when acquiring them usurps time and energy meant to be devoted to God, then they become curses instead of blessings. What kind of example does this set for our children? How do we respond to them when they insist on buying that $150 pair of Nike shoes? Can you really tell them not to be materialistic when you are sitting in front of your new 35-inch high-definition plasma TV, which took many hours of overtime or strained your finances to acquire?

During the week ahead, focus on what faithfulness to God, in its fullest sense, means to you and those closest to you. God expects our faithfulness in time, talents, and resources. Strive diligently to reexamine your priorities so that your example will demonstrate to those around you that you are as faithful to His Word as were those three young men so many years ago.
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?

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**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 7:3). 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.**
“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23, 24).

“Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:7).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Have you ever prayed long and hard for a miracle? Remember how you felt when your prayer was answered? You probably went down on both knees to thank God for His care and love. You praised Him from the bottom of your heart and promised Him again and again that you would never forget He answered your plea. You gave thanks to Him as the one and only true God, and you pledged your total commitment to Him forever.

Have you kept that promise to Him? Why does it seem easy to forget how terrible things were before and to move away from leaning on Him for our every sustenance?

Thought Questions:

1. Our Lord is a patient, forgiving parent. He offers us a way out of our dilemmas time and time again. He urges us to seek His help and to lean on Him. Can we abuse His forgiving and loving nature to the extent that He will withdraw His protection?

2. Senator Adlai Stevenson once said that it is often easier to fight for one’s principles than to live up to them. As Christians, do you find this to be an accurate and true statement? Is it sometimes more prudent to give in than to hang on to an unpopular position? What counsel can you give that will help others to know when it is appropriate to compromise or mediate and when it is not?

Application Question:

The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy tell us that God’s faithful believers will face great hardships as the end of time draws near. Can it be expected that miracles such as the one that occurred with the fiery furnace and the three young Hebrews will be experienced during that time?

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.
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?
Key Text: *Daniel 4:37.*

**Teachers Aims:**
1. To confirm that pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.
2. To affirm that God shall exalt those who humble themselves.
3. To reveal God’s mercy and His readiness to forgive and to restore.

**Lesson Outline:**

I. Nebuchadnezzar’s Second Dream (*Dan. 4:10-18*).
   A. After acknowledging God’s kingdom as an everlasting kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar receives a second dream from God.
   B. This time God uses an immense tree to symbolize the king, one that spreads its branches across the earth and seems to reach to heaven.

II. Daniel Interprets the Dream (*Dan. 4:19-27*).
   A. Daniel is reluctant to tell the king that the dream means he will suffer insanity for seven years.
   B. The dream serves as a warning to Nebuchadnezzar, who still denies God’s sovereignty.
   C. Daniel advises the king to accept his counsel to humble himself in order to avoid disaster.

III. From Humiliation to Conversion (*Dan. 4:33-37*).
   A. One year later, the king’s prideful words reduce him from nobility to wretchedness.
   B. After seven years of insanity, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the Most High God.

**Summary:** Nebuchadnezzar says it best: “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation” (*Dan. 4:34*).

**COMMENTARY**

1. You Are Not God.
   “First of all,” states the Alcoholics Anonymous manual, “we had to quit playing God. It didn’t work.”—*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 62, as cited at <http://www.whytehouse.com/big_book_search/book/ch5p62.html>. From Nebuchadnezzar to the present day, people have had an irresistible desire to play God. During all this time, however, it has never worked.

   Nebuchadnezzar had the most powerful empire of his day on
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?
which to try out his imaginary godhood. We, on the other hand, have only our little lives and realm of influence. Yet, the results of playing God are always the same: chaos and ruin.

In spite of these cautionary examples, why do we try to play God again and again? The first temptation that gave us the world as we know it was rooted in the lie that we could “be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5, NIV). So, the human tendency to take God’s place is at the very root of sin.

Texts such as Romans 12:2; Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 13; and 2 Peter 1:3-8 indicate that we are to develop a Godlike character. But we do not achieve this by trying to play God in our own life or in anyone else’s. Rather, this development is brought about by submitting to the Being who really does happen to be God. That, after all, is what God Himself did in the form of Jesus, “who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5-7, NASB).

To the contrary, the more we try to become what we perceive as Godlike, the further away we drift from knowledge of the true God and His will. Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated this quite well when in his efforts to become an object of worship, he succeeded only in becoming something less than human.

II. Useful Quotes About Not Playing God.

“The serpent appeals to the human desire to be like God. This is a right and reasonable desire. The later command, ‘ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy’ (Lev. 19:2; see also Matt. 5:48), makes it clear that man is possessed of the potentiality to become like God—in character. This likeness is to come through submission to God’s will. The serpent in telling the woman that likeness to God is to be achieved by defiance of his command . . . suggests that the likeness which is within human reach is likeness not in character but in power. He suggests that man can make himself the equal of God.”—The Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1982), vol. 1, p. 505.

“The man and his Creator God are not equals. God asserts his authority over mankind very early in human history. Admittedly, the word ‘authority’ leaves a bad taste in the mouths of many today. We don’t like to be told what to do. We want to decide things for ourselves.

“Nevertheless, Genesis asserts that God lays down rules with regard to what the first man and woman can and cannot do in the garden. According to Genesis, humanity is not autonomous [self-governing; sovereign].”—David R. Helm and Jon M. Dennis, The Genesis Factor (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2001), p. 53.

“The knowledge of good and evil—discerning, determining,
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?
In this week’s lesson God again uses the dreams of an ancient king to highlight values He prizes. What are some of these values? Why are humility and personal responsibility as important as the rise and fall of nations? How should the words of Micah 6:6-8 apply to world leaders and to us personally? Explain.

In every age God uses different means to communicate with His people. In Daniel’s time it was dreams (among others). In Jesus’ time it was parables. Read Hebrews 1:1, 2. What are some unique ways God communicates with His people today? How are these ways different than in times past? How are they the same?

What words did Daniel use to indicate he was reluctant to proclaim God’s judgment message against Nebuchadnezzar? (See Dan. 4:19.) In one sentence, describe the relationship between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar. Did that relationship make it easier or harder for Daniel to “tell it like it is”? Explain your answer.

Is pride ever justified? Explain. What makes pride so dangerous to our spiritual health? What was Paul’s antidote to pride? Read 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

Daniel 4 is Nebuchadnezzar’s “testimony” (written in his own words) about how God rescued him from spiritual destruction. Although it probably was not a pleasant experience at the time, Nebuchadnezzar came to appreciate what God had done for Him. What might you be going through now that will eventually yield positive results? How does knowing that God is in charge make it easier for you to persevere?
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?
(Gen. 3:5). We want to be Number One; indeed, sin is ‘looking out for Number One.’ But that place is already occupied. To covet it is to put ourselves where God alone belongs. When we make ourselves the center of the universe, we have put the creature in the place of the Creator. What else is that but worshipping an idol instead of the true God?”—Dorothy and Gabriel Fackre, Christian Basics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), p. 20.

Witnessing

Picture this: You are at work, minding your own business, when halfway through the morning you become aware of a fair amount of noise (banging of file cabinet drawers, spurts of low-volume mumbling, occasional pacing, etc.) invading the office. You are a bit curious, but you have tons of work to do. You attempt to banish the disturbance from your mind in an effort to concentrate on your own long-overdue projects. However, the noise continues and, frankly, it is getting annoying—not to mention it is breaking your concentration. Eventually you move your chair just enough so that you can get a clearer picture of the source of the noise—the cubicle across the hall. You catch a glimpse of your co-worker pacing, hands jammed in his pockets. Next thing you know, he runs them through his hair and mutters to himself. To say he is agitated would be a major understatement!

You are fully distracted now. You get up from your chair and pay him a visit. It turns out that the boss has just had a little “chat” with your co-worker; he has been told that if he does not immediately pick up the pace at work he will be joining the ranks of the unemployed. You are not quite sure what to say. You make some sympathetic gesture, then quickly rush back to your own office. Before long you notice that your own pace has dramatically increased and you are feeling more industrious than you have in a long time.

Sometimes God must grab our attention in much the same way. He may shake us up a bit by allowing us to face a defining moment in time. It is then that we know we must find Him, hold on to Him, and follow Him. How blessed we are that He cares so very much about our salvation that He will make every effort to redeem us.

God depends on us as His ambassadors to help Him attract the attention of those around us, whether it is family, close friends, neighbors, or strangers, so all will be exposed to His love and offer of salvation. So, think long and hard about specific ways you can partner with God this week to attract attention!
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?
III. What the Bible Says About Human-kind in Relation to God.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27, NIV).

“You will not surely die,’ the serpent said to the woman. ‘For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’ ” (Gen. 3:4, NIV).

“Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy’ ” (Lev. 19:2, NIV).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Our lesson this week focuses on crisis prevention: How important it is for us to listen to the admonitions of God and to heed His warnings in order to prevent calamity—in both our temporal and spiritual lives.

Thought Questions:

1. Mark 7:21-23 shares with us that pride comes from within, pride is evil, and pride defiles humanity. However, is all pride bad? Is it evil to have pride in one’s country or to be proud when your aunt finishes college at the age of 65 or when you pick the very first tomato of the summer from your garden? If this is not pride you are feeling, how else might you define it?

2. Nebuchadnezzar is an example of one who wished to play God. What are some ways today’s society plays God? Do you believe some of these actions are necessary because of the sinful environment in which we live?

Application Questions:

1. Ellen White tells us that dreams are one of “God’s own appointed mediums of communication.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 683. God sent dreams to Nebuchadnezzar in order to convey prophetic messages to him. From this we know that God can use dreams to warn us and show us the future. We are, however, warned in both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy to be wary of false dreams and visions, since they may be the work of Satan. How would you respond to someone who is concerned over the significance of a dream, and how would you help him or her to know whether or not it came from the Lord?

