

The Sanctuary Cleansed



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 8:9-14.*

Memory Text: “‘How long will the vision be . . . ?’ And he said to me, ‘For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.’” (*Daniel 8:13, 14, NKJV*).

Many Christians believe that Daniel 8 was fulfilled in the days of the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes (second century B.C.) whom they identify with the little horn. Some see this king also as a type of a future antichrist. As Seventh-day Adventists, we must forcefully reject these interpretations for numerous reasons, one being that, historically, Antiochus does not fit the description of the little-horn power at all. Instead, on the basis of the historicist principle of interpretation, which sees prophecy fulfilled throughout history (the interpretation that the texts in Daniel themselves demand), we believe that Daniel 8:9-14 refers to the great controversy between Christ and Satan, in particular, the spiritual battle between God's plan of salvation and the counterfeit system of the little horn, all of which will end at the second coming of Christ.

The Week at a Glance: Why does the sanctuary need cleansing? Why must the 2,300 days be understood as prophetic time? Why do we believe that the judgment in Daniel 7 is the same as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8? Why must the sanctuary depicted in Daniel 8 be the sanctuary in heaven and not one on earth? What happens when that sanctuary is cleansed?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 4.*

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

The Old Testament—sacrificial service had two parts: the daily service—and, once a year, the yearly service (the Day of Atonement). In the daily, the priests every day presented the required burnt sacrifices. The Israelites could then bring their own offerings, which—with priestly help and under their supervision—would be sacrificed. By the daily service throughout the year, the sins of the people of Israel were transferred to the sanctuary, and it, thereby, became defiled.

Read *Leviticus 16:16, 19*. **What is being cleansed, and what is it being cleansed from?**

How was the Old Testament sanctuary cleansed from the defilement of the sins of the people? *Lev. 16:15-19*.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, a special ceremony cleansed the sanctuary from the peoples' sins that had accumulated through the year. On that day, the high priest first brought a sacrifice for himself and his family. Then he cast lots over two goats—one for the Lord and one for the scapegoat. Next, he killed the Lord's goat and carried its blood into the Most Holy, where he sprinkled it on and before the mercy seat. On his way out, he put blood on the horns of the altar of incense, as well as on the altar of burnt offering. Through this ceremony, he cleansed the sanctuary from the accumulated sins of the people.

What was symbolized by the goat for the Lord? *Heb. 9:11, 12*.

The Old Testament sacrifices were types (symbols) of the sacrifice of Christ. When God looked at the altar in the old covenant, He did not see the death of the animals. Rather, He saw the Lamb of God on the cross at Golgotha, the bloody sacrifice of His Son, and on the basis of this atonement He forgave the sinner. The Day of Atonement ritual is another expression of how God saves His people on the basis of Christ's blood shed for them.

Study the ritual in Leviticus 16. Notice the emphasis on blood. How many times is blood mentioned in the chapter? What does that tell us about how cleansing and forgiveness were accomplished? (See also *Matt. 26:28; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7*.)

For Two Thousand Three Hundred Days

(Dan. 8:14).

Many interpret the 2,300 days as literal days and apply them to Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C., despite the fact that Antiochus cannot be made to fit the 2,300 days, no matter how tortuously they contort the text. How can we show that the 2,300 days mean 2,300 years and that the prophecy reaches a time period long after Antiochus?

Though there are numerous proofs that the 2,300 days here mean “years,” today we will look at only two. (See Friday’s section for more.)

First, Gabriel gives the prophecy an end-time interpretation, which wouldn’t fit if it applied to events that were finished prior even to the birth of Jesus.

Second, when we compare the historical events in Daniel 2, 7, and 8, we find that all three chapters begin with the ancient kingdoms of Babylon or Media-Persia and continue to the end:

Daniel 2

Babylon
Media-Persia
Greece
Pagan Rome
Papal Rome

Stone cut out
without hand
(Second Coming)

Daniel 7

Babylon
Media-Persia
Greece
Pagan Rome
Papal Rome
Judgment in heaven

Saints get the
kingdom
(Second Coming)

Daniel 8

Media-Persia
Greece
Pagan Rome
Papal Rome
Cleansing of the Sanctuary

Destroyed without hand
(Second Coming)

The parallelism between these chapters proves that Daniel 8 cannot be limited to the second century B.C. For instance, the little-horn power is “broken without hand” (Dan. 8:25), just as the stone that was “cut out . . . without hands” (Dan. 2:45); both are end-time events. The 2,300 days, then, could hardly be literal and extend that far into the future. Hence, the need to apply the day/year principle.

