

# COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

A North American Church Ministries Publication

January-March 1987

## Visions of the Kingdom



# GOOD REASONS TO JOIN UNION COLLEGE



**1** MARK KERN is a theology student from Albion, Iowa. Mark plans to enter the ministry after he completes college. "Union College gives young Christians an opportunity to come together and share each other's beliefs in Christ."

**2** TAMMY KAHLER, a nursing student from Goodrich, North Dakota, plans to work in a hospital. Tammy especially enjoys psychiatric nursing. "I enjoy attending Union College because the teachers are willing to help each student on a one to one basis. I also enjoy meeting fellow students and participating in the wide variety of activities on campus."

**3** DAVID WOODS, from Battle Lake, Minnesota, is studying horticulture. He wants to work with plant breeding. "Union College is a great place to be! Here at Union every student is considered important and is not regarded as just another face on campus."

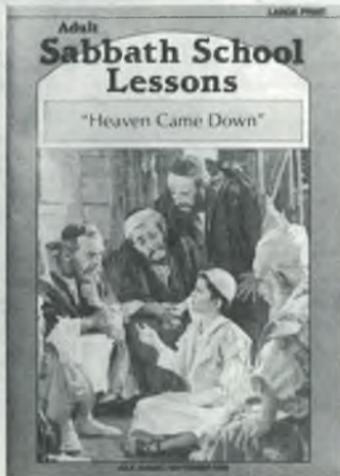
**4** NAMI FUJITA, from Denver, Colorado, is a medical records major. Nami plans to finish the last two years of her degree at Loma Linda University. "The teachers are willing to help a student out personally, even though they are busy. The atmosphere is great!"

**5** MICHAEL EVANS is a computer science major from Lincoln, Nebraska. Michael plans to work as a computer programmer. "Union College is a college for those who are serious about their career. I feel that the computer science program is organized and up to date."

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## THIS QUARTER'S ARTIST

Louis Johnson, a resident of Grand Terrace, California, is currently pursuing a free-lance career in illustration and design. He has studied figure, design, graphics and illustration techniques at Santa Monica City College, Art Center Design Pasadena, Otis Parson School of Design Los Angeles, and Loma Linda University.

Louis' work can be found throughout Loma Linda University Medical Center, at the Tri-County Surgical Society, and in the *Collegiate Quarterly* (Oct-Dec, 1984, and April-June, 1985). His early achievements in art include designing the stone relief sculpture at the entrance of Pacific Palisades High School while attending school there, being elected senior class artist, and being awarded the Outstanding Senior Artist upon graduating.

Louis most enjoys biblical illustrating, and would like to expand this interest into motion pictures. He is currently researching techniques in special effects and stage design to further his interest in portraying the Bible.

## Introduction to the Quarter

# A "PEOPLE'S" QUARTERLY

In this space usually devoted to introducing the topic for the quarter, I would like instead to comment on the *Collegiate Quarterly* (CQ) in general as it enters a new phase of its history.

The apostle Paul's metaphor of the church as the body of Christ has taken on new significance for me during my experience as editorial director of the CQ. The role of full-time paid staff in producing the quarterly has been minimal. Rather, each year hundreds of members of the Adventist body carved time out of their busy schedules to write the articles which shape and enliven the CQ. Theologians, pastors, and biblical scholars have made major contributions, but so have nurses, biologists, maintenance workers, financial consultants, dentists, attorneys, etc., and, of course, students of every type. One might call the CQ a "people's quarterly," a product of cooperative, largely volunteer effort on the part of various portions of the church body.

This issue marks a transition in the life of the CQ. The quarterly began in the late 1970s as the brainchild of Eugene Shirley, then a student at Union College. The idea caught on quickly. Student religious leaders at other colleges, campus chaplains, and church and college administrators joined efforts to make the CQ a means for bringing new vitality to Bible study on campuses and in churches.

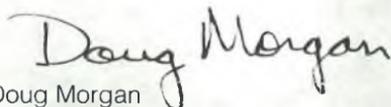
The General Conference voted approval of the CQ on an experimental basis in 1979. Then, early in 1982, it was brought into the church structure in a more formal way. A board, chaired by the North American Division president, was formed to establish and administer policy. Union College continued to be responsible for financing and editing the quarterly as a service to the division.

As an outgrowth of Spring Council and General Conference session decisions in 1985, the newly-formed General Conference Church Ministries Department assumed responsibility for the CQ and purchased it from Union College in March 1986. The present issue is the final one edited at Union College; next quarter's will be the first reflecting the CQ's new status as a GC Church Ministries publication.

The new editor, Graham Bingham, and those working with him, desire to continue the broad-based participation on the part of college students, teachers, and local church members which has given the CQ its distinctive character. So, I've left the CQ to resume graduate study, trusting that its strengths will be preserved and that progress will be made toward resolving its weaknesses.

Diverse people, working together under one Spirit, toward the goal of a more intelligent, more committed faith—that has been the guiding vision of the CQ. And I cherish more than I can express the privilege of being involved with the hundreds who have devoted time and energy to the realization of this vision in the quarterly's pages. I'm particularly grateful to those fellow editors and staff members, campus chaplains, and advisors, whom I can't begin to name here, for the creativity, wisdom, camaraderie, and love with which you have filled by life during the past four and a half years. You have continually renewed my joy at being a part of the Adventist body, as well as my hope that this body can be a fellowship which is both open and purposeful, tolerant and committed.

May the *Collegiate Quarterly* ever be an instrument of God's Spirit, a part of the process through which "the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, 13, NIV).



Doug Morgan  
Editorial Director

Lesson 1, December 28—January 3

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# SPOKESMAN FOR GOD

"Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7, NIV).



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# When Culture Confronts Faith

Chaim Potok, the best-selling Jewish author, identifies the central problem running through each of his books as a "core-to-core culture confrontation." Such a confrontation occurs when an individual brought up in the very heart of a particular religious understanding of the world encounters ideas from the very heart of the secular culture of today's Western society. In *The Chosen*, for example, Danny Saunders, a brilliant boy raised in the very orthodox Hasidic Jewish tradition, encounters an element in the very heart of the secular understanding of the world—the psychology of Sigmund Freud.

Such an encounter constitutes a core-to-core culture confrontation because, as Potok observes, "Freud is utterly adversary to almost all the ways of structuring the human experience found in Western religions. No Western religion can countenance Freud's view of man. And yet there are some magnificent things in Freud, profound insights into the nature of man. The question that confronts an individual like Danny Saunders is, How do you come to terms with the good things in Freud and what do you do with the things that cause tremendous stress?"<sup>1</sup>

Culture confrontation is not a new theme for Jewish writers. Centuries before Chaim Potok articulated the problem in the setting of modern American Judaism, a story was written about another Daniel,

a young Jewish scholar who, with his friends, encountered a strange Babylonian world. Taken captive from the heart of Judaism—the Jerusalem nobility—Daniel confronted the heart of the pagan culture in Babylon—its lifestyle, its learning, its government.

Daniel freely engaged the Babylonian culture, despite its corruption, cruelty and error. He didn't try to run away. And that's one reason why his story and visions are so relevant to us. As children of the king, exiled in a strange land, we too, if our eyes are open, face our core-to-core culture confrontations. If we wish to make a difference in our society, we can't shy away from these confrontations. How do we sort them out in a way that both keeps our faith strong and enables us to make an impact for God's kingdom in the secular culture around us? The book of Daniel helps us find the way. And that alone makes its study worthwhile, not to mention the prophetic perspective it gives us on our world and its future.

This week, our purpose is to lay groundwork for a chapter-by-chapter study of Daniel, which begins next week. We will first look at some general principles of biblical prophecy (Logos), then at some special features of the book of Daniel and how to interpret it (Testimony, Evidence, How To), and finally suggest some further reasons why Daniel is especially relevant for our day (Opinion).

D. F. M.

## INTRODUCTION

1. "When Culture Confronts Faith," *College People*, October 1983, p. 9.

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# Principles of Prophecy

**LOGOS**    **Theme:** God communicates to His people through prophets such as Daniel, who proclaim His will for the present and His intention for the future.

## 1. A Communicating God

Two fundamental assumptions about God underlie all of Scripture: 1) He exists; and 2) He communicates. The Almighty Sovereign of the universe does not sequester Himself in remote transcendence, He *speaks* to His human creatures, which means He involves Himself with us in a personal way.

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2, NIV). We see here that God's primary means of speaking to us is through prophets, and the supreme prophet is His Son. A prophet is one who *speaks for God*—a human being who receives a message from God and conveys that message to others (compare Ex. 7:1 with Jer. 1:9).

Prophets are also depicted as God's friends and confidants. They sit in the heavenly council, where they gain the insight into the divine will and plan which qualifies them to function as prophets (see 1 Kings 22:19-23; Isa. 6:8; Jer. 23:22). God's inclusion of the prophets in His council shows that He is open and consistent in His dealings with us, not secretive or capricious. "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7, NIV).

From a biblical perspective, therefore, it is inaccurate to equate prophecy with prediction, as we tend to do in modern usage. Prediction was only a relatively small portion of the prophet's message and such prediction usually concerned the near future. The prophet's main concern was ethical, not predictive—to call the people of God to justice and fidelity. Predictions of future events served as warnings and examples of the consequences of evil and thus reinforced the call to ethical rightness.