2. The next time you hear thrilling church-growth statistics, take a moment and ask yourself the following: “What can I do to ensure that these precious souls truly have the thrill of conversion in their lives?” Share now how you plan to start!

“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.
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?
Key Text: Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Teachers Aims:
1. To understand the wisdom in learning from our parents and grandparents.
2. To show that God’s mercy is not without boundaries.
3. To see the pernicious results of reducing the sacred to the profane.

Lesson Outline:
I. The Party’s Over (Dan. 5:1-9).
   A. Belshazzar’s sensual feast insults the living God.
   B. Belshazzar sobers up when a disembodied hand scrawls strange words on the wall of the palace.
   C. The king’s wise men are unable to translate the handwriting.

II. The Queen Mother’s Counsel (Dan. 5:10-12).
   A. News of the mysterious handwriting on the wall reaches the queen mother, who calms Belshazzar.
   B. She recalls Daniel’s ability to decipher dreams.
   C. She urges Belshazzar to call Daniel to interpret the handwriting on the wall.

III. Weighed and Found Wanting (Dan. 5:25-29).
   A. Belshazzar knows of Nebuchadnezzar’s experience and still refuses to humble his heart.
   B. Consequently, Belshazzar is without excuse.
   C. God gives Babylon into the hands of Darius, the king of Media.

Summary: “We are living in the time of the end. The fast-fulfilling signs of the times declare that the coming of Christ is near at hand.”—Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 11. “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”—Page 10.

COMMENTARY

I. Ignorance Is Not Bliss.
   It is common in Christian and particularly in Seventh-day Adventist circles to say that people are responsible only for the knowledge available to them. It is comforting to think that God does not hold us accountable for things we could not have known.

   It is true that some passages, such as Leviticus 5:16, 17, suggest it is possible for one to commit sins in ignorance, but perhaps we can attribute that to the peculiarities of the sacrificial system in place at the time. In commenting on this passage, the Seventh-day
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?
Adventist Bible Commentary points out that “a man might be ignorant and his act therefore considered excusable. But though ignorant, he might yet become a menace to others as a carrier of infection. Hence, in certain cases he might not be entirely innocent, and must be taught a lesson designed to impress him and others.” —Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1978), p. 734. So, we see that the sanctions in such instances served a social function.

However, some people understand the “ignorance clause” to mean they can refuse to absorb knowledge readily available to them without bearing any responsibility for their ignorance. This is a form of spiritual sloth (laziness), and sloth is a particularly deadly sin (Prov. 21:25, Matt. 25:14-30). The “ignorance clause” also is quite distinct from the case of someone who would like to know more about God and His will but who does not have the resources available. We are responsible to seek the truth. Failure to do so is itself a sin. Belshazzar was raised in the palace with Daniel and the eventually God-fearing Nebuchadnezzar. Yet, he chose to pretend that the knowledge available to him did not exist. Although he did not seek knowledge, knowledge sought him. By then, however, it was too late.

Ignorance is not bliss. The truly ignorant want to replace ignorance with knowledge. The willfully ignorant try to shut out the truth, but fail. So, follow the advice of Isaiah: “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near” (Isa. 55:6, NIV).

II. Useful Quotes About Ignorance, Knowledge, and Wisdom.

“Wisdom must be welcomed into our lives daily. When crises come, wisdom will carry us through if we have allowed her to teach us daily lessons. But she will not be called in as a means of rescue just to be abandoned as soon as the crisis is past. . . .

“Life is full of chances to learn the life-code God recommends. If we spurn them, our refusals will snowball until when we need help, we have nothing and no one to turn to.” —David Wright, Wisdom as a Lifestyle (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), p. 39.

“For all knowledge that we might have gained but did not, there will be an eternal loss, even if we do not lose our souls.” —Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers, p. 147.

“A fool may be merely simple and uninstructed, young and susceptible. . . . But he may also be willfully perverse, ill-natured like Nabal or like Saul in their behavior toward David . . . or a prey to cupidity like Achan . . . and hating knowledge or reproof, his way being ‘right in his own eyes.’ ” —“Folly,” Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1962), vol. 2, p. 304.

“These fearful words of doom [found wanting, Dan. 5:26, ed.] . . . condemn all who, like Belshazzar, neglect their God-given
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 whom ever 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?
opportunities. In the investigative judgment now in progress . . . men are weighed in the balances of the sanctuary to see whether their moral character and spiritual state correspond with the benefits and blessings God has conferred upon them.” — The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 805.

“The wise man is one who fears God, whereas the fool has no fear of God in his heart. He either neglects God because of a love of ease and pleasure, or willfully defies Him. Foolishness and wickedness are thus almost synonymous expressions.” — The SDA Bible Dictionary, p. 385.

Inductive Bible Study


1. The incident recorded in Daniel 5 is about judgment—there was nothing redemptive about it (at least as far as Belshazzar was concerned). What should Belshazzar have known about Daniel’s God? How should he have known about Him?

2. The crowning act of Belshazzar’s defiance against God was the use of temple utensils for idolatrous and profane purposes. What, in today’s society, does God consider truly offensive? Read Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Timothy 3:1-9. Are these the sins of only really bad people? Or is there anything here that we could all be guilty of? What is the antidote to these negative traits?

3. Daniel’s influence in Babylon had by now spanned several decades. His was a trusted voice. How does one get that kind of reputation? Is it something we can all have? Read Matt. 7:15-20.

4. The words, “You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting” (Dan. 5:27, NIV), remind us that our lives are not without meaning. The world is either a better place for us being here, or it is not. Belshazzar’s material blessings did not prevent him from living a life of disgrace. Who do you know who has had far fewer resources but uses what he or she has to honor God and serve others? Be specific.

5. If God really keeps track of what we do, how can we be confident that we have done enough to please Him? Read Rom. 8:1-4. Our actions do not save us. So, what purpose do they serve? How do they reflect only the extent we have been captivated by God’s grace and transformed by His Spirit?
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 MNMTQLPNS 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?
III. What the Bible Says About Ignorance, Knowledge, and Wisdom.

“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children” (Hos. 4:6, NIV).

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge. . . . For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and

Witnessing

Never underestimate the power of influence. In the right hands, influence can keep the course of our lives heavenly; in the wrong hands, it can open wide the doors of hell. If fortunate, we are influenced at an early age by committed Christian parents, whose power of example leads us ever closer to our heavenly Father. The following example illustrates just that.

U.S. attorney general and former senator John Ashcroft grew up in a strong, nurturing Christian family. His father, a pastor and the president of a Christian college, always asked for God’s special blessing on memorable events in the family’s life. So, it was natural that just before John was sworn in as a U.S. senator the family gathered for a special consecration service. At the beginning of the service, John’s dad asked for all present to sing the song “Holy Ground.” He told those assembled he had chosen this song because Washington, D.C., held a reputation as an arrogant city, and John was being called there to model a life filled with humility and to stand for what is right. Therefore, God’s holy ground was indeed needed.

John goes on to say, “‘We knelt together, knee to knee. . . . And I . . . thanked God for my legacy, my rich inheritance. . . . I [thanked] God for the lessons my father taught me—some by his words, and some by his life. . . . My father prayed as if his family’s life and vitality were even then being debated on high as he bowed low. . . . Sitting so close to him provided a serenity and comfort and captivated my heart.’”—Ruthie Jacobsen with Penny Estes Wheeler, Because You Prayed (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), pp. 19, 20.

What an example has been set by this earthly father! His Christ-centered influence stretches into the highest levels of government—just as the faithful Daniel’s did so many centuries ago.

No question about it. Never underestimate the power of influence.
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, 13, 45, 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.
blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins” (2 Pet. 1:5, 8, 9, NIV).

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles” (Rom. 1:21-23, NIV).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Children love riddles. Riddles pique their curiosity and imagination. Children love trying to unscramble and untangle what may appear to be isolated and perplexing bits of nonsense. Little ones are comfortable with the ridiculous—adults generally are not. Adults most often prefer the predictable and explained rather than the unpredictable and the unexplained. They want messaging and language units to be whole and precise, not fragments that are incomplete. Adults like straightforward communication, and they value the human skills required for decoding complex messages. God, too, has a particular use for cryptology from time to time. He also has promised to reveal all in His own way, at His chosen time.

Thought Question:

God’s message to Belshazzar was clear and unequivocal: “I’ve given you the past to draw from and have allowed you time to correct your behavior and get to really know Me. You’ve not done so—you’ve been found wanting; you will have no further chances.” We also have the past to draw from and the eternal future of heaven to focus on. Are you satisfied with your Christian progress? What more must you do to be ready to meet Jesus?

Application Question:

Queen mothers, whether in ancient or modern times, are revered for their station and position within the royal household. Their wise counsel and experience are treasured by those who would learn from them. Is this so different from the Christian mother’s role in the family unit? What an opportunity she has to mold and structure young lives, and what an impressive responsibility she has to prepare her children for heaven. Look for ways to encourage and uplift mothers whenever possible, knowing that such efforts honor God.

“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:

1. 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?

2. 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?

3. What is the relevance of this chapter to the second angel’s message, in Revelation 14:8?

4. 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.
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
**Key Text:** Daniel 6:22.

**Teachers Aims:**
1. To understand how God protects His people, even when empires rise and fall.
2. To encourage stronger faithfulness to God amid trials.
3. To comprehend how our faithfulness to God can affect and influence the lives of others, even politicians.

**Lesson Outline:**

I. **Daniel, God’s Faithful Servant** *(Dan. 6:1-4).*
   A. Darius conquers Babylon, spares Daniel’s life, and appoints him to be one of his three governors.
   B. Darius obviously recognizes Daniel’s exceptional wisdom, ability, and character.

II. **The Plot Against Daniel** *(Dan. 6:5-10).*
   A. The governors and satraps of the realm seethe with jealousy toward Daniel.
   B. They are unable to find fault with Daniel’s character or work to discredit him with the king.
   C. They invent a conflict between his work and his religion by convincing the king to outlaw prayer.
   D. Despite the decree forbidding prayer, Daniel visibly prays to God three times a day.

