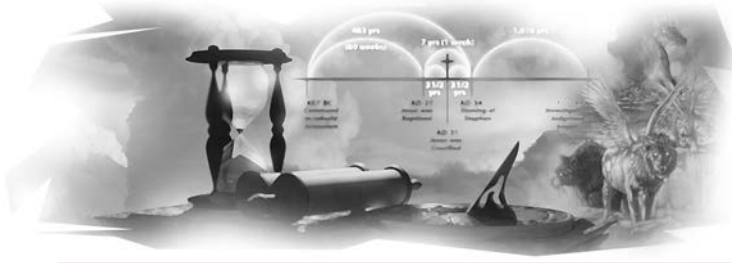


The Eschatological Day of Atonement



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Daniel 8; Rev. 14:6, 7; Num. 14:34; Dan. 9:24–27.*

Memory Text: “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (*Daniel 8:14*).

For a better understanding of the sanctuary message, study this chart, which shows how the great judgment scene of Daniel 7 (studied last week) is the same event as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14.

Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Interpretation
Lion	—	Babylon
Bear	Ram	Media-Persia
Leopard	He-goat	Greece
Fourth beast Little horn	Little horn	Rome—pagan Rome—papal
Pre-Advent Judgment	Cleansing of the sanctuary	Eschatological Day of Atonement
Transfer of kingdom to saints (Second Coming)		Second Coming and beyond

This week we will study Daniel 8. We will discover the real issue of the conflict between the horn power and God, and we will see why the cleansing of the sanctuary, beginning in A.D. 1844, is God’s perfect answer to that challenge.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 7.*

The Little Horn's Attack

Read Daniel 8, focusing especially on verses 9–14 and verses 23–25. What does the little horn power attack?

The horn power interferes with the worship of the divine “Prince of the host” (vs. 11, compare with Josh. 5:13–15). It removes from Him (Dan. 8:11, 12) “the daily” (in Hebrew *tamid*)—a word that refers over and over to the daily sacrificial service in the earthly sanctuary service. Because the agent of *tamid* activities at the sanctuary is a priest, often the high priest, the horn sought to usurp the role of the (high) priest, command its own counterfeit “host,” and take away “the daily.” In this case, given the prophetic context (during the time of papal Rome), it’s obviously Christ’s high priestly ministry that is attacked.

The horn power thus usurps the responsibilities of the heavenly Priest and interrupts the continual worship of God on earth. It acts like another “captain of the host,” waging a religious war against the divine heavenly Prince, His sanctuary, and His people. It becomes an earthly instrument of Satan; it is said to be “mighty, but not by his own power” (Dan. 8:24, NKJV), and its activities reflect a cosmic war that is fought on two levels, the earthly and the heavenly.

The little horn follows right after the ram (Media-Persia) and the he-goat (Greece); therefore, it must be identified historically as Rome, which came after the kingdoms of Media-Persia (Dan. 8:20) and Greece (Dan. 8:21). Though the little horn started out as imperial Rome, the greater emphasis is on papal Rome, the primary focus of the vision.

As said before, the “daily” (*tamid*) refers to Christ’s continual, priestly mediation in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 7:25; 8:1, 2). The “taking away of the daily” by the horn power represents the introduction of such papal innovations as a mediating priesthood, the sacrifice of the mass, the confessional, and the worship of Mary, by which it has successfully taken away knowledge of, and reliance upon, the continual ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

None of us is immune to the danger of trying to play God. How might you, however subtly, be doing the same thing?

“How Long?”

The presumption of the little horn leads to the cry for judgment. As the ram and the he-goat became great and then were broken (*Dan. 8:4, 7, 8*), so the horn power exalts itself (*Dan. 8:9–11*). Thus, the question comes, How long will the vision be?

What specific issues are prompting the question in Daniel 8:13?

Although the question singles out a few activities of the horn, perhaps the most horrible ones, it still asks for the length of the entire vision; that is, it is asking about the events shown in the vision of Daniel 8.

In the Scriptures, the question “How long?” always asks for the present situation to be changed. It is found directed to people by God and by His prophets (*Exod. 10:3, Num. 14:27, and 1 Kings 18:21*). It is also directed to God by His people (*Ps. 94:3, Rev. 6:10*) and by the angel of Yahweh (*Zech. 1:12*). The angelic cry “How long?” (*Dan. 8:13, 12:6*) is a lament over continuous distress, a plea for change, and a call for divine judgment. Such a question expresses the expectation that God will finally triumph.

