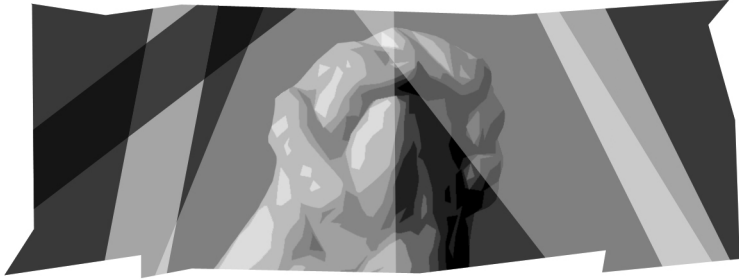


Daniel 9



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Dan. 9:1-23.*

Memory Text: “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments” (*Daniel 9:5*).

Before continuing here, make sure you understand the charts we’ve looked at the past few weeks. They form an immovable foundation for where we are going next. The crucial point that should be understood now is that the judgment scene in Daniel 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 are the same event and that this event takes place sometime after the 1,260-year period that depicted a phase of papal persecution of the saints.

Meanwhile, considering the time frame for this event, the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, what’s the only possible sanctuary that’s being cleansed here, the one on earth or the one in heaven (*see Matt. 24:2; Luke 21:6; Heb. 8:1, 2*)? The answer is obvious.

Finally, look at what the Lord has used to frame the important teaching of the cleansing of the sanctuary—and that’s massive world empires, things as immovable, unchangeable, and verifiable as are possible in this world. The Lord isn’t asking us to base our faith on sketchy, shadowy things; instead, He’s framing these great truths around world history, as firm a foundation as possible. God, obviously, wants us to believe these truths; that’s why He makes it easy for us to do just that.

This week we now move to Daniel 9, the final link in this amazing sequence of prophecy and history.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 5.*

Unfinished Business

Read Daniel 9:1. What major difference appears here in contrast to the three previous chapters we have studied so far?

The answer, to some degree, also helps explain what we noticed in Daniel 8: that unlike the previous two chapters, Babylon was not depicted. Daniel began, instead, with Media-Persia. It seems that already, in Daniel 8, the Lord was pointing toward the future, toward the next kingdom that would arise, which was Media-Persia.

It's also important to notice something about the previous chapters. As we saw, Daniel 2 was a dream/vision and an explanation of that dream/vision. Everything was explained.

In Daniel 7, the same thing: a dream/vision and an explanation of everything that he was shown.

In Daniel 8, however, a difference arises: There was a dream/vision and an explanation. However, as we saw, not everything was explained.

Review Daniel 8. Again, what was the one thing not explained to Daniel in chapter 8?

Unlike the sister visions that preceded it, Daniel 8 ends with Daniel saying that he didn't understand the "vision." What vision? Obviously, it was the part of the vision that dealt with the 2,300 evenings and mornings of verse 14. After all, everything else was explained; in some cases some of the powers depicted in Daniel 8 were even named (*vss. 20, 21*). In none of the previous visions did Daniel come away saying that he didn't understand something, even though in some cases the explanations weren't as precise as in parts of Daniel 8. Only in Daniel 8 does he say there was something that he didn't understand, and that's obviously the "vision" of the 2,300 days, the only part of the chapter not specifically explained.

Thus, we leave Daniel 8 and enter Daniel 9, with only one thing not clear to Daniel at this point: the vision of the 2,300 days in Daniel 8:14.

A prophet not understanding everything given in a prophetic dream or vision? Does this teach us anything that could help us better understand the nature of Ellen G. White's prophetic gift?

Key Text: *Daniel 9:15*

Teachers Aims:

1. To recognize the link between Daniel 8 and 9.
2. To highlight the importance of prayer while waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises.

Lesson Outline:

Closely Tied (*Daniel 9:24-27*)

- A. Daniel 9 reveals the decree concerning the restoration of the Jerusalem temple.
- B. The time prophecy left unexplained in Daniel 8 (2,300 days) is explained to Daniel in chapter 9.
- C. The time prophecy of Christ's crucifixion year is also evident in chapter 9.