III. **In the Lions’Den** *(Dan. 6:17-28).*
   A. King Darius realizes he has been duped by his advisors into betraying Daniel.
   B. Darius hopes God will save Daniel.
   C. Darius is exceedingly glad when God delivers Daniel from the lions.
   D. Darius orders the princes and their families to be cast into the lions’den for their evil plot.

**Summary:** “God did not prevent Daniel’s enemies from casting him into the lions’den; He permitted evil angels and wicked men thus far to accomplish their purpose; but it was that He might make the deliverance of His servant more marked, and the defeat of the enemies of truth and righteousness more complete.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 543, 544.

**COMMENTARY**

I. **Faithfulness in Trial.**
   Most of us are familiar with the list in Hebrews 11:4-34 of individuals who triumphed by faith. However, Hebrews 11:35-40 mentions those who had faith but who still did not triumph in any sense
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 world would recognize: “Others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword” (Heb. 11:36, 37, NASB). Yet, these individuals are no less triumphant than any of the others mentioned before them. They already had their reward, and that was God Himself: “And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (vss. 39, 40, NASB).

All these people had one thing in common: their earthly lives and fortunes meant little or nothing to them apart from God. Daniel, for example, would not sacrifice his worship of God for the sake of a long life, despite the fact he could have met the usual fate of people who were locked in with hungry lions.

While this may be difficult for us to relate to in an era where material concerns are so fundamental, we may one day have to leave everything we own behind. Daily ask for God’s help to see the world and its collection of “stuff” in proper perspective. As you draw closer to Jesus and develop His Christlike character (Gal. 5:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 13), all that you own becomes less and less meaningful.

II. Useful Quotes About Faith and Faithfulness.

“The measure of our faith is the intensity with which we are seeking a homeland. Our destiny is to embody the tension between what God wants and things as they are, and to keep that tension ‘so taut that it sings.’ When we have accepted ourselves and our world as it is, our faith is dead.”—The Interpreter’s Bible, vol. 11 (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 728.

“If I trust God, and believe in him, I shall submit myself to his will; even when it becomes very painful to me I shall say, ‘It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.’ But if I do not believe that he is God, and that he is aiming at my good, then I shall resent his chastisements, and shall kick against his will.”—Charles H. Spurgeon, Twelve Sermons on Faith (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 105.

“Paradoxically, the most perplexing, Job-like times may help ‘fertilize’ faith and nurture intimacy with God. The deepest faith, which I have called fidelity, sprouts at a point of contradiction, like a blade of grass between stones. Human beings grow by striving, working, stretching; and in a sense, human nature needs problems more than solutions.”—Philip Yancey, Disappointment With God (New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), p. 247.

“Because of their understanding of the faithfulness and preservation of God, believers can offer resistance in time of temptation. Admonished and consoled, they can then immediately submit
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.
TEACHERS COMMENTS

themselves to the further admonition, ‘Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry’ (1 Cor. 10:14). So they are again admonished to . . . seek the only Lord, who is faithful, and whose unchangeableness makes the miracle in their lives endure.”—G. C. Berkouwer, Faith and Perseverance (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1958), p. 196.

“Exposure to rebuffs and opposition leads the follower of Christ to greater watchfulness and more earnest prayer to the mighty Helper. Severe trial endured by the grace of God develops patience, vigilance, fortitude, and a deep and abiding trust in God. It is the triumph of the Christian faith that it enables its follower to suffer

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: Daniel 6, Matthew 6:5-8, 7:16-20, Revelation 14:6-12.

1 We tend to think of Daniel primarily in terms of his faithfulness to God. But Daniel was also regarded highly by the people he served. His religious convictions made him honest and trustworthy in his professional responsibilities. Think of other Bible characters who demonstrated a relationship between personal spirituality and personal integrity. Who in your church or workplace are outstanding examples of these traits?

2 The issues of the great controversy boil down to worship, loyalty, and obedience. These themes reoccur throughout Scripture. The Bible’s heroes are those who were faithful in situations both ordinary and extraordinary. In view of the prophecies about future persecution, what can we be doing today to prepare? What Bible promises can we claim?

3 Daniel, like all of us, was a creature of habit. His enemies knew they could count on him to pray each day at a certain time and place. What do your habits communicate to your friends and neighbors? What do your habits reveal about your faith?

4 By all accounts Daniel was a godly man. (He is one of the few characters about whom the Bible records nothing negative.) However, that did not keep him out of the lions’den. (Neither did it keep his friends out of the fiery furnace.) While Daniel’s faithfulness caused him some anxious hours, he had the blessing of enjoying God’s presence as he passed the night with wild, hungry animals. What challenges have brought God’s special presence to your life? Would you do it again—even if it involved heartbreak or tragedy? Why, or why not?
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.
and be strong; to submit, and thus to conquer; to be killed all the
day long, and yet to live; to bear the cross, and thus to win the

**III. What the Bible Says About Faith and Faithfulness.**

“Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take
the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord” (*James 5:10, NIV*).

**Witnessing**

Ask a child if he or she wants to visit the zoo, and then be pre-
pared to stand well out of the way as he or she makes for the car
at close to supersonic speed! Children love the zoo; they can’t wait
to visit the elephants, giraffes, bears, seals, etc. They become per-
fect little mimics in the monkey house. They glue their noses to
the glass in the panda pavilion. When they take that first step into
the reptile house, they make not a sound. You feel their little fin-
gers creep into yours. You save the best for last—the visit to the
big-cat house and yard, where the svelte panthers slink, the
incredibly fast cheetahs lurk, and the majestic lions prowl. How
the children’s eyes light up. They are so eager to pet the huge cats;
yet, instinct tells them they must not try.

Human instinct regarding the ferocity of lions has been honed
down through the centuries. History does not spare details as it
chronicles humanity’s use of lions as instruments of mutilation and
death. Only humanity would take one of God’s living creatures and
use it in such an evil way. Only God could use the same creature to
demonstrate His total involvement and control in our lives.

God also uses the lion to draw our attention to the glories of
heaven. Where here on earth this creature has lived its life as an
aggressive hunter, in heaven it is portrayed as a gentle creature, so
gentle, in fact, that it will be seen lying down with a lamb.
Imagine how children (and adults!) will react when they come
upon this twosome on one of their daily walks through peaceful
pastures. The lamb, small and fragile in appearance, approaches
the lion without reservation. The lamb kneels, snuggling tight
against the shaggy side of the lounging feline. Gradually, the lamb
lowers its tiny head until it rests on the massive paw of the mighty
lion. The lion leans down and gently nuzzles the lamb’s woollen
head. The two lie side by side, in perfect harmony and at peace
with the other.

Doesn’t this scenario make you long for heaven? Aren’t you
excited about sharing with others this intimate picture of God’s
home that He is preparing for His children? During the week
ahead, encourage one another to desire to join Him there.
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?
“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance” (Rom. 5:1, 3, NIV).

“A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished” (Prov. 28:20, NASB).

Life-Application Approach

**Icebreaker:** The story is told of a father who knelt at the side of his daughter’s sickbed. The child was gravely ill, and there was nothing more any earthly physician could do. The father had been praying incessantly, pleading with the Master Physician to provide a miracle of healing. As the night wore on, there was no improvement in the child’s condition; yet, the father continued his intercessory prayer on her behalf. As morning neared, with still no improvement, the father, in desperation, called out to God: “Father, I beg You to heal this precious child of mine. Nevertheless, I know that Your will must be done, so I leave her with You. Return her to me, if possible. If not, give me the strength to bear her loss.” Soon after his prayer, his daughter slipped quietly away. The father told this story to others as an example of how God leads His children. He answers our prayers in a way that, while often hard to bear or to understand this side of heaven, is always best for us.

**Thought Questions:**

1. We are cautioned to be wary of Satan’s attempts to introduce jealousy, resentment, and envy into our relationships with others. Why is that so? What do you think is found in humanity’s inherent nature to make it difficult to practice humility?

2. Our lesson mentions that Daniel was a sound businessman. Even his enemies could find no fault in his business dealings. As Christians, our everyday business practices should reflect our relationship with God. Our methods should be exemplary, including our financial relationship with the church regarding our tithes and offerings. Are you comfortable with your present position? In what ways can you help others?

**Application Question:**

The collapse of financial giants such as Enron, WorldCom, and others indicates that true leadership is often lacking in society. What do you consider to be six key characteristics of a true leader? Consult with class members and develop a list. Use this list as a yardstick for examining your own behavior.

“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.
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.
Key Text: 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

Teachers Aims:
1. To affirm God’s foreknowledge of world events, spanning to the close of time.
2. To show that Daniel 2 and 7 contain parallel prophecies.
3. To identify the little-horn power and understand how this power will persecute God’s people again at the time of the end.

Lesson Outline:
I. Daniel’s Vision (Dan. 7:1-8).
   A. Daniel’s vision in chapter 7 is largely parallel to Nebuchadnezzar’s vision in chapter 2, approximately 50 years earlier.
   B. Daniel is shown four beasts coming up out of the water.
   C. The beasts represent the world powers that follow Babylon.

II. The Little-Horn Power (Dan. 7:8, 23-25).
   A. The horns of the fourth beast correspond to the mingling of the iron with the clay in the feet and toes of the image in Daniel 2.
   B. Out of the ruins of political Rome arose papal Rome, the little-horn power.
   C. Papal Rome exercised both spiritual and political power.

III. A Persecuting Power (Dan. 7:25).
   A. The little horn persecutes the saints of God.
   B. During the Dark Ages the little horn uses accusations of heresy, the terror of the Inquisition, and the threats of excommunication and death to punish Christians who oppose it.
   C. The little horn claims to have changed the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday.