*Look up Jer. 18:7, 8; Dan. 4:27; and Eze. 33:11. What do these passages tell you about prophecy, and about God?*

## 2. Getting the Message Through

Dreams and visions were prime methods for God's communication to the biblical prophets (see Isa. 6:1-8; Eze. 1). In Daniel, all of the revelations from God come in this way. However, prophecy is not necessarily marked by spectacular visionary experiences. The crucial point is that in some way, perhaps only through a still, small voice, the prophets were gripped by a burning, inner conviction that the "word of the Lord" had come to them, and that their duty was to proclaim that word (see Jer. 20:9).

*What is the role of prophecy in the modern church? What are the*

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*characteristics of modern prophets? Check Joel 2:28, 29; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1-4; and Rev. 19:10 for some ideas.*

### 3. True or False?

Sometimes people who claim to be speaking for God are frauds. In 1 Kings 22 for example, the ratio of false prophets to true is 400 to 1! Christians thus need constantly to exercise discernment between true and false prophetic claims. The most crucial test is not predictive accuracy but whether or not the prophet promotes fidelity to the covenant between God and His people (see Deut. 13:1-5).

*What further tests of a prophet are found in the following verses: Deut. 18:21, 22; Isa. 8:20; Matt. 7:15-20; 1 John 4:1-3?*

### 4. Some Special Features

To understand biblical prophecy, it is essential to keep in mind that:

a) *Predictive prophecy is sometimes conditional upon human response* (Jer. 18:1-10; Jonah 3:10).

b) *Some prophecies have more than one fulfillment.* Peter declared that Joel 2:28-32 was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). But obviously, this prophecy has yet to meet its complete fulfillment.

c) *The prophetic perspective is frequently "telescoped."* That is, when the prophet looked into the future, he tended to see the events of the near future against the background of the great, eschatological Day of the Lord (see Joel 2; Isa. 13). Prophecy of God's final, cosmic judgment is merged with prophecy about His judgments on the nations and rulers existing during the prophet's own time. But since the Day of the Lord did not occur in the time of these prophets, it is a mistake to look for a future fulfillment of those aspects of the prophecies which were presented in conjunction with the Day of the Lord, but which are entirely bound to the culture and political situation of the ancient world.

It should be noted that according to the General Conference's Daniel and Revelation study committee, the three points above apply only to classical prophecy (such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and most "minor" prophets) and not to apocalyptic prophecy as found in Daniel.

d) *For the Christian, all prophecy centers in Christ and functions to deepen our new covenant relationship with Him* (Luke 24:25-27, 44; 1 Cor. 10:3; 2 Cor. 1:20).

*Why do you think the Bible almost always presents the "Day of the Lord" as an event of the near future?*

D. F. M.

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# A High Destiny

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
1 Samuel 2:30

"As Daniel clung to God with unwavering trust, the spirit of prophetic power came upon him. While receiving instruction from man in the duties of court life, he was being taught by God to read the mysteries of the future and to record for coming generations, through figures and symbols, events covering the history of this world till the close of time. . . .

"As God called Daniel to witness for Him in Babylon, so He calls us to be His witnesses in the world today. In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life, He desires us to reveal to men the principles of His kingdom. Many are waiting for some great work to be brought to them, while daily they lose opportunities for revealing faithfulness to God. Daily they fail of discharging with wholeheartedness the little duties of life. While they wait for some large work in which they may exercise supposedly great talents, and thus satisfy their ambitious longings, their days pass away.

"In the life of the true Christian there are no nonessentials; in the sight of Omnipotence every duty is important. The Lord measures with exactness every possibility for service. The unused capabilities are just as much brought into account as those that are used. We shall be judged by what we ought to have done, but did not accomplish because we did not use our powers to glorify God. . . .

"In them a heathen nation beheld an illustration of the goodness and beneficence of God."

"The Hebrew worthies were men of like passions with ourselves; yet, notwithstanding the seductive influences of the court of Babylon, they stood firm, because they depended upon a strength that is infinite. In them a heathen nation beheld an illustration of the goodness and beneficence of God, and of the love of Christ. And in their experience we have an instance of the triumph of principle over temptation, of purity over depravity, of devotion and loyalty over atheism and idolatry.

"The spirit that possessed Daniel, the youth of today may have; they may draw from the same source of strength, possess the same power of self-control, and reveal the same grace in their lives, even under circumstances as unfavorable. Though surrounded by temptations to self-indulgence, especially in our large cities, where every form of sensual gratification is made easy and inviting, yet by divine grace their purpose to honor God may remain firm. Through strong resolution and vigilant watchfulness they may withstand every temptation that assails the soul. But only by him who determines to do right because it is right will the victory be gained.

"What a lifework was that of these noble Hebrews! As they bade farewell to their childhood home, little did they dream that a high destiny was to be theirs. Faithful and steadfast, they yielded to the divine guiding, so that through them God could fulfill His purpose."<sup>1</sup>

## REACT

Is there a sense in which we should share in the "spirit of prophetic power" that came upon Daniel?

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1. Excerpted from *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 485-490.

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# Approaching Daniel's Mysteries

The book of Daniel, with its spectacular but bewildering visions, presents a number of complexities to the modern reader. And there is no magic formula to make its mysteries immediately plain. Some order and insight can be brought to the investigation of those mysteries, however, by awareness of the book's key features (discussed below) and by adopting an interpretive approach (discussed in tomorrow's section).

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Daniel 2:26-30

### Theme

Daniel is divided into two major sections: the stories of chapters 1-6, and the four visions of chapters 7-12. The visions (with the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2) exhibit a "progressive parallelism." That is, they cover the same general outline of events and point to the same climax, but each vision elaborates the basic theme in a distinctive way and has its own unique features to add to the overall picture.

The common theme which runs through the entire book of Daniel, both stories and visions, centers on four key words: 1) the *threat* posed by heathen kings in the stories and fierce beasts in the visions; 2) the *conflict* between God's faithful people and repressive earthly powers and between cosmic forces of good and evil; 3) the *victory* of God's kingdom over the beast powers and arrogant rulers; 4) the *salvation* of those who remain faithful through the conflict.<sup>1</sup>

If this thematic matrix seems a little abstract right now, refer to it when you get into the actual content of Daniel. Grasping the broad themes which run throughout all of Daniel can help you avoid becoming disoriented by details that aren't immediately clear.

### Author and Date

The hero of the book of Daniel is a young Jewish nobleman taken captive to Babylon by the army of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. Daniel speedily rises to prominence as a minister in the government of the empire, and remains active virtually throughout the entire seventy years of the Babylonian exile, even after the Babylonians are conquered by the Medes and the Persians.

It has traditionally been assumed that this Daniel wrote the book bearing his name in the sixth century B.C. However, since the nineteenth century, most scholars employing the techniques of higher criticism have argued that the book of Daniel was either written in the second century B.C., around the time of the Maccabean revolt, or reached its final form then. Adventist commentators, along with other conservative evangelicals, maintain that the evidence is in favor of the traditional dating. We don't have enough space to review the rationales for the various viewpoints, but each of the commentaries mentioned in the How To section contains an illuminating discussion of this problem.

"Apocalyptic concerns itself with the big picture."

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## Literary Form

The book of Daniel is generally classified as "apocalyptic" literature. Revelation in the New Testament, and a myriad of noncanonical Jewish works from the intertestamental period, such as the Book of Jubilees, the Testament of Levi, and the Sibylline Oracles, are also placed in this category.

A precise definition of apocalyptic is a matter of scholarly debate, but it does have some generally agreed upon characteristics which distinguish it from other forms of prophetic literature.

1. *Visions and dreams.* Apocalyptic prophecy is always given in the form of visions and dreams, rather than simply through the "word of the Lord" as is common in ordinary prophecy.

2. *Bizarre symbolism.* Though Scripture is replete with symbol and metaphor, the symbols of apocalyptic are much more exotic and dramatic than those found elsewhere. Apocalyptic symbols are drawn from the realm of inspired imagination rather than the simple objects of everyday life. In Daniel, for example, the powers of history are represented as unnaturally rapacious, multi-headed beasts with horns that speak. Since the meanings of such symbols are often not immediately apparent, angels may be employed to provide the interpretation.

3. *Cosmic scope.* Apocalyptic concerns itself with the big picture—the destiny of the world's nations, people and all history itself. The flow of history is divided into epochs, which are often delimited by mysterious numbers. Furthermore, "earthly history . . . is correlated to a supernatural and invisible history,"<sup>2</sup> knowledge of which is accessible only through apocalyptic channels. The events of this invisible history impinge on and ultimately determine the outcome of earthly history.

4. *Eschatological expectancy.* Apocalyptic expresses an urgent expectation for the "last things" of this present evil age to occur in the very near future. Only a short time of intense suffering and persecution separates the reader from "the end of time." The end comes with a cosmic catastrophe—the fiery destruction of the final "beast." Beyond the catastrophe, however, a new salvation arises—the earth is transformed into a paradise to be enjoyed by those who have remained faithful to God. All earthly kingdoms are replaced by the kingdom of God, which reigns forever. This final transformation is an act that issues from the throne of God, and is brought about through the work of a divine agent such as the "son of man" in Daniel 7.<sup>3</sup>

With its symbols and dramatic effects, apocalyptic leads us into the realm of the eternal in a way that literal language is incapable of.