Summary: The vision in Daniel 9 is closely linked to the part of the vision in Daniel 8, concerning the 2,300 days. Unlike earlier chapters, such as 2 and 7, in which each vision is followed by an explanation, Daniel 8 provides a vision with only a partial explanation. The explanation of this vision is now given in chapter 9.

COMMENTARY

Daniel's study and prayer had cheered him with the news that Israel's captivity in Babylon would soon end and God's people would be returning to Jerusalem. Daniel knew the captivity would last for 70 years (*Jer. 29:10*). It began during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (605 B.C., *Dan. 1:1*), and now after the vision of Daniel 8, it is already the reign of Darius (c. 539 B.C.). With almost 66 years gone, the captivity indeed would be over soon. Yet, at the conclusion of Daniel 8, the angel shocked Daniel with the news that the sanctuary will lay trampled for 2,300 years.

What should the prophet make of this? The only thing he could do was pray. This week's lesson deals with the essentials of that prayer (*Dan. 9:3-9*): its foundation, its appeal to God, and our relationship to Him and His response to us.

I. Prayer: Its Foundation

The Bible teaches that prayer is our response to God's Word. "Ask," He has said. So, we respond to His bidding—the foundation of our prayers. Thus, to a Christian, prayer is the second word, for the first word is always God's. In Daniel's case, what was God's first word? Was God's Word contradictory? Why should it take 2,300 years for the restoration of the sanctuary when Jeremiah had

The Exile of the Jews

As we see, Daniel is now under the reign of the Medes and the Persians, a direct fulfillment of the earlier prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, and 8.

There is, however, a great problem for Daniel. His people are still in captivity, the temple is still in ruins, and his nation has not been restored.

Read Daniel 9:2. What promise and prophecy is Daniel getting some hope from?

Despite all the hopes of national greatness, the Jewish nation was taken into captivity by a pagan power. From a logical perspective, it should have been the end of the Jews, and Judah, forever. However, the Lord wasn't through with His people. Though the prophets warned about judgment, doom, and destruction, they also gave the Jews the great hope of redemption and restoration.

Read Jeremiah 29:10-12. What hope do you believe Daniel derives from this prophecy? See also Jer. 25:11, 12.

According to His promise, the Lord did, indeed, restore His people to the land when He said He would. This is recorded most clearly in 2 Chronicles 36:18-23.

Read those verses in Chronicles. What do they tell us about God and His promises?

The fulfillment of those promises was still a few years off when the events of Daniel 9 happened. The 70 years, beginning in 605 B.C. with the conquest of Jerusalem and the exile of Daniel and of the other captives, almost were completed. Yet, nothing was happening. His people were still exiled, Jerusalem was still in ruins, and the temple was not even close to being rebuilt. Though Daniel witnessed the rise of the Medo-Persians, as predicted, more needed to happen, great events that from a human perspective would seem impossible. In this context, we can understand better the prayer that follows.

Daniel was deriving hope from a promise of God. Which promises of God are the most meaningful to you? How does prayer sustain you as you wait for these promises to be fulfilled?

clearly foretold that Babylonian captivity should end in 70 years (*Jer. 29:10*)? Daniel “perceived” this in “the books . . . according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet” (*Dan. 9:2, RSV*).

How did Daniel respond to God’s bidding? He sought clarity and understanding for the vision through prayer.

II. Prayer: The Appeal to God

Repeatedly Daniel used the phrases “the Lord my God,” “O Lord,” or “Lord God,” thus leaving no doubt as to whom one should pray. Three Hebrew words for God are used here. First, Yahweh: the LORD. He is the self-existent, eternal One, who is faithful. Second, El: God. He is mighty and powerful. The key word is power, as revealed to Abraham: “‘I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless’ ” (*Gen. 17:1, RSV*). Third, Adonai: Lord. God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe.

Put these three words together, and we have the image of a God who is faithful, who is powerful, and who has purpose for us individually and collectively. To this “‘great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands’ ” (*Dan. 9:4, NIV*), Daniel turned in prayer. He is the God of righteousness (*vs. 7*), of mercy and forgiveness (*vs. 9*), and of law (*vs. 10*). He is the God of majesty, holiness, and infinity—and yet approachable, caring, and loving. He is the God of heaven—and of earth.