Summary: “Says Daniel, of the little horn, the papacy: ‘He shall think to change times and the law.’ Daniel 7:25, R.V. . . . Only by changing God’s law could the papacy exalt itself above God; whoever should understandingly keep the law as thus changed would be giving supreme honor to that power by which the change was made.”—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 446.

COMMENTARY

I. The Lord of History.
Many Christians, whether Seventh-day Adventist or not, take a keen interest in biblical prophecy and have quite definite opinions on what it all means. Some would argue that it is acceptable for people to have differing opinions on the significance of prophecy. After all, some or all of prophecy is still waiting for fulfillment, and until that fulfillment occurs, we do not know precisely what form it will take.
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?
While this sounds logical, Seventh-day Adventists always have believed it is important to have as accurate a picture of future events as possible. Not only that, we believe that God intended the prophetic books to be understood, although perhaps perfect understanding is impossible. This is also logical. Why would God provide us with books giving at least an outline of events prior to and during the end times if their only effect would be to mystify honest seekers?

So, clearly God revealed this knowledge about future events because He wanted us to know about them. What did He want us to know? It is not uncommon for people to say that the only essential message of such books as Daniel and Revelation is that God controls history and that history is working in accordance with His will. Of course, it is important to be aware of this. Most Christians accept this anyway; otherwise they would not put their faith in God.

There are, however, at least two reasons the specifics of prophecy are important. First, it is not enough to be told that God controls history. Without some evidence in the form of accurate predictions, such a statement is only another unproven claim. Second, without proper guidance, it may be possible for even a believer to be deceived (see Matt. 24:24).

One could claim that God will protect believers from deception. True enough, but this is not a magical phenomenon. God gave us His Word, which includes prophecy, for us to study in order to avoid being deceived. We ignore it to our own disadvantage.

II. Useful Quotes About God as Lord of History.

“From the vantage ground of God’s Word, the student is afforded a view of the vast field of history and may gain some knowledge of the principles that govern the course of human events. But his vision is still clouded, and his knowledge incomplete. Not until he stands in the light of eternity will he see all things clearly.”—Ellen G. White, Education, p. 304.

“God’s sovereignty stands in antithesis [contrast] to the rulership of the ‘prince of this world.’ In his dealing with men and nations God stands in peaceful eternity and waits patiently for human recognition and acceptance of His sovereign will as the only way of wisdom for both man and nations.”—George E. Shankel, God and Man in History (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1967), p. 190.

“Beginning with Daniel’s own day history moves steadily and selectively to the establishment of the kingdom of God when all peoples, nations, and languages will render Him undivided worship, and His saints will receive and possess the kingdom for ever and ever. In the NT the end point of Daniel’s history coincides with the consummation of the kingdom of God. The Danielic kingdom of God is established after all earthly dominions are broken to
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?
The first six chapters of Daniel illustrate the principles involved in the great struggle between good and evil. The last six chapters expand on those themes and provide a timetable—in broad terms—about when these principles will be fulfilled. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the highest), how familiar is this prophecy to the general population? What would it take to increase the interest of the people in it?

Some people are fascinated by history, while others are bored by it. Is this chapter any more than a history lesson? If so, what themes should be developed as we communicate its truth? List at least three themes and discuss specific ways we see them being played out today.

Is it fair to judge an institution based on what happened centuries ago? To put it another way, would you be comfortable being characterized by what you did or said in your distant past? In what ways is the little-horn power the same as it was 100 years ago? In what ways is it different? Describe in one word the little-horn power as it presently exists.

This history of world religions does not always paint a pretty picture. There is probably nothing more terrifying than religious zealots using force to accomplish religious purposes. What examples of religious bigotry have you experienced firsthand? How has coercion been used to force a certain type of behavior?

The little-horn power of Daniel 7 has as its enduring legacy its attempt to “change times and laws.” What makes this behavior so objectionable?
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?
prophets.’” —The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 621.

“What mankind greatly needs is the beacon light of prophecy, for there is a divine purpose and blessing in prophecy. Mankind needs its guiding rays, and its inspiring hope and steadying assurance, in

Witnessing

What a sinister mastermind the devil is. How gifted he is at camouflage, subterfuge, deception, lies—his résumé of tricks is endless. One additional attribute could be added to the list that would seem very much out of place at first glance—patience. One might protest, Isn’t patience a virtue? Undeniably. Thus, it seems unnatural to think of Satan possessing virtuous qualities.

Yet, Satan can be very patient when it serves his needs and desires. Certainly, he is more than willing to bide his time in order to bring about ruination for humanity in the end. He is totally absorbed with his plan to bring about death and destruction for God’s chosen people, and he is ingenious at using incremental steps in worming his way into the very core of our lives. Examples of his unrelenting commitment and activity are evident in so many of the beliefs we, as Seventh-day Adventists, hold dear, especially the Sabbath.

Satan patiently and persistently encourages us to chip away at the sanctity of the Sabbath. What does it hurt, he whispers, if our Friday night activities are not exactly in harmony with God’s instructions? So what if we fudge a bit and blur the lines on what takes place after the morning church service? After all, we were in church, so that should count for something, right?

But the value we place on the time we spend in God’s presence matters very much to Him. Sabbath keeping is one of the pillars of our faith, one of our defining beliefs of which others take note. How can we possibly witness to those around us regarding the glory of the Sabbath day when our actions speak so differently? Satan exults in our compromise—the big payoff for his fiendish patience.

The patience of God is a healing virtue; but in Satan, patience is a hellish vice. For him it is only the act of waiting, a mere passage of time. God, on the other hand, patiently yearns for us to turn to Him so that He may heal our backsliding. He is “longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9, NKJV).

Perseverance is another word for patience. “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12, NKJV). Take decisive action this week to persevere in honoring God’s holy day as was ordained in the Garden of Eden.
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.
order to find the harbor of eternity in safety. Without the light of prophecy the future is a vast and impenetrable unknown, a trackless desert, an uncharted sea. But prophecy is God’s index finger pointing the way out for a world engulfed in growing confusion, disillusionment, and despair.”—Leroy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1950), pp. 15, 16.

**III. What the Bible Says About God as Lord of History.**

“‘I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later’” *(Rev. 1:18, 19, NIV).*

“‘But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come’” *(Dan. 2:28, NIV).*

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**Life-Application Approach**

**Icebreaker:** A vintage computer game from the 1980s features a persistent little creature with a giant mouth known as Pac-Man. Pac-Man has a ravenous appetite, and its goal is to gobble up all the little white dots in his path before it, in turn, is devoured by adversaries.

In the book of Daniel we see kingdoms appear and disappear, gobbled up by those larger, stronger, and more dangerous. The “game” is not yet over, however. Wars and rumors of wars and nations in turmoil flash across the video screen of present history, foretelling Christ’s imminent return. Are we prepared? Have we helped others prepare? More important, will we be ready?

**Thought Question:**

We hear much today about ecumenism and how moving toward a more united Christian body will reward believers with a broader understanding of one another’s beliefs and practices. What are your views on this topic? Are you supportive of our church furthering exploration in this area, or do you have reservations because of potentially hidden dangers? Discuss.

**Application Question:**

Atrocities conducted in the name of God (or Allah) are still that—atrocities. Those who do these things in God’s name cannot possibly know Him. For if they did, they would understand that He is a God of love and mercy; One who is likened to a lamb. Reflect on ways in which you can help others know God as you know Him.

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.

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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.
The Pre-Advent Judgment

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?
**Key Text:** Daniel 7:9-14, 21, 22, 26-28.

**Teachers Aims:**
1. To understand that the pre-Advent judgment occurs prior to Christ’s second advent.
2. To become keenly aware of the character we must allow Christ to form within us.
3. To encourage faithfulness to Jesus and His commandments.

**Lesson Outline:**

**I. Investigative Judgment: Old And New Testaments.**
A. God established a pattern of judicial procedure to handle sin and sinners.
B. The concept of an investigation prior to judgment is found in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:9-19).
C. God investigated Adam’s and Eve’s and Sodom’s and Gomorrah’s sins prior to taking punitive action.
D. The parable of the wedding feast is a prime example in the New Testament of the concept of the investigative judgment (Matt. 22:1-14).

**II. Vindication and Condemnation (Dan. 7:22).**
A. The Hebrew concept of justice and judgment involves not only the vindication of the innocent but the punishment of the guilty.
B. Jesus, the Son of Man, is at the center of this judgment.
C. The judgment brings about the demise of the little horn.
D. The judgment vindicates the saints of God.

**Summary:** “So in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period.” —Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 480.

**COMMENTARY**

**I. Judgment.**

Although the doctrine of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment are unique to Seventh-day Adventists, a day of judgment is common to many denominations who look to such a time when God will correct injustices.

In today’s world, however, divine judgment—indeed, any form of moral discernment—has become feared and misunderstood. Many people assume that to be good is to be nonjudgmental. God’s status as Judge is seen to conflict with His goodness. Matthew 7:1, “Judge not, that you be not judged” (NKJV) is often quoted out of context, in support of this general concept that judging is bad or distasteful.

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 problem is not that judging is bad but that it is not “nice.” We have come to value niceness above all else as a useful way of keeping our society from splitting apart into any number of divisions. However, it is a mistake to assume that God is bound by social convention. God is good, but He is not “nice.”

In fact, God’s goodness demands that He forego niceness. Niceness demands mostly that we do not get involved. Goodness, however, demands involvement. In order for God to fulfill His goodness, He eventually has to intervene and put an end to evil. This is where His final judgment comes in.

It is important to realize that God is judging people only secondarily. Primarily, He is judging sin and its results. God loves everyone, and He wants everyone to be in His kingdom. But He also wants everyone to be free from attachment to sin, which He is going to judge and destroy. The question is whether you want fellowship with God badly enough to let go of what is separating you from Him.

God has provided us with the means to let go—Jesus Christ. Anyone who accepts Jesus’ offer of salvation and His Lordship has already been judged, favorably.