D. F. M.

"Beyond the catastrophe, a new salvation arises."

1. See Paul D. Hanson, "Old Testament Apocalyptic Reexamined," in *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses*, Paul D. Hanson, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 54.

2. Klaus Koch, "What is Apocalyptic? An Attempt at a Preliminary Definition," in *Ibid.*, p. 26.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-28.

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# The Adventure of Interpretation

Mountains of ink have been spilled regarding the interpretation of Daniel, yet the disagreements between its interpreters remain as sharp today as they have ever been. Some would say that Daniel's prophecies are like the Rorschach inkblots used in psychiatric tests—the endlessly varied and contradictory interpretations tell us more about the interpreters than the prophecies themselves! The element of truth in that observation should not discourage us from searching for meaning in the book of Daniel. For though it contains ambiguities which may never be resolved, the very fact that people have continued trying to interpret it for over 2,000 years suggests that it has timeless value.

Interpreting Daniel may well be thought of as an adventure. It contains enough risk and challenge to avoid ever being dull, and enough promise of reward to be worth the effort. Before starting the study of Daniel, it is worthwhile to reflect on your assumptions and the methods you will employ. Here are some suggestions for success on the interpretive adventure:

1. **Be open-minded.** Set aside your preconceived ideas and let Daniel speak to you on its own terms. *Listen* to what Daniel is saying rather than trying to fit the prophecies into an agenda you've already established. Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose ongoing function is to guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

As people committed to truth, we have nothing to fear and everything to gain from a free, open inquiry into the meaning of Daniel. Indeed we can't afford *not* to take a fresh look, unless we believe the riches of Daniel have already been exhausted.

2. **Employ sound principles of exegesis.** As with any other piece of literature, we can grasp Daniel's message only if we:

a) understand the meaning of the words he uses and the grammar he uses to put the words together, taking into account the features of the author's original language;

b) take into account the literary context and any special literary devices;

c) take into account the historical context—the circumstances in which the text was written.

Such a process is called *exegesis*—getting meaning out of the text. You cannot properly interpret, evaluate or apply the text until you have properly exegeted it.

3. **Use the right tools.** Obviously step number two requires vastly more expertise than you or I could ever hope to have. But the right tools can give us access to that expertise. A good, modern translation such as the RSV, NEB or NIV goes a long way toward making step number two easier. Second, this quarterly itself should give you enough background information and thought-provoking comments for enriching study. But for more thorough-going study, good commentaries are very helpful, though none should ever be taken as the last word. The most up-to-date Adventist works on Daniel are Mervyn Maxwell's *God Cares*, vol. 1 (Pacific Press,

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Acts 17:11

"Some say the contradictory interpretations tell us more about the interpreters than the prophecies!"

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1981), the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 (Review and Herald, 1977), and the three volumes recently published by the General Conference Daniel and Revelation Committee. I've also found the commentaries by Joyce Baldwin (InterVarsity Press, 1978), Desmond Ford (Southern Publishing Association, 1978) and D. S. Russell (Westminster Press, 1981) especially helpful for their scholarly soundness, readability and evangelical orientation. Of course, this is only a small sample of the worthwhile material available.

4. **Be Christ-centered.** The kingdom to which Daniel pointed broke into history with the coming of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:15), and awaits its full realization at His second coming. And it is His cross and resurrection that make possible our participation in the kingdom. Don't let a distorted emphasis on the details of apocalyptic prophecy obscure the Saviour who is at the center of it all.

D. F. M.

### **REACT**

Reflect on your assumptions about the book of Daniel. Which are necessary starting points for study and which might unduly distort or limit your study?

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# The Relevance of Daniel

What relevance does Daniel, with its bizarre, fantastic expressions of the supernatural, really have for the tangible, practical, day-to-day realities of our material, technological world? Those who are content with a surface analysis of reality and who choose not to concern themselves with ultimate issues, may indeed afford to ignore Daniel's apocalyptic theme or take it lightly.

However, as Paul Hanson of Harvard University observes, "The shocking images of . . . apocalyptic arrest the attention of increasing numbers of thoughtful moderns because they recognize that the apocalyptic themes of history's decline, imminent doom, and a new order beyond the cataclysm are far more descriptive of the world they live in—or should we say, of the world they are leaving and the world they yearn to enter—than the facile assurances of their civil leaders that the future is bright if efforts at technological development, materialistic production, and accumulation are merely redoubled. . . .

"Against the dark backdrop of the death clouds of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the gas ovens of Dachau and Auschwitz there arises the dread awareness that nuclear proliferation has run out of control, making, in the minds of many sober scientists, nuclear war a statistical probability before the year 2000. A modern world slipping into a deeper and deeper pessimism regarding the future has turned to the literature of an ancient era similarly plagued by pessimism vis-à-vis human possibilities. Since the facile promises of the prophets of weal have run aground, there arises the hope that the hard look at reality found in apocalyptic may afford a glimpse beyond the tragedy which weighs so heavily upon the consciousness of thoughtful moderns."<sup>1</sup>

If we are convinced that the message of apocalyptic effectively penetrates to the deeper realities of our time, the remaining question is, What should our response be? Does apocalyptic invite us to a passive hope—as the world disintegrates, we watch and wait, confident in the future God has promised? Or does apocalyptic imply an ethical demand?

Klaus Koch of the University of Hamburg concludes his study on apocalyptic by declaring that apocalyptic writers "proclaim that the world is constantly being shaped and reshaped by God; they announce a mighty and ultimate divine revolution, and hold up to the eyes of the reader the goal of a renewed human society which has become one with its God and thus with the enduring ground of all reality. Do they not even paint the picture of a society in which the rule of man over man has hence been set aside forever? The apocalypticists demand that believers, on their own historical plane, 'project' themselves in the direction of this hope."<sup>2</sup>

These comments from Hanson and Koch point to the contemporary relevance of Daniel's apocalyptic message. In a nuclear age, the apocalyptic worldview is especially cogent. And if we find its vision of the future persuasive, the way we live in the present will be transformed.

D. F. M.

## OPINION

Key text:  
Revelation  
21:1-5

**"Apocalyptic writers proclaim that the world is constantly being shaped and reshaped by God."**

1. Paul Hanson, ed., *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp. 3, 8.

2. Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 131.

# GETTING THE GREATER WISDOM

"To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds" (Daniel 1:17, NIV).



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# Playing by the Rules

by Trudy J. Morgan

It is told that there were four of them, but that is not the truth. We were five, but no one remembers the name of the fifth. While the other four became great, I, the fifth of those young Hebrews, was left behind.

We had grown up together—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah and I. We had been educated together and all five of us were well on our way to successful futures. It was all a matter of knowing the right moves, playing by the rules—or so I thought then. We all followed the rules, and we all succeeded.

Then came the captivity, and we were plunged into a whole new world. Babylon—the royal court, the culture and learning of the Chaldeans! Daniel and the others thought we were fortunate that our lives were spared. They expected our journey to end in a drab prison cell. I knew better. The Babylonians recognized potential, and I realized that there would be a place for us in the new land even as there had been in the old. All we needed was to learn the rules and play by them.

Even I was surprised at how quickly we were chosen and how well the Babylonians treated us. Everything went smoothly until Daniel and the others began to raise questions about the food. Of all the fool-

ish reasons to cause trouble! This was the court of Babylon, where Nebuchadnezzar's word was law. No one who wanted to achieve any status here would dare challenge his word.

"What are you doing?" I raged at them. "Daniel, can't you see that you will never succeed here unless you play by the king's rules?"

"I know. I've thought of that," Daniel replied. "But I keep coming back to the law of God. I cannot deny it."

"What about the rest of you?" I asked the other three. "Are you all going to throw away the future for the sake of old traditions? You have a chance at greatness, but now you will never be anything more than mere scribes and clerks!"

Mishael spoke after a pause. "It does seem foolish. But perhaps there are things more important than success."

Then came that strange test, and the stranger outcome. After all these years, I still do not understand. Then and throughout their lives, Daniel and the others flouted the rules and defied the king. By all laws they should be dead or in prison. But Daniel is first minister of Babylon, while I, who played so carefully by the rules, sit as a scribe in the king's court.

**INTRO-  
DUCTION**  
Scripture:  
Daniel 1

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Trudy J. Morgan was a senior history and English major at Andrews University at the time of this writing.

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# A Resolute Faith

**LOGOS** Theme: God's people experienced His judgment in exile, but Daniel remains faithful in the foreign environment, and thus becomes an instrument through which God would communicate hope and guidance to His people.

## 1. The Historical Background

*"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god" (Dan. 1:1, 2, NIV).*

A casual reading of Daniel presents a confusing montage of times and times, beasts from seas, horns and goats, dreams and golden images. But a more detailed look reveals a work of consummate skill. Daniel, no ragged desert prophet but an elder statesman in the highest echelons of government, brings a careful and studied artistry to his apocalyptic message. This is evident right from the first chapter, which introduces the themes of the entire book: the conflict between good and evil, between false worship and true, between the kingdom of God and the realm of Satan.

The attack on Jerusalem described in vv. 1, 2 took place in 605 B.C. It established Babylon's control over Judah and marked the beginning of the Babylonian exile predicted by the prophets. Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy the temple or the city at this time, but Judah proved to be a disloyal vassal and eventually, in 586 B.C., the Babylonian emperor found it necessary to sack the city and burn the temple.