Daniel knew his God—personally, intimately, and experientially. Therefore, his prayer is direct, with no shade of fear or hint of hesitancy. Rather, it is like a friend conversing with a friend or a child asking a parent for clarification.

III. Prayer: Relationship and Response

Prayer is not a game of “you scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.” God is not a pagan deity itching for our apologies or shouts of misplaced praise. Terrible in His judgment and tender and gracious in His concerns, He waits for us to come to Him with transparency, boldness, and trust. And as we come, Daniel’s prayer suggests we should do three things.

First, acknowledge our sinfulness. “‘We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled’ ” (*Dan. 9:5, RSV*). The word *sinned* suggests missing the mark. The words *done wrong* point to the deliberate falsehood in rearranging the moral guideposts. *Acted wickedly* speaks of moral failure. *Rebelled* is a deliberate rejection of God’s commandments. Neither did Israel listen to God’s servants (*vs. 6*). In 17 verses (*vs. 3-19*), the prophet refers 14 times to the sinfulness of Israel, thus revealing the gravity of sin, the need for confession, and the importance of repentance.

Second, acknowledge our predicament in the face of God’s holiness. Prayer is speaking to God as to a friend, but that does not make God our equal. To Him belongs “‘righteousness’ ” and to us

“We Have Sinned”

Read Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:3-19. On the lines below, summarize the essence of what Daniel was praying for.

Numerous points jump out from Daniel’s prayer:

① Daniel acknowledges the sins of his people; there was no excuse on his part to justify their actions. What can we learn from this for ourselves?

② Daniel makes it clear that his people’s sin involved turning away from God’s Word. What lesson is here for us, as well?

③ Even amid all the punishment, sorrow, and judgment, all of which was deserved, Daniel appeals to God for mercy, grace, and restoration. What hope does this offer us regarding our own mistakes?

If you read Daniel’s prayer, you’ll notice that one thing is not there. You’ll notice that Daniel isn’t asking the Lord one simple question: *Why did all this happen to us?* And that’s because he knows why all this happened: The people disobeyed the Lord. Daniel asked no questions in his prayer. He is not seeking for light, wisdom, or understanding. In the context of what he is talking about, he understands the issues: Israel sinned, was punished, and now he pleads for the promised restoration.

The point is that nowhere in this prayer is Daniel seeking for understanding. The last time, at least as recorded in Scripture, that Daniel needed understanding was in regard to the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, what he specifically said he didn’t understand at the end of the last chapter (*Dan. 8:27*).

What, if anything, stands out in Daniel’s prayer that has special significance for you in your own walk with the Lord?

“ ‘confusion of face’ ” (vs. 7, 8). The former is firmness, the latter chaos. Daniel is sure that the confused state of his people was because they rejected God’s Word, which alone assures a strong house of faith.

Third, acknowledge God’s delivering power. Daniel grasps a timeless truth in redemptive history: “ ‘We do not present our supplications before thee on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of thy great mercy’ ” (vs. 18, *RSV*).

Fourth, never give up. Hopelessness is the most dangerous foe

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *1 Kings 3:5-14, Daniel 9:1-23, Micah 6:8*

❶ This week’s lesson is a reminder that, while we’re sometimes allowed to preview the great themes of the future, our primary responsibilities are in the present. Few Bible passages match this imperative for purposeful living: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (*Mic. 6:8, NRSV*). How are justice, kindness, and humility revealed in your personal life and in the lives of your congregation?

❷ In Daniel 9:2, Daniel turns his attention from prophetic timetables that stretch to the “ ‘distant future’ ” (*Dan. 8:26, NIV*) to a prophecy that he and his people believed would be fulfilled in their day: the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Is prophecy always fulfilled as we expect it? What might hinder or alter the way God’s prophecies are fulfilled?

❸ Most of Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9 features Daniel’s confession of the sins of his people. Not until the last few verses does Daniel state his request: “ ‘O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act!’ ” (*Dan. 9:19, NIV*). What do we miss when our prayers consist primarily of an endless list of requests? What more might God want to hear?

❹ While Daniel was still praying, Gabriel appeared in order to help him understand the prophecy that had left him baffled (*see Daniel 8*). Just as Solomon prayed for wisdom and received riches and honor (*1 Kings 3:5-14*), so Daniel prayed for forgiveness and received understanding to interpret the puzzle of the 2,300 days. What does this teach us about prayer?