As in Zechariah 1:13, where Yahweh replied with “gracious words, comforting words” (*NASB*), the answer to the question in Daniel 8:13 comes right away: restoration will be under way beginning with a period of “2,300 evenings and mornings” (*vs. 14, NASB*).

Once we understand the human condition and the prophetic time in which we live, we cannot remain silent. The cry “How long?” needs to be put forth. As we look around at our world, how can we not plead for the Lord to come and usher in a new world “in which righteousness dwells” (*2 Pet. 3:13, NKJV*)? Although God is now at work, as promised in Daniel 8:14, we want Him to end the reign of evil here and return in the glory that He has promised time and again.

In which situations have you asked God the question “How long?” How do you maintain the assurance that God is indeed in control, however dismal your immediate prospects might seem and no matter “how long” it is taking to resolve the things you want changed?

Restoration of the Holy

Read Daniel 8:14. What happens at the end of the 2,300 “evenings and mornings”?

The phrase “evenings and mornings” reflects language from the Creation account that signifies a day (*Gen. 1:5, 8, et cetera*). It implies that God, using His own creative force, will counter the destructive activities of the horn and its host. The Creator causes a change of situation, which is actually called for by the question in Daniel 8:13.

The answer in Daniel 8:14 can be read as “Until 2,300 evenings-mornings, then will the holy [sanctuary] be restored [cleansed].” A study of the terms that are parallel to “restore” (from the Hebrew word *zdq*) shows that it has three major meanings: in a relational context, it denotes restoration (*Isa. 10:22*); in the context of the sanctuary, it denotes cleansing or purification (*Job 4:17, 25:4*); and in a legal context, it denotes vindication (*Job 34:5*). The same verb is used for God’s intervention in judgment when the righteous are vindicated, or declared to be righteous (*1 Kings 8:32, Isa. 50:8*). The word *holy*, used in Daniel 8:14 (often translated as “sanctuary”), is also used in association with holy people (*Dan. 12:7*). In fact, Daniel 8:24 makes it clear that the little horn power, like the little horn power in Daniel 7, attacks God’s “holy” people.

Thus, the restoration of the “holy” (or “sanctuary”) in Daniel 8:14 encompasses the solution to all the problems mentioned previously in the question. Not only will judgment be rendered against the little horn power, but the sanctuary will be cleansed, and God’s people and God’s sanctuary will be given their rightful state. This finds a parallel in what happened on the Levitical Day of Atonement (*Lev. 16:20, 30*).

The work of restoration in Daniel 8 equals the divine judgment in Daniel 7, where judgment was given in favor of the saints and against the evil little horn power.

The world needs to know that justice and judgment, as predicted in Daniel 8:14, will come and that now is the time to accept the salvation offered us in Jesus.

Read Revelation 14:6, 7. How do these verses tie in directly with the judgment of Daniel 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8?

Day of Atonement in Daniel 8

The target of the horn's assault is God's heavenly sanctuary and His people. What does the future hold for them? That is what the question in Daniel 8:13 asks. However, only the Day of Atonement can bring the sanctuary and the people of God back to their rightful state and, thus, justify God in His dealings. So, the answer in Daniel 8:14 must be a Day of Atonement activity. In fact, the Day of Atonement is the only ritual day that shows the same combination of prominent themes as shown in the climax of the vision of Daniel 8: sanctuary imagery, purification of sanctuary and people, judgment, and creation.

There are also several terms in Daniel 8 that allude to the Day of Atonement. The horn acts in "rebellion" (*Dan. 8:12, 13, NIV*), a term that occurs specifically in Leviticus 16:16, 21 (*NIV*). It describes a defiant sin, and only on the Day of Atonement can the sanctuary be cleansed from it. The word *holy* (*qodesh*) explicitly links Daniel 8:14 with Leviticus 16, where it occurs to designate the Most Holy Place (*Lev. 16:2, 3, 16, 17, 20, 23, 27, 33*). That the "holy" is restored to its rightful place is reminiscent of the Day of Atonement, when the "holy" is purified from "rebellion" (*Lev. 16:16, NIV*). The specific use of the animal imagery of the ram and he-goat also alludes to the Day of Atonement (*Lev. 16:5*), as does the further designation of the goat as the "shaggy" one (*Dan. 8:21, NASB*), a description used for the two goats at the Day of Atonement.