Despite its opening verses chapter one is not a story of setback for the kingdom of God, nor of false worship overcoming the true. Instead, it conveys the message that even in catastrophic times God remains in control. The Hebrew word here used for Lord is Adonai, meaning "possessor and owner of all" and it is He who gives Jehoiakim, along with some of the articles of the temple, into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Only by divine permission did Nebuchadnezzar secure his victory. And it was in his apparent triumph over God's people that he became an instrument of God's purpose.

*The Israelites believed that they were God's chosen people, the ones who would eventually see God's kingdom established. Adventists tend to have the same outlook. Is it possible that if we compromise our position as "chosen," God will select others to proclaim His message? In what sense are we "chosen"? How would one's understanding of prophecies such as Dan. 8:14 and Rev. 14:6-12 relate to these questions? See The Desire of Ages, pp. 27-31 for further reflection on being "the chosen people."*

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## 2. The Test (read Dan. 1:3-21)

*"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way" (1:8, NIV).*

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The message in their story is, be faithful to God and He will be faithful to you. All so simple for a child's bedtime story, complete with a happy ending. But consider, if you will, the context.

Tornadoes flatten houses, earthquakes destroy cities, fire and flood take their toll. But the damage is repaired and life goes on. It is, however, a little different when not only your house, but the whole meaning of your existence is destroyed. To all appearances, in destroying Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the reason for Israel's existence as a people. Ten tribes of God's chosen had been dispersed through the Middle East never to be heard of again, and now the last two were conquered, with much of Jerusalem's elite in chains, trudging off to Babylon. The heathen gods had apparently triumphed over the God of Israel. Many captives plodding along the desert sands may well have said, "God is dead!" Yet, denying all appearances, Daniel and his friends remained true, even resisting peer pressure to cooperate from other captives who chose to compromise, as v. 10 implies.

Remove everything familiar, shatter faith and meaning, and destroy security. These are three elements for achieving mind control which Nebuchadnezzar effectively used to assimilate the captives into his culture. But there was a point beyond which a few refused to go. It's interesting to note the nature of the test. Diet—not a crucial issue in a cosmic conflict, one would think. Yet the first test given to man was diet, and it was also a test given to Christ. It is through the senses that Satan is most effective in attacks against one's commitment to God, not in more obvious temptations such as to disbelieve in God's existence. Faithfulness to God is not defined by a belief, but rather in the actions that the beliefs motivate, no matter how seemingly inconsequential.

By their public faithfulness in the matter of diet, the four Jewish young men were making a statement about God in the pagan environment, the impact of which was heightened by their scholarly excellence. "As representatives of the only God they needed to prove in Babylon's highly competitive setting that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. High intelligence and hard work alone did not account for their success, but their wisdom was God's gift (cf. Col. 1:9; 2:9, 10)."<sup>1</sup>

*Is diet really important in our relationship with Christ? Why?*

*What is the key to triumphantly surviving a faith-shattering experience?*

E. R. M.

1. Joyce Baldwin, *Daniel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1978), p. 84.

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# Scholar, Statesman, and Seer

by Ken Ursin

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Daniel 1:17

Obtaining wisdom is usually the primary reason people attend college. But we, as Christian students, have the opportunity to obtain the "greater wisdom" that Daniel and his companions were blessed with. In searching through the writings of Ellen White, I discovered some interesting parallels between Daniel and his companions in captivity and the life students lead on campus.

"It is the privilege of every student to enter college with the same fixed, determined principle that Daniel had when he entered the court of Babylon, and throughout his course to keep his integrity untarnished. The strength and grace of God have been provided at an infinite sacrifice, that men might be victorious over Satan's suggestions and temptations, and come forth unsullied."<sup>1</sup>

"If the students who attend our colleges would be firm and maintain integrity, if they would not associate with those who walk in the paths of sin nor be charmed by their society, like Daniel they would enjoy the favor of God. If they would discard unprofitable amusements and indulgence of appetite, their minds would be clear for the pursuit of knowledge. They would thus gain a moral power that would enable them to remain unmoved when assailed by temptation."<sup>2</sup>

"And if the youth are proved and tested, as was Daniel, what honor can they reflect of God by their firm adherence to the right!"<sup>3</sup>

Because I am a business major, this next quote is especially interesting to me. It tells us that like Daniel, we who are not going to be employed within the denominational cloister can still be powerful tools in the hands of the Lord: "The experience of Daniel as a statesman in the kingdoms of Babylon and Medo-Persia reveals the truth that a businessman is not necessarily a designing, policy man, but that he may be a man instructed by God at every step. Daniel, the prime minister of the greatest of earthly kingdoms, was at the same time a prophet of God, receiving the light of heavenly inspiration. He was an example of what every business man may become when His heart is converted and consecrated, and when his motives are right in the sight of God."<sup>4</sup>

Daniel and his companions showed how close, daily communion with God can strengthen the spirit and enrich the mind, even in the most adverse conditions, and, in turn, how adverse conditions can be used to further the Lord's work. "These youth stood firm to principle. They lived in close connection with God, honoring Him in all their ways, and He honored them. He was their wisdom. He gave them knowledge and understanding."<sup>5</sup>

## REACT

What kind of specific moral tests confront college students today?

1. *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 478.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 376.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 368.
4. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 546.
5. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 153.

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Ken Ursin is a marketing major at Andrews University.

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# Daring to Be Daniels

by Meredith Jones

You probably grew up singing "Dare to Be a Daniel." The song was usually used as a temperance song to encourage young people to be like Daniel and his friends who refused to eat Nebuchadnezzar's rich food and drink his wine (Dan. 1:8). Or perhaps you were adjured to resist the temptation of a Friday night basketball game or dance, to be a Daniel, to stand alone if necessary.

All of us still have decisions to make about the details of our daily lives, but we also have grown to the point where we must make broader decisions about how to live as responsible citizens and members of society. This, in fact, was the type of decision Daniel was making when he refused the king's food. By not partaking of the food the king required them to eat, Daniel and his friends were taking a stand for certain beliefs, a certain value system.

What kinds of issues are we facing today that are comparable to the situation Daniel found himself in? Does our government or our society ask us to do things that go against our beliefs or principles? How have we been taught to respond to such requests? Does our church offer us a model? Although those of us who live in a Western, democratic environment find it hard to imagine a government that would force us to act against our consciences, a large number of church members live under non-Christian, sometimes authoritarian governments, governments that are as alien to their beliefs as Nebuchadnezzar's was to Daniel's beliefs.

Challenges from the past such as those faced by Adventists in Hitler's Germany and American Adventists during the Vietnam War illustrate the church's need for discernment and courage in relating to government. In these and other instances, we have not been as successful as we might have been in bearing clear witness to the principles of the gospel.<sup>1</sup>

And what about the more contemporary issue of nuclear war? Though the General Conference president issued a general statement in favor of peace and decrying the arms race in June 1985, the SDA church has largely been silent and inactive concerning this issue.<sup>2</sup> Such non-action might be interpreted as tacit acceptance or even approval of a disturbing policy.

Is this conformity the sort of behavior the story of Daniel teaches us? How far should his example lead us? Is it a story for individuals only or for a community of believers? Should individuals and communities be led by public opinion? Or should they seek a greater wisdom?

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Daniel 1:8

**"All of us must make decisions about how to live as responsible citizens and members of society."**

1. See Erwin Sicher, "Seventh-day Adventists Publication and the Nazi Temptation," *Spectrum*, 8, No. 3 (1977), 21; and Donald R. McAdams, "A Defense of the Adventist Position," *Spectrum*, 1, No. 1 (1969), 49.

2. "GC President issues statements on racism, peace, home and family, and drugs," *Adventist Review*, June 30, 1985, p. 2.

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Meredith Jones is an assistant professor of English at Andrews University.

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# Generational Therapy

## HOW TO

**Key Text:**  
**Mark 8:35**

In her award-winning essay, "Mom, Dad—We're Disengaged," Ingrid Canright discusses the emotional and political detachment of her generation of college students. Canright, a 1985 graduate of Antioch College in Ohio, sees in herself and her peers a "fundamental disengagement from reality." Political apathy is one expression of this disengagement. Another is the character of sexual relationships:

"... Sexual freedom (the term "free love" brings a smirk to youthful lips) has released sex from the conventional structures of love, marriage, and children; sexual relationships have become easier to get but also infinitely easier to lose. Sexual and emotional involvement no longer comes with any illusion of permanence, and herein lies the danger. . . . Mobility is the modern, mature approach to 'cool sex,' the typical pattern is a series of detached, if 'caring,' relationships in which there are few, if any expectations."

Canright contends that "fear of attachment confounds communication and leads to despair and anger" over those relationships which we do attempt. "Our self-defeating solution is to renounce all romantic notions. Slam goes the drawbridge; we are peacefully, if desolately, alone again.

"That's the wrong solution. It amounts to isolation that defends against isolation, and it parallels our political apathy in response to a politically untenable situation. What is required of us is courage."