Then there’s the parallel between the judgment in Daniel 7 (vs. 26), which leads to the Second Coming and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. Because they are the same event and because that judgment occurs prior to the Second Coming, the cleansing of the sanctuary is also an end-time event, something that it could not be if the 2,300 days were literal.

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

Yesterday's study showed why the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 weren't literal days, but years, which placed the cleansing of the sanctuary in the end times. We proved this by showing that the cleansing of the sanctuary was the same event as the pre-Advent judgment in Daniel 7.

Indeed, in Daniel 7—after the 1,260 years of dominance of the little horn—the next great event is the judgment. In Daniel 8, after the attacks of the little horn on God's people and on Christ and His sanctuary, the next great event is the cleansing of the sanctuary at the end of the 2,300 years. The cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14, therefore, is the same event as the judgment in Daniel 7:9-14 (see the chart in previous day's study).

Daniel 7

Little horn (*vss. 24, 25*)
Judgment (*vs. 26*)

Daniel 8

Little horn (*vss. 9-12*)
Sanctuary cleansed (*vs. 14*)

Take the time to study the above chart, and the chart from yesterday, until you can see this crucial point: that the judgment in heaven in Daniel 7 is the same thing as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8.

Two points need to be looked at here. First, we saw from lesson 8 that the judgment in heaven in Daniel 7, which occurs after the 1,260 years, is an event that comes down to the last few centuries. The judgment, then, begins sometime in this time frame (remember, it's this judgment that leads to the Second Coming). Second, because the cleansing of the sanctuary is the same event, it, too, is something that has happened in more recent times, as opposed to something prior to the life and death of Jesus (which was when Antiochus Epiphanes had defiled the sanctuary in Jerusalem).

Given the time frame of the judgment, which occurs long after the earthly temple was destroyed, what's the only possible sanctuary being referred to here? *Hebrews 8:1, 2.*

The answer, of course, is the sanctuary in heaven; it couldn't be any other one.

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.

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 (*Ps. 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*).

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.

Home at Last!

J. H. Zachary

Alex Schlussler was born into a conservative Jewish family, but he did not practice his Jewish faith. Just before his 30th birthday Alex decided that his life was going in the wrong direction; he needed God. He began attending a Messianic synagogue, where he eventually filled leadership positions. But Alex felt hungry for a deeper knowledge of God.

Some Protestants encouraged him to enroll in a Protestant Bible seminary, where he eventually earned a degree in pastoral ministry. Upon graduation he became an associate pastor of a large Protestant church. There he helped plant several new churches. While he enjoyed his work, he missed his Hebrew roots. Over the months his burden for his Jewish heritage grew.

He and his wife started a Messianic synagogue. It was good to sing the Hebrew songs, preach from the Torah, and use his knowledge of Hebrew. Then during a vacation to Florida, Alex and his wife decided to return to their native state. They resigned their jobs, sold their home, and moved back to Florida.

One day a friend invited Alex and his wife to attend the Adventist synagogue in town. Alex knew nothing about Seventh-day Adventists, but he accepted the invitation. He was thrilled to learn that there were Christians who loved the Sabbath, followed God's Ten Commandments, and practiced the same dietary guidelines that Jews hold dear. Alex and his wife joined the Bible class and eventually were baptized.

"I was thrilled to learn that Adventists follow the Bible teachings about death and the second advent while rejecting the secret rapture," Alex said. "We have found a people who truly follow the Scriptures. I did not go looking for Jesus," Alex smiles. "But when my life was crumbling, Yeshua [Jesus] came looking for me. I was deeply touched when I read the New Testament record of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. This presents a very different picture of the Messiah than any notions I had ever heard. We have found God, and best of all, we have found Jesus. I know that I am home, at last!"



Alex (left) leads the music ministry in the Adventist synagogue he attends in Port Richey, Florida. J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour.