

When Kings Go to War



SABBATH AFTERNOON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TEACHERS COMMENTS

Key Text: *Numbers 12:6.*

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?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

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?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

“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, Leviticus, 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?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

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.”

TEACHERS COMMENTS

“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.)

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

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

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

Discussion Questions:

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.