The essay concludes with a call to paying the price of engagement: "M. Scott Peck says that the price of emotional attachment is pain; he will get no quarrel with that from my generation. The only real security in life, he goes on, lies in relishing life's insecurity. Here American youth will throw up their hands in disgust and abandon Peck as an imbecile. (Slam goes the drawbridge.) But what he says is true. Love, like other commitments, takes a great deal of courage, work, and acceptance of a certain amount of risk. The premise is that it's worth it. I hope ultimately we decide it is.

"... Activism, a dedication to some cause outside of ourselves, would be excellent generational therapy—and we need it."

The extent to which Canright's analysis applies to Adventist youth is debatable. Yet surely it is worth reflecting on the ways that the dominant mood of this generation has permeated our subculture.

And here's where Daniel 1 comes in. The four young Jews in this story had found for themselves a cause worth living for and worth dying for. They took the risk of forming genuine attachments—to God, His people, His truth. They were decisive about those attachments and courageous in living them out. Their story shows us how to be engaged, how to avoid the oblivion of apathy, mediocrity and narcissism. Excellent generational therapy indeed.

D. F. M.

## REACT

How applicable do you think Ingrid Canright's comments are to Adventist young people?

1. Ingrid Canright, "Mom, Dad—We're Disengaged," *Antioch Notes*, Spring-Summer, 1985.

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# Daring to Be Lonely

by Douglas Jones

Sometimes I like to be by myself, alone with my own thoughts. After a busy day of meeting classes, attending committees—and talking, talking, talking—I crave solitude, a time to myself.

But I don't always want to be by myself. After the newness of solitude wears off, I find myself pining for company, for someone to share conversation with. I remember three days in 1982 when I was alone in London. My solitude was a trial. Sure, there were people all around me, but I was alone. I don't enjoy art museums by myself; I don't enjoy tea-times by myself. An irritating and brooding self-consciousness takes over when I'm by myself when I'd rather be with friends and loved ones.

When I ponder solitude, I often think of Henry David Thoreau, America's legendary hermit who spent two and a half years at Walden Pond. But Thoreau wasn't alone a lot of the time. He was often entertaining guests at his cabin; he was often hiking into the village of Concord to visit his friends and family.

What I've been talking about thus far is *physical* solitude. What the lesson this week has discussed is non-conformity—a kind of *moral* solitude. We all have ways of coping with being alone physically, but I wonder how we deal with a solitary moral stance. Is it easy? Is it desirable? Is it inevitable?

Echoes of childhood shouts—"Play fair!" and "Play by the rules!"—drift into memories of Sabbath School choruses—"Dare to be a Daniel"—and suggest a gentle paradox. Of course, playing by the rules is an admirable trait in kids when they're playing at recess. But what about other situations and expectations, such as those described on the Evidence page? Do we dare to stand alone when "playing by the rules" is what's expected of us? When "playing by the rules" is wrong for us? And to whom (or what) do I look for camaraderie? For alliance? For direction? Or *do* I look?

T. S. Eliot asks: "Do I dare disturb the universe?"<sup>1</sup> It's a lonely question. Notice: the subject of the question—*I*—is singular. It's not the plural *we*. I think traditionally we've looked at Daniel 1 as an illustration of righteous non-conformity—and it is—but we tend to dismiss the fact that standing alone is a very unenviable posture for humans. It's a noble stance, but nevertheless unenviable.

## REACT

For what reasons might an individual Christian wish to "disturb the universe"?

## OPINION

Key text:  
Ephesians 6:13

**"Do we dare to stand alone when 'playing by the rules' is what's expected of us?"**

1. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," in *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1934), p. 5.

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Friday, January 9 25

# KINGDOM OF THE STONE

“In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever” (Daniel 2:44, NIV).



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# Good News for the Future

by Norman K. Miles

I was walking down a busy street with two friends when suddenly a woman dressed in bright-colored clothing appeared from a shop doorway and caught me by the arm. Startled by this sudden assault, and almost blinded by the glint of the sun on her gold jewelry, I struggled to wrench my arm free and get away. As I struggled to get away she was trying to pull me toward her shop door, shouting, "Come with me, mister. I will tell your fortune and bring you luck." I gave her a polite but brisk "no, thank you," and hurried away despite her repeated promises to bring me good luck. I am sure that if I had gone into her parlor she would have given me a glowing report of my future. After all, when people go to a fortune teller they hope for a prediction of a bright future.

Interest in the future has characterized the human family from the earliest times, and people who profess the ability to disclose the future have often enjoyed status and wealth. Even in today's secular society, fortune tellers and "prophets" of various types are able to extract huge sums of money from their clients. Some people have their personal astrological charts drawn, and millions consult the daily horoscopes in the local newspaper. Of course all are hoping that their fortune will

be the promise of good news.

Like most people, King Nebuchadnezzar was intensely interested in his personal future, and he hoped that it was full of good things. He had his personal fortune tellers and wise men to give him a continual stream of good news.

But God had something more to tell Nebuchadnezzar than the usual predictions of a lasting dynasty and greater wealth and power. Through a dream God told Nebuchadnezzar and succeeding generations two vital truths: 1) All human kingdoms and political systems are temporary, and 2) God will set up a righteous kingdom which will overturn all others and last forever.

Although this was not the news Nebuchadnezzar wanted to hear, it is very good news for us. In a world of conflict, clashing political ideologies, nuclear threat, and sweltering oppression, it is difficult to have a sense of hope and optimism. Christians who know God's plan for the future can remain hopeful and optimistic in the face of the chaos around them. The Christian's hope is not in some plan for a utopian society set up by human invention, but in the sure promise that no matter what happens God has set limits on human dominance, oppression and suffering, and that His kingdom will triumph at last.

**INTRO-  
DUCTION**  
Scripture:  
Daniel 2

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# The God in Control

**LOGOS** **Theme:** Through a dream given to Nebuchadnezzar and the interpretation given to Daniel, God reveals Himself to be the source of understanding about the future. The dream reveals that though a succession of idolatrous empires will have their day, the God of heaven will one day set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.

## 1. The Forgotten Dream (read Dan. 2:1-23)

*"In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, he said to them, 'I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means'" (2:1-3, NIV).*

Israel, God's chosen people, had taken a disastrous defeat—exiled in a foreign land, dispersed and demoralized. Where was their God? The symbols of His presence and the emblems of their worship were now trophies on the walls of a heathen king's temple, testimony taken as proof of the power of one god over the other. Now it was God's move. The apparent triumph of a heathen monarch was not a setback, but rather an instrument of God's purpose. And this He chose to reveal to Nebuchadnezzar through a dream the king could not remember.

Whatever the pitiful schemings of evil people, God remains in control. When times appear blackest, with no apparent hope, His purpose remains sure. Never is there a lapse in His control, never even so much as a threat to His government. "He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him" (Dan. 2:21, 22, NIV).

The first opportunity to explain Nebuchadnezzar's dream was given to the brain trust of the empire, those who claimed special insight on the secrets of the future. They had, no doubt, given the king guidance before. But now the fraud of their system was discovered and they were condemned.

It is interesting to note that in their defense, they admitted having no special connection to their gods and thus provided a contrast to the God of Israel. "What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men" (v. 11, NIV). As emphasized in lesson one, God does nothing without revealing it to human beings. He even chose to live among us!

*If God is in control and "sets up and deposes kings," how can the Hitlers and the Stalins of the world be explained? Did God set them up?*

## 2. The Dream Revealed (read Dan. 2:24-49)

*"The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy" (2:45, NIV).*

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"There is a God in heaven" (v. 28). Here is hope for the emptiness of our souls. To all desperate longings of whatever cause, the answer is the same. No human can explain the perplexities of life. In the quest for meaning the philosophers can only disagree and the scientists raise further questions, but fortunately for all, there is a God in heaven. This was the answer Daniel gave to the troubled king upon his throne; indeed it was the meaning of the dream. Through Nebuchadnezzar's triumph and Judah's defeat, God's purpose remained sure. In the ensuing ages kingdoms would usurp each other's power in turn, hoping to achieve lasting glory, only to be uprooted by another until God sets up His everlasting kingdom.

After Babylon would come Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the seeds of modern Europe. Much could be said regarding the finer interpretations of the text, but to Nebuchadnezzar the meaning was plain enough. Though he was ruler and master of the world's greatest empire, it was, is and will be God who controls. And the same is true for us today. Whatever our triumph or grief, it is God who controls.

Before closing the study on this chapter it is worthwhile to note the character of Daniel. Exalted to a position of power, he never succumbed to its temptations. He interceded for the wise men of Babylon. In contrast to the self-centered Arioch, who claimed to have answered the king's need through his own diligent searching, Daniel claims no credit for himself. "No wise men can explain the mystery . . . [But] The great God has shown the king . . ." (vv. 27, 45, NIV). Moreover, when lavished with gifts, Daniel remembered his friends. In his book on Daniel, Edward Pusey makes these remarks on Daniel's humility (the reference is to 1:21): "*Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus*, are the simple words; but what a volume of tried faithfulness is unrolled by them! Amid all the intrigues, indigenious, at all times, in dynasties of Oriental despotism, where intrigue too rolls round so surely and so suddenly on its author's head; amid all the envy toward a foreign captive in high office as a king's counselor . . . in that whole critical period for his people, Daniel continued. . . ."