“Skill and Understanding”

Read Daniel 9:20-22 and look at what happens. After Daniel prayed, the angel Gabriel appeared to him. This, however, wasn't Gabriel's first appearance to Daniel.

When was the last time Gabriel was seen in the book of Daniel? See *Dan. 8:16*.

Remember, too, that in Daniel 8 Gabriel was commanded to make Daniel understand what he had seen in vision. And, as we saw, he did just that, with the exception of the vision of the 2,300 days.

Now, however, Gabriel appears again to Daniel, who refers to him as the one he had seen “in the vision at the beginning” (*vs. 21*). Though he doesn't say which specific vision that was, the only other time Gabriel appears in Daniel is in chapter 8, so it's certainly logical to assume that's the vision Daniel is referring to.

In Daniel 9:20-23, what does Gabriel say to Daniel that he came to do?

As we saw yesterday, nowhere in Daniel's prayer did he ask for “understanding.” The last time he needed understanding was about the 2,300 days. Now, the same angel interpreter appears and specifically says that he has come to give him “understanding.” Understanding about what? The 2,300 days obviously, the last time Daniel needed any understanding.

In fact, the Hebrew root verb (*bin*), translated “understood” (*Dan. 8:27*), is the same root word that appears in Daniel 9:22, wherein Gabriel says that he came to give him skill and “understanding” (from *bin*). Thus, Gabriel comes to Daniel and gives him the “understanding” (*bin*) that he didn't have at the end of Daniel 8!

Also, notice what kind of prophecy Daniel 8:14 was; it was a time prophecy. Right after Gabriel comes to Daniel and offers to give him understanding, what kind of prophecy does he give him (*see Dan. 9:24*)? Of course, a time prophecy. Clearly, the vision of Daniel 9 is linked to part of the vision in Daniel 8, the 2,300 days. While Daniel 2 and 7 had a vision and complete explanation, Daniel 8 had a vision and a partial explanation. In Daniel 9, there was no vision but only an explanation—an explanation of what wasn't explained in Daniel 8.

of faith and prayer. Hear Daniel's persistence: " 'O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, give heed and act; delay not, for thy own sake' " (*vs. 19, RSV*). Such determination brought an end to his perplexity (*vss. 20-27*). The mystery of the 2,300 days would soon be made clear.

Witnessing

Even after some things are officially "over," not everyone gets the message: The winner of a marathon may hit the finish line at approximately two hours and thirty minutes; others will straggle in hours later.

The Second World War, in Asia, ended in the autumn of 1945. Yet, 29 long years later, a lone Japanese soldier was still holed up in the Philippine jungle, surrendering nearly three decades after his country had been pacified.

In reading about the fate of the Jews in chapter 9 of Daniel, we see that they were, indeed, suffering the national consequences of their choices. But they also had faith that God's plan for them was "for good and not for evil, to give [them] a future and a hope" (*Jer. 29:11, TLB*).

Their captivity would end, Daniel was told, but not in the way they expected. Instead, the prophecy of the 70 weeks would lead to a total vindication of God, salvation for His people, and happiness evermore.

Yet, like that lone Japanese soldier in the jungle, the news hasn't reached everyone. Those who don't know God or His Son almost certainly don't know about this plan for ultimate good. Many Christians have been deluded by popular teaching to "leave behind" the clear message of the Scripture and hope for some kind of rapture to be their deliverance, lifting them out of trouble while the rest of the world suffers unspeakable horrors.

Someone finally got the word to that jungle-bound holdout: "The battle is over! You can go home, and in peace!" Aren't there many around us today, this moment, who need to hear those very same words?

“Understand the Vision”

As if the information from the previous few days weren't enough to link Daniel 9:24-27 with Daniel 8:14, the Lord has given us even more evidence to make that link.

In Daniel 8:1, 2, Daniel three times makes reference to the “vision” of the chapter; each time it comes from the same Hebrew word, *hazon*: “In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision [*hazon*] appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in a vision [*hazon*]; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision [*hazon*], and I was by the river of Ulai” (*Dan. 8:1, 2*).

Daniel then describes what he sees in the *hazon*: the ram, the goat, the little horn, and so forth. *Hazon*, therefore, refers to the general vision of chapter 8.