The horn's war in the realm of religion is countered and cut short by divine intervention carried out in the context of an eschatological Day of Atonement. At last, terror finds its end, and God's people, the true worship, and the sanctuary are restored to their rightful position and, in the final analysis, God Himself is vindicated. As God demonstrated on the Day of Atonement that He is just in His dealings and judgments by forgiving the loyal and judging the disloyal and rebellious, so the eschatological Day of Atonement will verify that God is just when He saves and when He punishes.

Whatever else we can learn from Daniel 8:14, it should tell us that, even after all these long centuries, the Lord has not forgotten His promises to us and that He will punish evil and reward His saints. How can you learn to hold on to those promises, especially during times of trial? After all, without these promises, what hope do you have?

Daniel 8 and 9

The term for “vision” (in Hebrew, *chazon*) in the question in Daniel 8:13 refers to the entire vision in Daniel 8:3–11 (see *Dan. 8:1, 2, 13, 15*) and encompasses the time of Media-Persia (ram), Greece (he-goat), and papal Rome (little horn). When the length of the vision is given as “2,300 evenings and mornings,” we should therefore understand it as covering the span from Media-Persia to the end time. The text repeatedly emphasizes that the vision pertains to the “time of the end” (*Dan. 8:17, 19*) and “many days in the future” (*Dan. 8:26, NASB*). Because of its length, a literal 2,300 days is nowhere near long enough to cover the time span of the vision. Therefore, we need to interpret it by the day-year principle as 2,300 years, following the example of Ezekiel 4:5, 6 and Numbers 14:34.

The question remains: When do the 2,300 years begin?

Bible scholars, both Jewish and Christian, have seen a strong link between Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24–27, long viewed as a powerful prophecy pointing to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

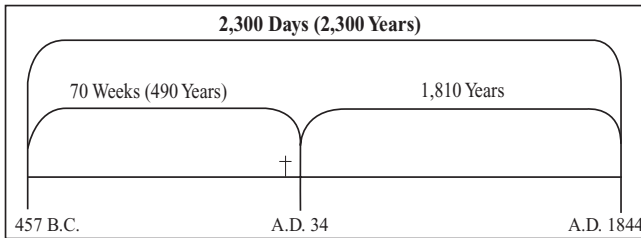
Read Daniel 9:24–27. What is happening in these verses? How is this linked to Daniel 8:14?

While the word *vision* (*chazon*) refers to the entire prophecy of Daniel 8, another word, *mareh*, translated as “vision,” points specifically to the “vision [*mareh*] of the evenings and mornings” (*Dan. 8:26, NASB*). It is this *mareh*, that of the 2,300 days, that Daniel did not understand (*Dan. 8:27*). The angel had explained everything else.

Several years later, the same angel, Gabriel, appeared to Daniel to give him a message so that he would “understand the vision [*mareh*]” of the 2,300 days (*Dan. 9:23, NKJV*). The 70-week prophecy in those verses helps us to understand the prophetic time element of Daniel 8:14. It is the verb *decreed* at the beginning of Daniel 9:24, which is best translated as “apportioned” or “cut off,” that specifically suggests that the 70 weeks compose a part of the longer period of 2,300 days. Thus, the 70-week prophecy is “cut off” from the larger 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14. This gives us the starting point for the prophetic time period depicted in Daniel 8:14. (See tomorrow’s study for more details.)

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “What Is the Sanctuary?” pp. 409–422; “The Holy of Holies,” pp. 423–432, in *The Great Controversy*.

In Daniel 9:24–27, the beginning of the 70 weeks is marked by “the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem” (*Dan. 9:25, NASB*). The book of Ezra reports on three decrees that concern Jerusalem and the temple, but the third, reported in Ezra 7:12–26, is the most effective one. The Persian King Artaxerxes I issued the decree in 457 B.C. It involves both the reconstruction of the temple and the rebuilding of Jerusalem as a political and administrative center (*Ezra 7:25, 26*). In the Bible, only this decree is followed by thanksgiving that praises God for influencing the king (*Ezra 7:27, 28*). Furthermore, only with 457 B.C. as a starting point do the 70 weeks (that is, 490 years) reach the time of Christ, the “Messiah, the Prince” of Daniel 9:25–27. Thus, the prophecy of the 70 weeks provides the precise event to date for the beginning of the 2,300 evenings and mornings. They start in 457 B.C. and end after 2,300 years in A.D. 1844.