"Striking is the reserve about himself. A chief statesman in the first Empire of the world, he has not recorded a single voluntary act of his own. Conceive any mere human writer, occupying such a position as Daniel had, saying not one word of all the toils, plans, counsels of those seventy years, nothing of the good which he furthered, or the evil which he hindered!"<sup>1</sup>

*Summarize the qualities of Daniel which come to light in chapters 1 and 2. What do you like or dislike about him? Does his conduct suggest principles for being an effective Christian in a secular work or educational environment?*

E. R. M.

1. Edward B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1885), pp. 88, 89.

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# Anxiety's Antidote

compiled by D. G. Rand

## TESTIMONY

Key Text:

Isaiah 46:9, 10

"If you have given yourself to God, to do His work, you have no need to be anxious for tomorrow. He whose servant you are, knows the end from the beginning. The events of tomorrow, which are hidden from your view, are open to the eyes of Him who is omnipotent.

"When we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good, we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God."<sup>1</sup>

"He has heaven and earth at His command, and He knows just what we need even before we present our necessities and desires before Him.

"We can see only a little way before us; 'but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.' He never becomes confused. He sits above the confusion and distractions of the earth, and all things are opened to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He can order that which His providence sees is best."<sup>2</sup>

**"When we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good, we shall cease to worry about the future."**

"I AM means an eternal presence; the past, present, and future are alike to God. He sees the most remote events of past history, and the far distant future with as clear a vision as we do those things that are transpiring daily. We know not what is before us, and if we did, it would not contribute to our eternal welfare. God gives us an opportunity to exercise faith and trust in the great I AM."<sup>3</sup>

"In the annals of human history, the growth of the nations, the rise of the empires, appear as if 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, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."<sup>4</sup>

## REACT

Why doesn't God send a prophet today to warn and instruct us and our national leaders about the exact course of coming world events?

1. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings*, pp. 100, 101.
2. *My Life Today*, p. 10.
3. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1099.
4. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 499, 500.

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D. G. Rand is a chaplain at Andrews University.

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# Does God Really Know the Future?

by William Shea

From the interpretation that Daniel gave to the king, we know that the four main metals of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream represented four great kingdoms of world history. But when Daniel started with the head of gold he told Nebuchadnezzar that it represented the king himself. Isn't it a contradiction to say the gold represents a person but the silver represents a kingdom? Nebuchadnezzar was a long-lived king. The Neo-Babylonian kingdom over which he ruled lasted for 66 years, from 605 to 539 B.C., and he reigned for 43 of those 66 years. Millions of clay bricks, the main building material available in Babylon, can be found in the ruins of that city today. Nebuchadnezzar had his name stamped on thousands of those bricks to show what a great king he was. When he came to the throne he set out on a series of military campaigns in which he conquered most of the territory which was to comprise the empire of Babylon. Thus the prophet was quite accurate in identifying Nebuchadnezzar directly with the golden kingdom of Babylon because he was the one who conquered most of its territory, he built it architecturally, and he ruled over it most of the time it lasted.

But it did not last very long. The silver kingdom followed it. Which kingdom was that? The ruins of Babylon themselves tell us. In those ruins archaeologists have dug up some of the royal records written in a wedge-shaped or cuneiform type of writing on clay tablets. Many of these tablets were dated according to the year of the ruling king, and following the series of tablets dated to the Babylonian kings comes another series of tablets dated to the Persian kings. We even have a tablet which describes the last years of the last Babylonian king and the subsequent conquest of Babylon by the Persians.

Thus the ruins of Babylon testify to the fact that the Persians succeeded the Babylonians there. But who succeeded the Persians as the third metal kingdom of the image? Once again, Babylon provides the answer. A British scholar working on the tablets from Babylon in the British Museum in London recently announced the discovery of a tablet which described the procession which occurred there when Alexander the Great first arrived in Babylon from Greece. To reach that far into the Near East, Alexander had to defeat the armies of Darius III, the last king of the Persian empire.

Alexander lived only a few years after he conquered Babylon. Following his death his generals argued about which one of them would control the empire Alexander had conquered. Since they were unable to agree, the empire broke up into four main pieces that became independent kingdoms. These kingdoms did not last long either. Imperial Rome soon swallowed up all four of the pieces of Alexander's empire: Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt in that order. The last of these kingdoms fell to Rome when Julius Caesar conquered Egypt in 31 B.C. That was the time of his famous encounter with Cleopatra, the last of the Greek queens of Egypt.

History repeated itself once more. Just as the Greek kingdom of Alexander broke into pieces, so did the Roman empire of the Caesars.

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Daniel 2:20-23

**"The modern nations of Europe are descendants of those fragments."**

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At the time of this writing, William Shea was a professor of Old Testament history at Andrews University.

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The modern nations of Europe are descendants of those fragments, and this outcome is described in the prophecy with the reference to iron mixed with clay. Note the difference between human guesswork and divine foreknowledge here. Starting from the sixth century B.C. when Daniel lived, a normal human estimate would be either that the greatest kingdom would stand forever or another series of kingdoms would follow it. The prophet did not follow either of these more likely scenarios from the human standpoint in spelling out the future course of history. Four kingdoms and no more, and the fourth was to break up into pieces. This less likely historical alternative is what God inspired the prophet to describe.

**“The climax of his story is that human history will end with an entirely different kind of kingdom.”**

We like to read a story to get to its climax. So we should read this prophecy to get to its climax. Human history is not going to end with one great human kingdom like Rome or Russia or the United States. Nor is it going to end with a lot of smaller kingdoms like the nations of Europe. It is going to end with an entirely different kind of kingdom: “In the days of these kings [of the modern nations of Europe] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.” That is the climax upon which Daniel’s prophecy focuses. It will come soon and it will be wonderful when it arrives. We should put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness to prepare ourselves to enter that kingdom and meet the Lord of History and the Captain of Our Salvation.

### **REACT**

Daniel 2:41-43 seems to envision the mixture of iron and clay in the toes of the image as part of one kingdom, albeit a divided one, rather than several distinct kingdoms. Does this present a problem for interpreting the toes of the image as “the modern nations of Europe”?

If this question interests you, pursue it by reading the passage in several translations and checking some Bible commentaries, both Adventist and non-Adventist.

What, to you, is the most convincing interpretation of this passage? What are the implications of your view?

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# The Nightmare Is Real

by Janice Watson

My first memory of watching television comes from when I was about five or six—the age when the real is whatever you experience, regardless of the source. The flickering black and white pictures of the magic box fascinated me. Later, I sat silently replaying the pictures in my mind, making up endings and continuations of my own. Finally I fell asleep, my mind still churning.

I ran and ran in the darkness, dodging around corners, hiding behind garbage cans—one more corner before the light and safety of the open door. I turned the corner and there he was. I couldn't scream. I just lay there, heart pounding, chest heaving, listening to the boards creak and wishing I could scream or die.

Then the light came on and Mummy was holding me. My rigid body relaxed and I gulped for air. "It's OK," she explained, understanding instantly. "It's not real, it's only real on TV." From then on I had it licked. I would wake in the night sweaty and shaken, flip the switch and chant to myself, "It's not real. It's only on TV. It's not real." The light and the explanation were enough.

Recently the world has been watching a lot of TV—the horror of hijacking, the anguish of AIDS, the devastation and destruction of death in its many forms—it's all on TV, and it's real. Like Nebuchadnezzar, the world's sleep is troubled with nightmares that are reality. And like Daniel, we have the cure. We have both the light and the explanation. The God who "reveals deep and hidden things," who "knows what lies in darkness" and with whom light dwells (Dan. 2:22) has shown us what will take place in the future. "The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy" (v. 45). The nightmare is real, but above and beyond it lies a greater reality—the light of God's love and watchcare and the explanation of His plan for the salvation and redemption of mankind.

In a sleepless world having troubling dreams, wanting to know their meanings, there is and must continue to be a people praising God, a people willing not only to accept His interpretation and revelation, but willing, like Daniel, to share the light and the explanation that others too may understand the nightmare and through their understanding be released from its grip to the morning of God's greater reality.

## REACT

How can we communicate the "light and explanation" we have from Daniel more effectively?

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Daniel 2:1, 20-22

**"Like Nebuchadnezzar, the world is troubled and cannot sleep. And like Daniel, we have the cure."**

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Janice Watson is the director of the academic skills center at Andrews University.

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# Today's Kerygma

by D. S. Russell

## OPINION

**Key text:**  
**Revelation 11:15**

*In his book *Apocalyptic*, the British scholar D. S. Russell contends that the proclamation, or kerygma, of the New Testament is that Daniel's theme of the kingdom of God finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the following selection, Russell discusses the implications of this view for the church in its efforts to proclaim the message of the kingdom predicted in Daniel 2:44.*

Today, as in the first century A.D., the Christian church has the inescapable responsibility of proclaiming to all men the gospel of the kingdom. That means essentially "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). He is the embodiment of the kingdom; through him its power is at work in the world today; and in him it will find its fulfillment in the providence and will of God. The *kerygma*, now as then, must be a proclamation of Jesus Christ who holds the key to our understanding of the kingdom at this present time and will be there at the end to give it meaning and purpose. . . .

There are different levels at which the powers of the kingdom are seen to be at work. As we have observed, it is bound up, for example, with the individual and with the individual's response in faith to what he has seen and known of Christ. The proclamation of the kingdom is an invitation to people to commit themselves to Jesus Christ and to his way of life. . . .