II. Useful Quotes on Divine Judgment.

“Because the judge is God himself, we can be confident that, at that last judgment, everything will be absolutely just. Everyone will be judged on the basis of what he has known of God and his laws. Those who have never heard of God’s written law will be judged by what they can see of God and his standards from the evidence of the world around them. Their conscience also will have indicated to them what is right and wrong.”—Eerdmans’ Handbook to Christian Belief (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), p. 255.

“Mention of this judgment in the New Testament frequently refers to its righteousness. . . . This righteousness is closely connected with the fact that everything will be revealed before the judgment seat: it is not only Christ who will be revealed, but also the living and the dead. This judgment is just; it corresponds to the way things are in this present reality. It will be a true unveiling, an unveiling of what was already seen by the eyes of God during the present, earthly existence.”—G. C. Berkouwer, The Return of Christ (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 156.

“In one sense, however, judgment has already occurred. God’s wrath and righteous indignation against sin and evil has been manifested. Hell, the second death, happened—but instead of happening right away to those who deserve it, it happened to Jesus Christ on the cross. What killed Christ was the wrath of a holy God who allowed Jesus to face divine wrath—the Lord’s final righteous judg-
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.
Inductive Bible Study


1. **Judgment has both positive and negative meanings.** Someone being oppressed or brutalized would welcome judgment against his or her oppressor; while wrongdoers would do well to tremble before the threat of judgment. Are your earliest memories of the term *judgment* positive or negative? Explain why. How about now? Do you fear or welcome the judgment?

2. **The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the judgment has evolved from primarily an “investigative” process to a “pre-Advent” process.** How would you characterize the difference between the two? Which one, in your opinion, best reflects God’s character? Read John 3:16-21, 1 John 3:11-24.

3. **Jesus’ parable of the wedding (Matt. 22:1-14) describes some interesting dynamics:** The ruler’s “friends” refuse to come to his son’s wedding, thus revealing themselves as enemies. Those unworthy of the ruler’s kindness are treated as honored guests. But one of the guests refuses to wear the wedding garment provided by the ruler. How does gratitude or ingratitude reveal itself in the salvation process? What is represented by the wedding garment? What does it say about the person who refuses to wear it? Read Rev. 19:6-9.

4. **How does it feel to be declared innocent in Heaven’s judgment?** How does it make you want to live, and why?

5. **Part of the judgment has to do with how God is regarded by the citizens of heaven and earth.** How do people know that you are dedicated to living by His principles? (Hint: It is not just what we do not do. It is also what we do.)
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.

‘scoffers’ who ridicule the notion of a future day of judgment; the reason for its nonarrival is that God in his patience is holding the door of opportunity open a while longer.”—John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 208.

**III. What the Bible Says About Divine Judgment.**

“Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind’” *(John 9:39, NIV).*

**Witnessing**

*We are not alone in the universe.* An evocative statement for some; dismissed out of hand by others.

Some individuals state, without doubt or hesitation, that science strongly supports extraterrestrial contacts; others recollect personal contact with extraterrestrials through actual alien abductions. These alleged encounters are generally described as highly traumatic, physically and mentally damaging, and frightening beyond imagination. Is any of this possible—could it be true?

The answer lies in the story of the great controversy, which is pivotal to Seventh-day Adventist belief. Satan began his earthly odyssey as a result of his failed attempt to bring about division in heaven. He was thrown out of heaven along with those angels who chose to follow him, and they were confined to this planet, and this one alone. Is it conceivable that God would permit Satan to spread his evil to other sinless worlds, or that they, in turn, would wish to visit this sad little planet?

We know that other sinless worlds in the universe watch the drama of good versus evil play out to the final act. These other worlds review the events as they unfold, because they are, and will continue to be, witnesses to the results of rebellion. Yet, regardless of how majestic the flight of the space shuttle is or the engineering brilliance of the international space station, space exploration will be confined according to God’s master plan.

Imagine how wonderful our existence would have been if our planet had not fallen into Lucifer’s evil hands! Think of the complete joy other worlds experience because of their sinless state. Doesn’t it make you long for our heavenly journey home? Rather than debate with nonbelievers about extraterrestrial visitations here on earth or in outer space, share with them the certainty of future fellowship with other intelligent beings when heaven becomes our home and this earth is made new again. Let those searching for truth know why you’re absolutely certain we are not alone in the universe!
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.
“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” (1 Cor. 6:2, NIV).

“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8, NIV).

“...But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever” (Dan. 7:26, NIV).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Remember when you were a kid and studied current events in class? God appointed His servant, Daniel, to help unravel one of the greatest current-events assignments of all time in order to provide His people with a detailed road map to guide them toward their ultimate destination—heaven.

Gives an old assignment new meaning, doesn’t it!

Thought Question:

Have you ever been invited to a formal event for which the invitation you received stated the event began promptly at 8:00 P.M., required formal attire, and asked you to RSVP? Let’s say your response to the invitation was to arrive two hours late dressed in jeans and sweatshirt, and you had never bothered to RSVP anyone. What do you think you would find? Would the event be delayed until you arrived? Would the dress requirement be relaxed just in case you did not want to comply with it? Was your place still reserved even though you failed to give any indication that you were planning to attend? Is it possible that we often respond in much the same way to Christ’s invitation to join Him on the journey toward eternal salvation? If so, what will be the final outcome? How can we comply with the terms of God’s invitation?

Application Question:

God never forces; rather, He provides each of us with free will—the ability to choose for ourselves. He has provided each of us with the gift of intelligence, which He expects us to use in ways that will strengthen our relationship with Him. God also has provided us with the perfect resource to use whenever we are unclear as to the choice(s) we should make. What is this resource? (See John 15:26.) Finally, we know the positive side of free choice; is there a negative side? Discuss with others.
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.
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).


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?
Key Text: Daniel 8:11.

Teachers Aims:
1. To understand how the heavenly sanctuary has been defiled by the little-horn power.
2. To understand the significance of knowing who the little horn is and what he is doing today.
3. To show how the little horn takes away the “daily sacrifice.”

Lesson Outline:
I. The Earthly Sanctuary Defiled (Ezek. 5:11).
   A. A study of how the sanctuary could become defiled helps us understand the symbolism in Daniel 8:9-14.
   B. The Old Testament sanctuary could be defiled, or polluted, by
      1. Sin offerings
      2. Foreign invaders who looted the temple
      3. Setting up profane idols and altars in it

II. The Ram, the He-Goat, and the Great Horn (Dan. 8:1-8, 20-22).
   A. Horns in Scripture represent political powers.
   B. Media-Persia (ram) was destroyed by Greece (he-goat).
   C. Alexander the Great (the great horn) of Greece (he-goat) conquered the world.
   D. The great horn broke (Alexander died), and four horns (Alexander’s generals) sprang up.

III. The Little-Horn Power (Dan. 8:9-12, 24, 25).
   A. It comes from one of the winds of heaven (the directions of the compass), not the four horns.
   B. Rome (the little horn) followed Greece and became exceedingly great.
   C. The little horn attacks the host of heaven (God’s people), the Prince of the host (Jesus), and the daily sacrifice (Christ’s ministry in heaven).

Summary: “The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ’s work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin.”—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 488.

Commentary

I. Christ and Antichrist.
Over the past few decades, novels and films have made the concept of the antichrist well known to most people. Many believe that

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 antichrist is a semimystical figure of supernatural evil who will arise at the end of the world.

People who otherwise appear to be completely free of religious or Christian tendencies enjoy speculating about who the antichrist is. It seems that it is even possible to believe in, or be entertained by, the antichrist while having no knowledge of, or interest in, Christ, without whom the antichrist would be completely pointless.

This is an ironic state of affairs, because the true meaning of antichrist as it is used in the Bible refers to anyone—possibly anything—that opposes or attempts to replace Christ: “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:3). Furthermore, in the minds of many people, the concept of the intriguing, mysterious, apocalyptic antichrist of popular culture has overshadowed Christ. This concept is also misleading in a number of ways.

First, the influence of the antichrist spirit has been evident throughout world history. According to 1 John 4:3, it was in the world during the author’s own time, the first century A.D. So, it is not strictly something that pertains only to the end time. It is also worth noting that the term itself is never used in the book of Revelation, and has no direct connection to the number 666 (Rev. 13:18).

Second, the antichrist cannot be said to be a single figure, or even a single institution. Rather, it is all figures or institutions that manifest the antichrist spirit. At times the antichrist may even be looking out at you from your mirror.

It is interesting to note that the term antichrist is used only four times in the Bible, and then only to warn us to stay away from what it represents.

II. Useful Quotes About the Antichrist.


“From Paul’s teachings, then, we derive the following points of instruction concerning the antichrist: 1. This ‘mystery’ is not simply a matter of the apostolic age but rather will be continuously operative from Paul’s time down to the end of time. Consequently, the incessant [endless] satanic activity does not permit us to locate ‘the mystery of lawlessness’ exclusively in a single isolated historical period in the past or in the future.” —*The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 868.

“The concreteness of their expectation of the antichrist has often
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?

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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.
Inductive Bible Study


1. Every government has its symbol of authority, whether it is the United States capitol building, the Russian kremlin, or the Vatican in Rome. Read Exodus 25:8, 9. How do you understand the ministry of the earthly sanctuary and how it represented the function of God’s government in heaven?

2. Without intending to, we all play a part in defiling the heavenly sanctuary with our misdeeds and rebelliousness. However, it is the mechanism God established to deal with sin and cleanse His people from their guilt. What is different about the defilement caused by the little-horn power? What is the same?

3. Read Daniel 8:9-12. These verses symbolically describe an earthly power assuming divine powers and privileges. Were historical figures deliberately trying to usurp that which belongs only to God? Or did they have less sinister motives? What might those motives have been? How might we be tempted to do the same thing? Read Matthew 23:13-15. Why are religious people so prone to disgrace God?