Discussion Questions:

- ❶ If possible, get a more detailed explanation of the link between Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24–27 and study the close connection between them. What should it tell us about the importance of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 that it is so closely linked to such a major prophecy as Daniel 9:24–27?
- ❷ Ellen G. White wrote: “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. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 488. What do you think she meant by this? Why are these things so important for us to understand?
- ❸ When talking about the little horn, the prophecies of Daniel 7 and 8 are dealing solely with Rome, and nothing else—not communism (as some have said in the past) or Islam (as some now say). How, though, do we remain faithful to our beliefs without causing undue hurt to others? Why must we show that our concern is with a system, not with the people caught up in it?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Daniel 8:14*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Understand that the cleansing of the sanctuary is the same as the pre-Advent judgment and that Daniel 7–9 describes complementary prophetic events.

Feel: Foster the sense of assurance of salvation, because Jesus presently reveals and affirms in heaven that His grace is sufficient for His people.

Do: As Jesus is for and never against His followers, so we should always encourage and help our brothers and sisters.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: God Restores

A Why is it crucial to understand the issues behind the usurpation of the “daily ministry” of Jesus Christ by the little horn?

B According to Daniel 8:14, the sanctuary will be *nitzdaq*, a Hebrew word meaning “cleansing,” “justifying,” “restoring,” and “vindicating.” Explain how these nuances respond to the distorting activities of the little horn.

II. Feel: God of His People

A How does the sense of belonging to God’s end-time people give you a feeling of urgency for fulfilling God’s mission?

B How does the prophetic time limit of the activities of the little horn make you feel, and why?

III. Do: God Assures

A How can you take part in the restoration of truth that has been put down by the little horn’s activities?

B What is the task of the remnant in the time of the end?

► **Summary:** To take part in God’s last movement means to have an urgent sense of mission in order to fulfill His goal of saving all people.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate**

Spotlight on Scripture: *Revelation 15:3, 4:* “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. . . . All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed” (*NIV*).

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: In order to understand the meaning of God’s pre-Advent judgment, it must be seen from a broader perspective and not in isolation. In our explanations of the pre-Advent judgment, our High Priest Jesus, and His activities, must be the most attractive reality and His cross its foundation. Only in this way will the pre-Advent judgment be a meaningful experience for believers by bringing them closer to God, giving them the assurance of safety by being in His hands; consequently, they will rejoice over God’s work in their behalf.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson should help members of your class to see the beautiful panorama of God’s judgment activity. The pre-Advent judgment should be explained from the perspective of the Cross. The year 1844 cannot be dissected from A.D. 31 but must be its starting point.

Opening Discussion: God’s judgment on the cross was, and is, the foundation of all other divine judgments. Ellen G. White powerfully encourages that all our teachings must be explained from the viewpoint of the Cross: “The Sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 315. As during the Day of Atonement in ancient Israel, the most important person was the high priest and what he was doing (*see Leviticus 16*). Consequently, Christ and His cross must be the central point of the pre-Advent judgment. How can the pre-Advent judgment be explained from the standpoint of the Cross?

► **STEP 2—Explore**

Just for Teachers: One of the major themes of the pre-Advent

judgment is Christ's affirmation of our affirmative decisions made for Him. Full evidence is given in front of the heavenly beings in order to secure our place in heaven for all eternity. For this reason, we call the investigative judgment an affirmative judgment, because Christ reveals and affirms to heaven that we belong to Him and that His grace is sufficient. As a result, all heaven will applaud Jesus' work for us, because they will see that God's transforming grace has prepared His followers to become part of the heavenly family.

Bible Commentary

I. Pattern of God's Judgments *(Review Genesis 18:25 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 with your class.)*

The scriptural teaching about judgment lies at the center of God's revelation. It is the crux of the biblical message and gives a profound paradigm for our thinking. Next to the fundamental proclamation that God is the Creator (*Genesis 1–2*), in the Garden of Eden the Lord is presented as the Judge, and the first reference to a trial judgment is given (*Gen 3:8–24*), wherein God's grace and justice are intermingled. The biblical Flood narrative is an account about judgment (*Genesis 6–9*). Already Abraham calls God "the Judge of all the earth" (*Gen. 18:25*). And we can continue to demonstrate judgment after judgment in the Bible. Judgment is an integral part of God's nature; it is His divine prerogative, His very characteristic. To understand God means to know and comprehend His comprehensive judgments. Through the study of His judgments, we can know who He is and His character.

Discussion Question: Why did Jesus say in John 14:1–3 that He would go to heaven to prepare a place for us? It must mean something more than only preparing mansions because as our Creator, He could do them in "a few days." Why would it take so long? What, then, is involved in Jesus' statement?