**"The kingdom is about right relationships."**

But the gospel is more than good news for the individual; it is good news too for present-day society in which men and women live, for all mankind and indeed for the whole created order. It is true that the kingdom is not to be identified with any one social or political system; nor is it to be welcomed in either by social emancipation or by political liberation. But we must not conclude from this that it has nothing to do with present-day society or with the hopes and fears of men and women who live under oppression or in abject poverty or in fear of nuclear obliteration. The kingdom is operative now in the world. Its unobtrusive and irresistible energies are not confined to private experience or even to the corporate life of the church. They are at work in the world, changing society, shaping history, renewing creation. The kingdom of God, says Paul, means "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). It is surely not without significance that the word "righteousness" comes first here and is followed immediately by the word "peace," which in its root meaning signifies "wholeness," "completeness," "harmony," "integration." The kingdom is about right relationships not only between men and God but also between men and men. It is about the *wholeness* of salvation when at last *all things* will be taken up into God's eternal purpose in Christ. And it is concerned about these things here and now. The church's proclamation of the kingdom is the good news of God's righteous and peaceful rule as it seeks to work itself out in this world and at this time. Its message is not abnegation of involvement in the world's affairs or giving up of the world as lost and on the verge of destruction. Its mood is not that of

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**D. S. Russell is general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.**

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pessimism and renunciation. On the contrary it is one of hope and confidence because it is *God's* kingdom and not ours; it is the revelation of *God's* power in the affairs of men, not the working out of man's designs. For this reason its presence among us and its growth to completion are stamped with the certainty of God. The *kerygma* which saw in the passion and death of Jesus a heralding of the kingdom coming in power, cannot today lose hope even when confronted with oppression, discrimination, persecution, torture and war. The kingdom belongs to God and is at work now, overcoming the powers of evil and subduing the chaos of creation. Because this is so, today's *kerygma* must address itself to the world in which we live and to the situations in which men and women are. It is not good news in a vacuum; it is good news for particular people in particular circumstances who are crying out, corporately as well as individually, for the salvation of God. . . .

But here again, for the Christian, the name of Jesus is supreme. Politics and sociology are and must always be areas of Christian concern, but they must not be allowed to take the place of Jesus Christ as the content or focus of Christian preaching or Christian witness concerning the kingdom. . . .

The New Testament makes it plain that the kingdom which came with Jesus and which is even now at work in the world is yet to be revealed at the consummation when all things will be summed up in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:9ff). The timely warnings given by Jesus in this regard were clear and to the point. . . . Slide-rule theology which calculates times and seasons with allegorical arithmetic and prognosticates with precision what God has reserved for himself alone (cf. Matt. 24:36) has no place in the teaching of Jesus and should have no place in the *kerygma* of his church."<sup>1</sup>

**"Slide-rule  
theology  
has no place  
in the  
teaching of  
Jesus."**

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1. Excerpted from D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 55-58.

# FAITH AS PROTEST

“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it. . . . But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Daniel 3:17, 18, NIV).



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# Journal Thoughts

by Claudia Tagliasacchi

Friday, November 29, 1985

Dear Journal,

I've been thinking again.

They say babies are egocentric 'cause they're only concerned for their own needs. I don't believe we ever grow out of it. We gain control, maybe, and are able to "force ourselves against ourselves," but basically we are all self-centered.

I've got to realize that I am just a tiny part of a huge whole. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have reminded me of that. I've been thinking about that story 'cause I have to write an article for the Quarterly. The story's lesson can't be that if you stand up for God to the point of death He will deliver you. It can't be, 'cause that's not true. He is able to deliver us, and He is worthy of dying for, but as history shows, He doesn't always save a dedicated Christian facing death.

So what's the point of the story? Why does He save people or let people die? He must have a specific reason for keeping some alive, but I don't think that reason is merely to save their bodies from death. That doesn't concern God, so

much as "forever" things.

So what's the point of the story? It isn't to prove the integrity of the three young men. God knew their integrity. They knew their God. Maybe the story is a tiny part of a large whole. God used the strength and faith of S, M, and A as well as that of Daniel to vindicate Himself in the eyes of King Nebuchadnezzar. It was Nebuchadnezzar that God wanted.

Nebuchadnezzar was a great king and he knew it. But God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge Him. So He used the faith of people that He knew He could count on. They took the risks, God pulled them through, and little by little Nebuchadnezzar was convinced and humbled himself before God. That's what God aimed for.

We should stand up for God regardless of the consequences, or the rewards. We do so as the result of a commitment we've made. God's work in my life, in anybody's life, is not to please me and make me happy (though it does). His work in my life is a tiny part of a large whole.

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture:  
Daniel 3

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Claudia Tagliasacchi is a graduate student at Andrews University.

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# Through the Fire

**LOGOS** Theme: God delivers Daniel's friends, who refuse to submit to Nebuchadnezzar's idolatrous program, despite the threat of the death penalty.

## 1. The Image of Gold (read Dan. 3:1-7)

*"Then the herald loudly proclaimed, 'This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace'"* (3:4-6, NIV).

Commentators generally agree that this event must have taken place a considerable time after the events of the previous chapter. It is human to forget, especially that which diminishes our ego. The incidents that reveal our frailty fade in our minds while indicators of our small glory expand with time. But whatever the time period between the dream and the image, it is clear that the impression made on the king of Daniel's omniscient God faded to a disturbing and lingering memory of the predicted temporary nature of his kingdom. The all-golden image, no doubt, was to help assuage this memory.

Mortal gods are the most insecure. They need constant reassurance of their power. For evidence, one need only look as far as the amassed thousands manipulated by the pageantry of Nazi banners and martial music, and many other modern examples could also be cited. The effect and purpose were the same in Daniel's day: To breathe life into the fallacy of total power, feed the ego of the monarch, and unite the subjects in unswerving, unthinking obedience. Group hysteria is infectious, but if that isn't enough then the threat of death, as punishment for "treason," often stands as the rear guard.

Daniel 3 presents the theme which is retold and enlarged, both in Daniel and Revelation: Flee from the intrigues of idolatrous worship in whatever form. Do not conform though the result be death.

*What relationship/parallels do these verses have with God's people at the end time? What about now?*

## 2. Three Jews Resist (read Dan. 3:8-18)

*"At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. . . . 'There are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up'"* (3:8, 12, NIV).

Who are the men who stood and accused Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego before the king, hoping to exalt themselves? Little is known about them except the veiled antagonism in their words. "There are some Jews whom you have set. . . ." Time has effectively

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erased the accusers from memory, but who can forget Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? These who would not bend in their resolve to principle have never been forgotten. So it is in human affairs. Those who conform and compromise for quick gain wither in time as a field flower. The way of conformity leads ever to forgotten mediocrity. But independence of thought and unflinching loyalty to the Most High bring true glory.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego obeyed the king as far as their consciences would allow. They journeyed to the Plain of Dura and even stood before the image. But they refused to bow, an act that would have been interpreted as worship. Yet even in their refusal, they remained courteous. "As Daniel before them had been courteous in his request to follow his convictions, so these three verbally acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as king, while committing their ultimate allegiance to the King of kings alone. The entire account illustrates the New Testament dicta: 'We must obey God rather than men' and 'Render . . . to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's' (Acts 5:29; Matt. 22:21)."<sup>1</sup>

*What is the difference between fanaticism and being true to the dictates of conscience?*

### **3. Delivered from the Fire (read Dan. 3:19-30)**

*"They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God" (3:28, NIV).*

Here again in Daniel the theme of the great controversy is played out in miniature. An idolatrous system of worship is set up contrary to the commandments of God. Allegiance to this system is prompted through the threat of death. God's people are put to the test, they remain true, and God is glorified. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego "were prepared to be loyal to God whether He appeared to be loyal to them or not. They would not break His laws regardless of whether deliverance would be forthcoming. In other words, life itself was the measure of their fidelity."<sup>2</sup> No less is required of us today (see Rev. 12:11). "With unceasing constancy we are called upon to decide between giving our allegiance to the idols of popular conformity or to the requirements of our Creator. Though furnaces of trial threaten, the believer will count on the saving presence of the Son of God and seek to obey and follow Him only. If duty is clear, no question need be asked about consequences. Providence may permit us to be thrown into the furnace, but it will only consume our bonds. Heaven is the presence of God, and it is worth entering a fiery furnace if thereby we meet Christ."<sup>4</sup>

*Is it ever right for the Christian to compromise in order to avoid negative consequences?*

E. R. M.

1. Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), p. 107.  
2. *Ibid.*  
3. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

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# Abiding Presence

by Brenda Grimm

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Isaiah 43:2

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego offers at least two important lessons for modern Christians. First, God's protection will be manifested toward His children when they stand in His name, no matter how Satan attempts to pressure them. Christians can expect persecution, but God will sustain His followers. Second, persecution provides an ideal opportunity for Christians to witness to those around them.

In the following paragraphs from *Prophets and Kings*, Ellen White elaborates on these two lessons:

"By the deliverance of His faithful servants, the Lord declared that He takes His stand with the oppressed, and rebukes all earthly powers that rebel against the authority of Heaven. The three Hebrews declared to the whole nation of Babylon their faith in Him whom they worship. . . . The tidings of their wonderful deliverance were carried to many countries by the representatives of the different nations that had been invited by Nebuchadnezzar to the dedication. Through the faithfulness of His children, God was glorified in all the earth. . . .