4. Daniel 8 is one of the Bible’s clearest demonstrations of how Satan uses earthly powers to try to block God’s purposes. What is our greatest protection against being deceived into thinking we are doing God’s will, when in fact we are serving the enemy? Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. How does your life demonstrate that you “love the truth” (vs. 10, NIV)?

5. The proper translation of antichrist means “instead of” or “in the place of” Christ. In what ways might we be in danger of demonstrating less than complete dependence on Christ? How is that dangerous for our spiritual development, as well as harmful to our spiritual influence?
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.)
envy and jealousy toward him by religious persecution. But all heaven is on the side of Christ, not of Antichrist. Those who love God and are willing to be partakers with Christ in His sufferings, God will honor. Antichrist, meaning all who exalt themselves against the will and work of God, will at the appointed time feel the wrath of Him who gave Himself that they might not perish but have eternal life. All who persevere in obedience, all who will not sell their souls for money or for the favor of men, God will register in the book of life.”—Ellen G. White Comments, The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 950.

III. What the Bible Says About the Anti-Witnessing

Consider the following:

1. The couple living next door to you argues constantly. You can’t help hearing the words they’re shouting at each other. Some make you squirm, and some you do not even understand (and are not sure you would want to)!  
2. You sort the laundry into dark and light piles, and in the process a pack of cigarettes hidden in your son’s or daughter’s jean jacket falls out onto the floor.  
3. The evening news reports another child has been abducted. No suspects yet.  
4. Racial slurs are found scrawled across the side of a church set on fire across town—the church is badly damaged, and authorities say they suspect arson.

What do all of the above scenarios have in common (besides being all too common in occurrence)? Each one represents a form of defilement. If you look up defile/defilement in the dictionary or thesaurus you will find it accompanied by such words such as foul, blacken, spoil, ravish, degradation, dishonor. Perhaps we have not thought of these actions in quite that way before, but we should. Whether we are the receiver or initiator of this type of behavior, the message circulated to others is a painful commentary on human weakness.

Defilement may occur in spiritual, physical, and emotional forms. Consider the counsel of Paul in 1 Timothy 1:9-11. When we deliberately humiliate someone, we behave in a degrading manner. When we do not eat and drink according to God’s plan, we contaminate our bodies. When we are disrespectful, we dishonor others, including God.

You can be a powerful witness to those around you, not only by what you choose to do but by what you do not say, think, and do.
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?
christ.

“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18, NIV).

“Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist” (2 John 7, NIV).

“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction” (2 Thess. 2:3, NIV).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Christ continues to stand before God as our Advocate. Imagine our fate without His presence. What possible method could we then use to approach God in our own defense? Or is such an attempt pointless without Jesus? Explain.

Thought Question:

We have the advantage of reviewing world history from our twenty-first–century perspective. Are you comforted by the accuracy of prophecy in foretelling earth’s historical events? Is it with fear or excitement that you anticipate the fulfillment of prophesied events yet to come? Give reasons for your response.

Application Question:

A young man was convicted and received a fine in court. The presiding judge happened to be a longtime friend of the young man’s mother. Learning of her son’s fine, she wrote to the judge, begging that he dismiss the fine. Otherwise, she would need to pay it, since her son was penniless. Greatly moved though he was, the judge still refused to dismiss the fine. He wrote back to the woman and explained that to dismiss the fine would be a great miscarriage of justice, and he could not allow that to occur. However, enclosed with his letter was a personal check in an amount large enough to cover all court costs, as well as the fine itself. What an example of justice tempered with mercy. One would be hard pressed to think of a better way than this to describe Christ’s own advocacy for us. The next time you pray, fervently thank your Savior for His perfect example of merciful justice, though we are unworthy of it.
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:

1. 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?

2. 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.
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.
**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 tor-turously 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:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daniel 2</th>
<th>Daniel 7</th>
<th>Daniel 8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>Media-Persia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media-Persia</td>
<td>Media-Persia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pagan Rome</td>
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<td>Pagan Rome</td>
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<td>Papal Rome</td>
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<td>Papal Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>———</td>
<td>Judgment in heaven</td>
<td>Cleansing of the sanctuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone cut out without hand (Second Coming)</td>
<td>Saints get the kingdom (Second Coming)</td>
<td>Destroyed without hand (Second Coming)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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 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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daniel 7</th>
<th>Daniel 8</th>
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<tr>
<td>Little horn (vss. 24, 25)</td>
<td>Little horn (vss. 9-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment (vs. 26)</td>
<td>Sanctuary cleansed (vs. 14)</td>
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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.
“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.*

1. 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.

2. 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?

3. 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.

4. 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?

5. 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.
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.
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 commend 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?
Key Text: Jeremiah 25:11.

Teachers Aims:
1. To reemphasize that God hears and answers our prayers.
2. To understand the 70-week, or 490-year, prophecy.
3. To reveal God’s love, mercy, and concern for His people in unveiling the future to them.

Lesson Outline:

I. Daniel’s Prayer (Dan. 9:1-9).
   A. Babylon, the conqueror of God’s people, fell to Media-Persia, but the Jews were still in exile.
   B. Daniel did not try to excuse or hide the sins of his people in his prayer for their deliverance.
   C. Daniel prayed for understanding of the vision of the 2,300 days.

II. Seventy Weeks (Dan. 9:20-24).
   A. Applying the day/year principle, 70 weeks equals 490 years.
   B. This time prophecy describes details pertaining to the first advent, ministry, and death of Christ.
   C. Using the day/year principle, the period from 457 B.C. until the coming of Messiah the Prince, in A.D. 27, equals 483 years.

III. Messiah Cut Off in the Midst of the Week (Dan. 9:24-27).
   A. Jesus begins His earthly ministry in A.D. 27.
   B. In the midst of the week, or the final seven years of the prophecy, Jesus dies.
   C. Jesus is the Lamb who was slain and took the sins of the world upon Himself.
   D. After Jesus’ death, the new covenant promises salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles.

Summary: “The angel had been sent to Daniel for the express purpose of explaining to him the point which he had failed to understand in the vision of the eighth chapter, the statement relative to time—‘unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.’ ”—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 326.

Commentary

I. Christ: The Central Figure of Prophecy.
   Christians who attempt to understand Daniel’s prophecies and other books of the Bible can be prone to forget Scripture’s major point—all of God’s Word points to and centers on Jesus’ first and second comings.
   It is possible to become so fascinated by the array of events and

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 fulfilled prophecies that one forgets about the God to whom they point. Apparently Christ noticed this tendency during His own time when He said, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39, NIV).

The prophecies themselves contain the cure for this tendency, for they consider all other subject matter to be secondary to Jesus and His salvation. All the time periods mentioned in Daniel are centered on the major events of the salvation story. The 70 weeks, while clearly focusing on the restoration of Jerusalem and its life span, is determined and limited by Christ’s birth, ministry, and death. The remaining portion of the 2,300 days, while a period of momentous changes and upheavals in this world, is determined and limited by Christ’s ministry on behalf of our salvation in the next time period.

Is it that important then to focus on prophecies and their fulfillment? Is such a focus a distraction from “real” spiritual issues? No, and this is why we are aware that fulfilled prophecies and miracles are themselves great evidence of God’s power over and concern for the world and His people. The prophecies of Daniel and other biblical prophets serve a still greater purpose: to testify to the truth and reality of our own salvation. It is one thing to say that Jesus appeared and made all these claims about Himself. It is quite another to see that all of world history seems to arrange itself around Him.

II. Useful Quotes About Christ as the Central Figure of Prophecy.

“The parable of Matthew 18 [vss. 21-35] is a story of the pre-Advent judgment. There is only one issue that matters in the judgment—‘What think ye of Christ?’ How we relate to Christ is what truly matters.”—Jon Paulien, What the Bible Says About the End-Time, p. 91.

“Jesus announced that He had been sent from heaven to reveal God’s redemptive will through His life and teachings (John 12:49, 50). His presence radiated the saving power of God’s kingdom among the Jews. As the promised Messiah, He claimed to fulfill the Hebrew Scriptures and their messianic prophecies. To the surprise of the rabbis, Jesus taught that the Hebrew Bible was not primarily Israel-centered but Messiah-centered. . . .

“Jesus presented Himself as the great Reality to which the symbolic rituals and prophetic types of Israel’s temple services pointed. He claimed to have been sent as the promised Lamb, Priest, Prophet, and King, all in one Person.”—Hans K. LaRondelle, Light for the Last Days (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1999), p. 8.

“It was the Cross and resurrection that conquered Satan. Christ’s defeat was transformed into victory, his death into eternal life. . . .

“This Lamb who was slain is the same one who is the ruler of
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.
the kings of the earth, who shares the throne with God the Almighty, and who shares both the throne and the kingdom with his loyal followers. The victim is the victor. The Lamb wins! Christ is victorious!”—C. Freeman Sleeper, *The Victorious Christ* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), p. 66.

“The judgment—the crisis—is concentrated in Christ Himself: it is not an unveiling of all things in general, but of one’s relationship to Christ in particular. For that reason He was ordained to judge . . . and in that way He will judge the living and the dead. Love sets the criteria for judgment, the love of God that appeared in Christ.”—G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, p. 158.

“The great majority of his [Jesus’] symbolic actions announce that the messianic age has dawned. Jesus, in fact, not only proclaimed the parables’ message; he lived it and embodied it in his own person. ‘Jesus not only utters the message of the Kingdom of

**Inductive Bible Study**

**Texts for Discovery:** Isaiah 53:1-6, Daniel 9, Romans 5:6-17.

1. Daniel 9 begins with one of the most selfless prayers recorded in Scripture. This prayer is the result of Daniel’s understanding that one of Jeremiah’s prophecies (*Jer. 25:1-14*) was coming to an end. Before Daniel asked for anything, he confessed the sins that originally had caused his people to be taken captive. How would you characterize the sins mentioned by Daniel? What are some modern comparisons?