In contrast, when he talks specifically about the 2,300 days, Daniel uses a different word for vision, *mareh*. “And the vision [*mareh*] of the evening and the morning which was told is true. . . . And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision [*mareh*], but none understood it” (*Dan. 8:26, 27*).

Thus, we have two words for “vision” in Daniel 8: *hazon* for the whole vision, *mareh* for Daniel 8:14, the vision about the 2,300 days and the sanctuary being cleansed, the part that Daniel didn't understand (*Dan. 8:27*).

Now these two words appear again, in Daniel 9, when Gabriel appears to Daniel. “Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision [*hazon*] at the beginning . . . touched me. . . . At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision [*mareh*]” (*Dan. 9:21-23*).

Consider what *mareh*? There's only one: the *mareh* of the 2,300 days that Daniel specifically said he didn't understand. In fact, the word translated “consider” comes from *bin*, which also links this to the *mareh* of Daniel 8:26, which Daniel needed understanding (*bin*) about.

Clearly, the explanation of Daniel 9:24-27 is linked to the 2,300 days of the previous chapter. Gabriel came to give Daniel understanding about the *mareh* of the 2,300 days!

Review the links between Daniel 8 and Daniel 9. Be able to defend the position that these two chapters are indeed tied together with each other.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: “The African impala can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance greater than 30 feet. Yet these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3-foot wall. The animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall. Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with faith we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to entrap us.”—John Emmons, “Faith,” eSermons, <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/f/faith.htm> (accessed February 23, 2005).

Thought Questions:

1 The lesson says, The Lord isn’t asking us to base our faith on sketchy, shadowy things; instead, He framed these great truths around world history, as firm a foundation as possible. Obviously, God wants us to believe these truths; that’s why He makes it easy for us to do just that. Telling us His great plan within the framework of history makes it almost impossible to deny its validity. Why did God make this prophecy so clear? Why doesn’t He make it as easy to live a Christian life every day? Or has He?

2 Daniel was given a vision he desperately wanted to understand. But for some reason the meaning of the vision was not revealed to him for a long while. Why do you think God left Daniel hanging before He gave him the explanation? Think of times in your life when you were left hanging. Looking back, do you think those times were a deterrent or a catalyst to your spiritual life? Share with the class times when hindsight and memories of God leading in the past have played a pivotal role in your decision-making process.

Application Questions:

1 Share with the class experiences in your life or the lives of others that illustrate the following quote: “Little faith will bring your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul.”—Unknown, “Faith,” eSermons, <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/f/faith.htm> (accessed February 23, 2005).

2 Have you ever felt impressed that the Lord was calling you to do something that took every ounce of faith you had to accomplish? How can you use Daniel’s experience as an inspiration in your own test of faith? What practical things can your home church do to be more supportive to people going through hardships in their spiritual life?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 345–347; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 553–556.

Daniel 8 ends with the *mareh* of the 2,300 days not explained. Gabriel, the same angel interpreter in Daniel 8, appears in Daniel 9 and tells him to understand the *mareh*. The only *mareh* Daniel didn't understand was the *mareh* of 8:14 and 8:26, which was a time prophecy. Then, immediately after telling him to understand the *mareh*, a time prophecy, what does Gabriel give Daniel? Another time prophecy.

No wonder Adventists see a powerful link between the two chapters and two prophecies. We're not alone either. The following quote comes from an Orthodox Jewish commentary on the book of Daniel. Below is the extract on the phrase "consider the *mareh*" in Daniel 9:23, though this commentary translates it "gain understanding of the vision." What do these Jews do with the 70-week prophecy?

"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*." —*Daniel*, Art Scroll Tanach Series (Brooklyn, New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1988), p. 258.

Thus, these Orthodox Jews do with the 70-week prophecy exactly what we do: that is, they link it to the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 As a class, review the material studied this week. Make sure that everyone understands the links between the two chapters.
- 2 If you read Daniel's prayer, you'll notice that time and again he prays in the first person plural, "we" have done this, "we" have done that. Why do you think Daniel, who is depicted in Scripture as such a faithful, holy character, includes himself as one of those who brought this calamity upon his own people? What message is there for us, as well?