II. An Overview of the Seven Phases of God's Universal Judgment *(Review Revelation 15:3, 4 with your class.)*

The gospel according to divine judgment is perfect as seen from the perspective of a genuine believer in Jesus:

1. Pedagogical or typological judgment in pre-Cross time. God gives us educational lessons, "mini-judgments," from the Old Testament past. From this historical background, we may know that He is truly the God of grace, love, justice, truth, order, and guarantor of freedom. He loves people but hates sin. We are responsible for our actions, and there are consequences to what we do.

2. Central and cosmic judgment on the cross. Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sins, died for us, and thus experienced the judgment of condemnation in order that we may live and never be condemned to the second death. Also, Satan and evil were defeated.

3. Decisive judgment during our lifetime. If we surrender to Jesus, He applies what He accomplished at the Cross to our present experience. He justifies and changes us by His amazing grace, Word, and Spirit. He gives eternal life, peace, joy, and full assurance of salvation, and He sets us with Him in heaven on His throne.

4. Affirmative judgment (called also investigative judgment) before the second coming of Jesus, from 1844 on. Christ, as our True Witness and Intercessor, secures legally and transparently our place in heaven by revealing and affirming in front of the universe that we have truly accepted His righteousness (justification is the basis of salvation) and have cultivated a relationship with Him. Consequently, we are fitted (sanctification is the fruit of salvation) by His transforming grace, Word, and Spirit and may safely be admitted into the heavenly family and enjoy eternal life.

5. Realization judgment at the second coming of Christ. At Christ's second coming, He personally comes to the earth in order to give His faithful followers tangible and physical eternal life.

6. Attestation judgment during the millennium. Jesus Christ takes time to explain to the saved His thinking and decisions in order to help them to understand His judgments, cope with the eternal loss of their loved ones (if applicable), and gain deeper insights into the great controversy, His struggles with Satan and evil. He provides time for healing.

7. The executive judgment or last judgment at the end of the millennium. Finally, God Himself forever annihilates all evil—Satan, evil angels, the wicked, and sin—so that only love, truth, justice, peace, and harmony will reign. As Creator, He will re-create for His people the new earth and new heaven. Thus, true and meaningful life can be fully secured and enjoyed eternally.

Discussion Question: Ellen G. White outstandingly summarizes the gospel of salvation in the following way: “If you give yourself to Him [Christ], and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62. Out of the seven phases of God’s judgment described above, which phase is impacted the most by our decision to follow Christ? What consequences does this phase have on other phases of divine judgment?

► **STEP 3—Apply**

Just for Teachers: Your joy, enthusiasm, and conviction have great

influence. Contemplate how to make the judgment message relevant to young people.

Application Questions:

- 1 Just imagine that you are physically present at the investigative/affirmative judgment in the heavenly court. Where would you like to be in that court? Express your feelings.
- 2 What would you do if you knew that the book with your life in it had just been opened and your case was being discussed?

Activity: How would you paint the scene of the heavenly judgment? Concentrate especially on the repentant sinner’s position in relationship to Jesus. Would you draw a distance between them? If yes, why? If not, how would you express their relationship? What about human faces? Would you paint them to look serious, smiling, or sad? Why?

► STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Create with your class a list of questions that you think Jesus or the angels will ask about our individual lives. Justify your questions. What kind of questions would you like to be asked in the heavenly court about the activities of the little horn? Make another list.

Activity: With the class, develop reasons that demonstrate that the visions of Daniel 8 and 9 belong together and that the 70-week prophecy forms an actual part of the 2,300-evenings-and-mornings prophecy. Take into consideration the following: (A) the angel Gabriel gave both visions (8:16, 9:21); (B) the same vocabulary of “understanding” and “vision” (8:27b, 9:23) is at the end of the vision of chapter 8 and in the beginning of the vision described in chapter 9; (C) the specific Hebrew term *nechtak* (from the root *chatak*) given at the beginning of the 70-week prophecy means “cut off” and thus shows that the period of the 70-week prophecy should be taken from the previous prophetic unit of 2,300-evenings-mornings prophecy (9:24a); (D) a prophetic time element is usually given at the end of a vision, but in chapter 9, it is given at the beginning of the vision, hinting that it is connected with the previous vision (8:14, 9:24); (E) Daniel usually has a dream or vision and then follows it with an interpretation (see chapters 2, 7, 8, and 10–12); however, in chapter 9 there is no vision but only an interpretation, thus pointing back to the explanation of the previous vision of chapter 8. Give your class a special assignment to find different reasons for the validity of the year-day principle in interpreting apocalyptic prophecy. Share the results next week.