2. Read Daniel 9:19. What seemed to be Daniel’s primary interest in his prayer? What did Daniel expect God to do? How would God’s answer change Daniel’s fortunes? How would your life be different if God answered your prayers? How would society or the church be different?

3. The explanation of the dream in Daniel 8 is further validation of the year/day principle of prophetic interpretation. How does this prophecy concerning Jesus’ first advent make it easier to explain the prophetic signposts that point to Christ’s second coming? Are you ready to explain this to your non-Adventist friends? Why, or why not?

4. The prophecies of Daniel 7–9 remind us that human events are influenced by divine initiative. Events initiated by God centuries before reach their fulfillment in the “fullness of time.” What are the implications for us? What do we need to do today to ensure that God’s future plan is fulfilled?
**Wednesday**

**December 8**

**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?**
III. What the Bible Says About Christ as the Central Figure of Prophecy.

"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations’” (Luke 24:45-47, NIV).

"Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of..."
“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?
TEACHERS COMMENTS

prophecy’ ” (Rev. 19:10, NIV).

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Pet. 1:10, 11, NIV).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Have you ever had the opportunity to hold a large, perfect jewel in your hand? When you do, you cannot resist lifting it toward the light and turning it multiple ways so that you catch all the fire and brilliance found in it. Some of the loveliest jewels in the world are found in the Tower of London in England and belong to the British monarchy. These irreplaceable gems are known as the crown jewels and are considered the best of the best. Our lesson talks about a different set of crown jewels: prophecies that are the heart and soul of prophecy and can be referring only to Christ’s own time here on earth. Aren’t you humbled when you think of the price paid in order for these jewels of prophecy to be fulfilled?

Thought Question:
The 70-week prophecy is the ultimate confirmation of God’s prophetic accuracy. Why is that so? Without the promise of this prophecy, what would be the hope of our future? How is Christ’s second coming addressed by this particular prophecy?

Application Questions:

1. For every action there is a reaction; cause and effect, if you will. Applying this principle to the investigative judgment, what are the two guaranteed outcomes of Christ’s high-priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary?

2. Daniel gains much additional insight into his understanding of the 2,300-year prophecy during his second visit with the angel Gabriel. What additional critical piece of information is given to Daniel that helps bridge his gap of understanding? Why is that piece so important to the Christian’s salvation? Why is Daniel not given this information during his first conversation with Gabriel ten years earlier? What is the significance in the fact that it was Gabriel who brought the message to Daniel?

In Daniel 8, the only part of the vision that Daniel didn’t understand was the *mareh* of the 2,300 days (vss. 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.

Thus, we have two time prophecies placed closely together, one larger than the other and the smaller “cut off” from the larger.

With the starting point given in the decree to restore and 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.
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.

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?

Teachers Aims:
1. To understand how God communicates with His prophets.
2. To note that Daniel 2, 7–9, 11, and 12 cover approximately the same time periods.
3. To affirm that despite the terrible conflict with evil, Jesus wins.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Prophet in Vision (*Dan. 10:4-13*).
   A. God lifted the veil and showed Daniel the realities of the unseen world—the conflict between the forces of good and evil.
   B. The physical effects of the vision upon Daniel were similar to those experienced by the apostle Paul.

II. The Last Conflict (*Dan. 10:14*).
   A. The “latter days” refer to the future, which ends with Christ’s second coming.
   B. Through Daniel we are given a glimpse of the struggle between good and evil.
   C. Everyone must choose whom he or she will serve.

III. The Kings of the North and the South (*Dan. 11:1-28*).
   A. Daniel 2, 7, and 8 cover approximately the same time span as Daniel 11:1–12:4.
   B. Thus, Greece, Rome, and the divided kingdoms find corresponding parallels in Daniel 11–12:4.
   C. The Messianic prophecies also are found in Daniel 10:21, 11:1, and chapter 12.

Summary: Two Seventh-day Adventists were discussing how Satan works through individuals in the church to gain power and control in order to compromise truth and righteousness. One held up the Bible and said, “You know, I checked the last chapter and the last page of my Bible. We win!”

**COMMENTARY**

I. Free Will or Determinism?

Unlike theologies that suggest God predestines humans to either salvation or damnation, Seventh-day Adventists generally believe that God has given us free will to decide whether we will obey Him and live or disobey Him and die.

Indeed, the idea of the great controversy involves God’s efforts to persuade His creatures to obey Him because they choose to. It is important to realize that although we are free, without God that freedom is of little or no use to us. God intended us to fellowship with Him, but in the absence of that fellowship, we search for other
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?
things to fill the void, things that are inadequate or dangerous. Even things quite harmless in themselves can become cruel masters if we allow them to take God’s place in our lives.

Then, of course, there is the cruelest of all cruel masters, Satan himself. Not to serve God is always to serve Satan. Why is neutrality not possible? Once again, because we, like all created beings, are intended to serve God. As the Presbyterian Westminster Shorter Catechism states: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”—Taken from Westminster Shorter Catechism, <http://www.opc.org/documents/WSC.html>.

Not to serve God is to rebel against His will and by default puts one in harmony with Satan’s will. After all, how did Satan begin his career? “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the most High” (Isa. 14:14, NASB). Satan wanted to be his own god and to be free of the real God.

At first this must have seemed innocent enough, just as it does to many people today. Satan did not even say he wanted to replace God; he merely wanted to be “like” God, to control his own destiny. And he has done just that, to his and our detriment. We do indeed have control over our own destiny, but we are intended to achieve it in loving partnership with God.

II. Useful Quotes About Freedom of Choice.

“Daniel sees no problem in or contradiction between God’s activity in history and human freedom. His foreordained will does not override human freedom. The individual is free to make decisions. But any decision is made in the context of the inevitable unfolding of events. Men may choose to serve the divine will within the course of events determined by the divine Sovereign.”—Arthur Ferch, *Symposium on Daniel* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), p. 66; Frank B. Holbrook, ed.

“Apocalyptic prophecies describe God’s universal plan for the human race and His people, and therefore they are unconditional. The sovereign Lord of history, He leads it, without violating human choice or free will, to a particular goal, namely, the establishment of His eternal kingdom on earth. Consequently, apocalyptic prophecy has an element of determinism based on the fact that God’s plan will triumph in spite of any opposition.”—Angel Manuel Rodriguez, *Future Glory* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2002), p. 12.

“But God’s knowledge about what individuals will do does not interfere with what they actually choose to do any more than a historian’s knowledge of what people did in the past interferes with their actions. Just as a camera records a scene but does not change it, foreknowledge looks into the future without altering it. The foreknowledge of the Godhead never violates human freedom.”—Seventh-day Adventists Believe, p. 22.
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?
“In a biblical philosophy of history, therefore, human freedom must be held in tension with divine sovereignty. To deny the former is to make history deterministic; to repudiate [deny] the latter is to render it chaotic, uncertain, meaningless.”—William Johnsson, *The Seventy Weeks, Leuiticus, and the Nature of Prophecy* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), p. 284; Frank B. Holbrook, ed.

**Inductive Bible Study**

**Texts for Discovery:** Daniel 10, 11.

1. The historical context of Daniel 10 and 11 sees Daniel in Babylon, while his people had returned to their homeland and were struggling to restore Jerusalem. Although physically removed from his people, Daniel often prayed for them. (And when he recorded their sins—Daniel 9:4-19—he counted himself among them.) Compare this attitude with the critics of today’s church. What can prayer accomplish in restoring the church that criticism cannot? Does this mean we should not be critical? Explain your answer.

2. At the sight of the heavenly being, Daniel was terrified; yet he heard the words, “Daniel, you . . . are highly esteemed” (*Dan. 10:11, NIV*). What caused Daniel’s initial reaction? Is there anything about your relationship with God that scares you? How do you know you are highly regarded by Heaven? What Scripture promises can you claim as proof?

3. “Behold, I am coming soon!” said Jesus (*Rev. 22:7, NIV*). Is there something about Christ’s second coming that should be emphasized more than its “soon-ness”? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

4. The underlying theme of this lesson could be the behind-the-scenes activity of God and Satan in the struggle between good and evil. What current world events cause you the most anxious moments? What explanations can be offered for such atrocities as the Holocaust, the Stalinist purges, the killing fields of Cambodia, Rwanda violence, etc.?

5. There are almost as many interpretations of Daniel 10 and 11 as there are interpreters. What absolute, foundational truth can you take away from the passage that will comfort you between now and when Jesus comes again?
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?
III. What the Bible Says About Freedom of Choice.

“I [Moses] call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days’” (Deut. 30:19, 20, NKJV).

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15, NKJV).

Witnessing

God’s love for us eclipses any human love; His love is as deep as the ocean and as wide as the heavens. His love is all-consuming and all-encompassing. How can we be sure that God loves us that much? Listen to some of the ways He shows His love:

- He gave us His Son and the plan of salvation.
- We see His love every time we look at our children.
- God continues to hold back the end of time so more people may hear His message of love and redemption.
- He provides us with places on this earth that are of such natural beauty that they feed our soul. They give us a small taste of what our world will be like when this planet is finally made new again.

“Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love. Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature. Think of their marvelous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator’s love. It is God who supplies the daily needs of all His creatures. In the beautiful words of the psalmist—

‘The eyes of all wait upon Thee;
And Thou givest them their meat in due season.
Thou openest Thine hand,
And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.’ Psalm 145:15, 16.”—Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 9.

Share with others, at every opportunity that comes your way, these manifestations of God’s expansive love for His children so that those around you understand how very much God cherishes each one of them. Add one new example of His love to your list daily. Keep the list with you, or place it in your Bible, so that you can refer to it often, especially when you need a reminder of the one great and perfect love.
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.”
“And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him’” (1 Kings 18:21, NKJV).

“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11:24, 25, NKJV).

Life-Application Approach

**Icebreaker:** Think back on how trials and heartaches you have survived in the past have strengthened you. Maybe you did not realize it at the time, but later, when faced with a new challenge, you felt better prepared for the experience ahead because of the one you had undergone. Those who have faced life-threatening illnesses often say that they are better people because of the experience. Why do you think this is true?

**Thought Questions:**
1. When we stop and think about the tug-of-war going on for our souls, we need only remember that Jesus Himself faced great temptation from the master tempter. He defeated Satan by keeping His heart and mind fixed solely on His heavenly Father. How is it that Satan knows the weakest areas in our lives? How can we be sure we will be able to withstand his deceptions?

2. If you were offered the opportunity to see your entire future, would you take the opportunity? Explain your answer. Do you think you would be a better person for having this knowledge? Why?

**Application Question:**
We are warned that false prophets will try to deceive God’s righteous people; extreme vigilance is required in seeing through their deceit. Here is the test we must apply to verify authenticity: “If they belittle the law of God, if they pay no heed to His will as revealed in the testimonies of His Spirit, they are deceivers. They are controlled by impulse and impressions which they believe to be from the Holy Spirit and consider more reliable than the Inspired Word... But while they think that they are led by the Spirit of God, they are in reality following an imagination wrought upon by Satan.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 952. To apply this test, what must we first become? (Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, pp. 951, 952, for the answer.)

“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:

1. 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?

2. 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.
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?
Key Text: Daniel 12:3.

Teachers Aims:
1. To assure God’s people that the book of Daniel is unsealed and that knowledge concerning these prophecies has increased.
2. To examine how precise God’s timing is in the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecies.

Lesson Outline:
I. The Time of the End (Dan. 11:40-45).
   A. This expression appears only in the book of Daniel.
   B. Seventh-day Adventists believe the time of the end commenced in 1798.
   C. Daniel 12 reveals that we are standing on the threshold of eternity.

II. Michael Will Rise Up (Dan. 12:1).
   A. Michael is Jesus, the Prince and the Messiah.
   B. Michael means “who is like God.”
   C. Because of Christ’s victory over death, the righteous dead will be resurrected at Christ’s second coming.

III. The Book of Daniel Is Unsealed and Open (Dan. 12:4, 9, 10).
   A. Many of Daniel’s prophecies were hidden for centuries.
   B. We are privileged, today, to see many of Daniel’s prophecies fulfilled.
   C. The solemn judgment-hour message is being proclaimed by God’s remnant church.

Summary: “We are living in the most solemn period of this world’s history. The destiny of earth’s teeming multitudes is about to be decided. . . . We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon His word, especially upon the scenes of the judgment.”—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 601.

Commentary
I. Michael—Archangel and Christ?
    Seventh-day Adventist scholars have traditionally identified the archangel Michael in Daniel 10:13 as Christ Himself. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary states that while his identity is not obvious, “a comparison with other scriptures identifies Him as Christ.”—Volume 4, p. 860.
    This conflicts with the views of other denominations that view Michael as an angel and thus a created being. Some have used this as a basis for the claim that Seventh-day Adventists do not fully recognize the divinity of Christ. One website, in attempting to refute this view, asserts that “Calling Michael a created angel Christ, is
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.


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?
TEACHERS COMMENTS


If we as Adventists believed the assumption that Michael is an angel, and went on to identify him with Christ, we would be holding unorthodox views about Christ’s nature. The Jehovah’s Witnesses combine a belief that Michael is Christ with the belief that Christ is merely the greatest of created beings. (See “Jehovah’s Witnesses—Michael,” <http://www.gospeldefense.org/quote_list.php3?keyword=Michael&group=Jehovah\’s%20Witnesses>; see also “Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Beliefs and Practices,” <http://www.religioustolerance.org/witness3.htm>.)

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary clarifies this, however, by saying that they believe that “‘Michael’ is one of the names of Christ . . . not as the chief angel but as ruler over the angels.”—Volume 7, p. 706.

Seventh-day Adventists identify Christ with Michael for two primary reasons. First, such texts as Jude 9 place Michael in a mediatorial role similar to that attributed to Christ. Second, both Michael and Christ are said to be the individuals who will call the righteous dead from their graves (John 5:28, 1 Thess. 4:16; cited in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 860).

II. Useful Quotes About Michael the Archangel.

“Michael ranks as the greatest angel in all three of the major monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. . . . He is traditionally considered to be chief of the order of virtues; chief of archangels; prince of the presence; angel of repentance, righteousness, mercy, and sanctification; and ruler of the fourth heaven, conqueror of Satan. . . . In addition, he has been identified as the angel who stayed the hand of Abraham when the latter was on the point of sacrificing his son Isaac.”—James R. Lewis and Evelyn Dorothy Oliver, Angels A to Z (New York: Gale Research, Inc., 1996), p. 275.

“And what is the value of knowing that Michael is not a created being but is, in fact, our divine Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?

“For one thing, this knowledge helps us to keep the vision of Daniel 10–12 in proper perspective. The vision begins with a revelation . . . about Jesus at the second coming. The history . . . here presented begins and ends with the Lord of history. Once more we are reminded that God cares, that He is in control.

“Knowing that Michael is Jesus also helps us to remember that the principal focus of Daniel’s prophecies is neither on Antiochus Epiphanes nor on the antichrist. The focus is always on Jesus Christ.”—C. Mervyn Maxwell, God Cares, vol. 1 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1981), p. 273.

“Who was Michael, who came to Gabriel’s assistance? The term signifies, ‘He who is like God,’ and the Scriptures clearly show that
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?**

1 Daniel 11 introduces new and puzzling symbols to the prophecies we have studied so far. Yet, some common elements remain—mostly in connection with rebellion, force, and violence—a reminder that no religious or political power can reflect Heaven’s ideals when it forces someone to choose God. The only “force” sanctioned by Heaven is the force of unconditional love. In which events have you experienced the power of God’s love? How have you used His love to win others for Christ?

2 Heaven’s books are symbols that God knows who belongs to Him. Implied is that some people may imagine they belong to God, when in fact their true allegiance is elsewhere. Although we are saved by grace, we are judged by our works. In what ways does this make sense? Read Matt. 25:31-46.

3 Underlying the broad issue of judgment is the concept of ultimate truth and justice. We may have to endure lies and injustice between now and the coming of Christ, but God’s promise is that truth and justice will prevail. Does that assure you or frighten you? Why?

4 We dare not study these passages without asking ourselves whether the negative aspects of these prophecies might apply to us in any way. What temptations might apply to us, either as individuals or as a church?

5 Often the only way to truly interpret prophecy is by way of hindsight. Most of Daniel’s prophecies can be explained in terms of recognized historical events. Read John 13:35, 1 Corinthians 13. What is more important than being able to interpret prophecy? List five practical ways we can reflect God’s love to people.
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?

“As we know from Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7, Michael is Christ. He appears in many places in the Bible, in both Old and New Testaments, with various titles that express his various functions in the plan of salvation. The name Michael is used particularly in situations where there is conflict over the people of God. Michael comes to fight for them and protect them and deliver them.”— William H. Shea, Daniel 7–12 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1996), p. 215.

III. What the Bible Says About Michael

Witnessing

We have all experienced times of deep disappointment in our lives. In retrospect, we now see that some moments were so inconsequential that they have faded from our memory; we simply can’t recall the pain or the details at all. Other memories still haunt us, especially those that happened during our tender growing-up years. While these issues seemed capable of splintering our hearts into many tiny shards of glass at the time, we have found that the farther we move away from the experience, the more perspective we are able to apply. We have also found that, in time, depending on each individual situation (and the amount of emotional entanglement involved), the painful memories of the hurt have stopped and we think less and less about them until, eventually, they no longer matter to us.

Not all disappointments, however, are resolved in this way, with what appears to be little, if any, lasting scars. Some are so devastating to us personally (physically, emotionally, or spiritually) that they seem to have damaged our very soul. Afterward, we feel we are never really whole again. So it was with some who experienced the Great Disappointment of 1844.

Looking back on their experience from a twenty-first–century perspective, we might wonder why they interpreted prophecy in quite the manner they did, but this is not the point. What is important is that some were so spiritually and emotionally damaged by the event that they were never able to contribute as they had to the work of the fledgling new group of believers. What a tragic loss to God’s work. Nevertheless, the little band regrouped under God’s leadership and continued their search for truth in God’s Scriptures.

What a witness these struggling young believers then became to those around them! No obstacles were allowed to stand in their way; their hearts burned with fire for God’s message. They remain our example; their commitment to witnessing is a marvelous standard. Every day we must remember their beginning—out of great disappointment came the great advent movement. What a blessing and privilege it is to be a part of it!
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?
the Archangel.

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise” (Dan. 12:1, NIV).

“But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ ” (Jude 9, NIV).

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back” (Rev. 12:7, NIV).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Daniel heard directly from heaven that he was guaranteed eternal life. Can you even begin to imagine how he felt? He knew, without a doubt, without reservation, that he would be with God throughout eternity. You, too, have been offered the same guarantee. You must decide whether to accept the offer of salvation, but the offer is clearly on the table. What will be your thoughts and actions (the results of the choices you have made using your free will) that will confirm or release your heavenly reservation? Review how you are living your life and the choices you are now making; make any necessary adjustments. Be absolutely certain that there can be no doubt as to your full acceptance of God’s offer of eternal life. Guarantee your reservation!

Thought Questions:

1. We, as Seventh-day Adventists, believe we are living in the time of the end, the latter days. Prophecy time lines confirm this, and world conditions seem to leave no doubt. What specific events have taken place that confirm, for you, that the end time is truly unfolding? Is there the possibility of mistake? Explain.

2. Why is it important for Seventh-day Adventists to believe in the revelation that Michael is Christ?

Application Question:

We have been given the opportunity for insight into latter-day events beyond those provided to Daniel. It is our very proximity to the closing hours of earth’s history that makes us better able to interpret the visionary message. What is the inherent danger to ourselves and to others if we refuse to accept our responsibility and share God’s end-time message?

“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.”