"The season of distress before God's people will call for a faith that will not falter. His children must make it manifest that He is the only object of their worship, and that no consideration, not even that of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to false worship. To the loyal heart the commands of sinful, finite men will sink into insignificance beside the word of the eternal God. Truth will be obeyed though the result be imprisonment or exile or death.

"As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth's history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who stand steadfastly for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a "God of gods," able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him."<sup>1</sup>

**"All the  
hosts of evil  
cannot destroy  
the weakest of  
God's saints."**

## REACT

Do you see many conflicts between human commands and the word of God in your present situation? What will the conflicts be over in the time of trouble?

1. *Prophets and Kings*,  
pp. 511-513.

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Brenda Grimm was a freshman at Andrews University at the time of this writing.

# Leaven in the Lump

by Bruce Closser

In *Civil Disobedience*, where he responds to the twin issues of slavery and the Mexican-American war, Henry David Thoreau concerns himself with one's duty to both conscience and state. He concludes that in most matters, conscience is a higher rule than government which discourages its subjects from pointing out its faults. Thoreau notes that those who stand for right frequently meet opposition, and questions, "Why does [government] always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?"<sup>1</sup>

I suspect that with little additional encouragement, Thoreau would have included Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in this list of citizens "on the alert to point out [government's] faults."<sup>2</sup> Thoreau addresses himself in his essay, of course, to Americans, hoping to inspire them to a more honorable relationship with an often unscrupulous government. However, the behavior he advocates for his peers applies equally to the three Hebrews, who also lived up to his ideals. These were men for whom "majorities [did] not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience"; men for whom "it [was] not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right."<sup>3</sup> The three Hebrews were men who "must do justice, cost what it may."<sup>4</sup> They were among the very few who, "as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and *men*, serve[d] the State with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist[ed] it for the most part; and they [were] commonly treated by it as enemies."<sup>5</sup>

Thoreau felt that "it [was] not so important that many should be as good as [he], as that there be some absolute goodness somewhere; for that [would] leaven the whole lump."<sup>6</sup> And he lived by the code he preached. In reaction to what he saw as unjust domination of one people by another, exemplified by slavery in the South and America's invasion of Mexico, Thoreau refused to pay his poll taxes. He gladly went to jail, and rued the secret night-time visitor who paid his tax for him and prematurely set him free, spoiling his chance to make a public statement.

Sadrach, Meshach, and Abednego "leavened the lump" of Babylonian society. They were truly men who, as Thoreau's neighbor used to say, "[had] a bone in [their backs] which you cannot pass your hand through!"<sup>7</sup>

## REACT

1. Do you think the parallel drawn between Thoreau and the three Hebrews is accurate? Do you see any differences between Thoreau and Daniel's friends?

2. Does Thoreau's outlook contradict Paul's admonition in Romans 13:1, 2?

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Acts 5:29

"Thoreau concludes that in most matters, conscience is a higher rule than government."

1. *Civil Disobedience* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1966), p. 231.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

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# When the Ending Isn't Happy

by Bonnie L. Casey

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Revelation 2:10

Everyone likes stories that come out all right in the end. They comfort us and reassure us that the world isn't such a bad place, that someone is watching over us, and that bad people won't always have the last word. Stories such as the one about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are essential because sometimes telling a story is the only way to adequately express God's everlasting regard for us.

But we're not children. In the face of everyday tragedy, loss, and uncertainty, sometimes stories with happy endings just aren't enough to get us through the night. We know stories of God's intervention in sickness and calamity; we believe in miracles and providential rescues. But we also know godly people who live by faith who have nevertheless suffered unspeakable losses. And we wonder why the stories work out right for some of God's children and not for others.

There aren't any conclusive answers, but there are ideas we can cling to to help us make sense out of our pain. It was Mother Teresa, the missionary sister to the destitute of India, who said, "God doesn't call us to be successful. He calls us to be faithful." That means we are to live always as though there were a God who loved us and heard our prayers, even though He is silent sometimes. We are to live by our faith and our commitment to what is right, not by assumptions that if we do what God asks, everything will always work out in our favor.

**"Living courageously is more important than winning."**

C. S. Lewis said that courage is the greatest of all the virtues, because it is the form of every virtue at the testing point. Honesty is no virtue if you haven't the courage to tell the truth in a pinch.

Living courageously is more important than winning. We all rejoice that the three Hebrews were saved by God's hand from the burning fiery furnace. But they didn't know for certain that they would be saved from death. Maybe the most important lesson for us is not that they came out of the furnace alive, but that they went into it in the first place.

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Bonnie L. Casey is a free-lance writer and editor in Takoma Park, Maryland.

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# Cause for Commitment

by Gayle Jackson

Whether we agree or disagree with them, we respect people who commit themselves to a cause. Think of the famous protesters you've heard of: Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry in the American Revolution; John Brown and Henry David Thoreau and their stand against slavery; Gandhi and his protest of British rule in India. From more recent times, we think of Martin Luther King, Jr., who worked for racial equality; Joan Baez, Jane Fonda, and Abbie Hoffman who protested U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war; and, at the other end of the spectrum, Anita Bryant, who protested against "gay rights." Today, protesters openly voice their disapproval of nuclear energy in the U.S., apartheid in South Africa, and suppression of dissidents in the U.S.S.R.

There will always be cause for protest. Abortion. Pornography. Nuclear weapons. Famine. In a world teeming with protests, we easily become indifferent to causes, forgetting their very existence in order to remain uninvolved. Perhaps we are afraid of being labeled. Afraid to take responsibility for ourselves and our influence on others. Afraid to risk being wrong. To become involved would require a commitment, sacrificing our time and efforts. One cannot passively protest something.

But many of us *have* become passive. We are content with the good life we live. None of today's threats seem immediate enough to warrant reaction: in America, Seventh-day Adventism is not threatened, believers are not arrested, and most members have enough to eat. Other problems in our world are ignored. We are untrained in protesting.

However, an active faith in God demands protest when moral issues are involved. In knowing God, we know His ways. In knowing God's ways, we realize His ways are not the ways of the world. Since Scripture tells us that we are either "for or against" God, our lives will either protest His ways or the ways of sin.

Many have been known for their religious protests, including Zwingli, Huss, Jerome, Martin Luther, the Pilgrim Fathers. Fox's *Book of Martyrs* is full of other examples. In World War II, Seventh-day Adventist Desmond Doss refused to carry a gun but carried the wounded bodies of many fellow soldiers to safety and medical help.

Perhaps a more familiar example of religious protest is the one found in Daniel 3. In Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego recognized God's dominion above all else, including the golden image. Their commitment to God left them no other choice but to protest the king's law. We need to be more like these three Hebrews who, their accusers declared, "pay no attention [to the king's orders] . . ." and, "neither serve [his] gods nor worship the image."

They knew what was right; they were willing to put their all into the protest. And so should we.

## REACT

What should Christians protest against today? In what ways?

## OPINION

Key text:

Isaiah 58:1, 6-8

"Since we are either for or against God, we will either protest His ways or the ways of sin."

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Gayle Jackson was a student at Andrews University at the time of this writing.

# POWER IN PERSPECTIVE

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble” (Daniel 4:37, NIV).



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# The Conquest

by Jennifer Morgan

**INTRO-  
DUCTION**  
Scripture:  
Daniel 4

She was a tree.  
Blown into being by the  
breath of the maker.  
Stubbing white fingers  
through the deep earth,  
Twisting her trunk into the  
light,  
Twining green stems around  
the wind,  
She waved to the breath of  
her master.  
She grew in the warmth of the  
sun.  
She sheltered the child in her  
branches  
And fed the birds with her  
fruit.

She was the tree.  
Networking the garden with  
her roots alone.  
Fighting young seedlings  
from her tumbled earth.  
Choking their gasps of life's  
pleasant air,  
Blocking their view of the  
world's smiling sun.  
Under her leaves  
The bitter grass  
screamed,  
At her roots  
Faint flowers wept.  
Her branches became sticks  
and spears,  
For the child of the garden to  
play games of war.

And she was wood.  
Successful and tall, she had  
fought for her conquest.  
Conquered and fought for, she  
became Man's success.  
The child of the garden saw  
her a Desire.  
For the child of her branches  
wanted to own her.  
When she screamed at the blows  
He did not hear her.  
When she fainted to the earth  
He had no pity.  
And the child of the garden  
Piled the tree in her pieces.  
He carried her home;  
Long, straight and still.

But I was the vine.  
Who wove my warm life  
around her, the dead stump.  
I drew from the earth  
To give to the birds,  
And drank of the rain  
To water the grass.  
I made her beautiful.  
Wrapping my care around her  
dead beauty.  
I housed the squirrel in her  
trunk,  
And gave birth to rabbits at  
her roots.  
I blew fresh breath into long-  
cold cells.  
She whispered, "I need you."  
And she was my tree.

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Jennifer Morgan was a first-year seminarian at Andrews University, from Newfoundland, at the time of this writing.

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# That the Living May Know

**LOGOS** **Theme:** In another dream and its subsequent fulfillment, the superiority of God over the greatest earthly sovereign is demonstrated.

## 1. Another Disturbing Dream (read Dan. 4:1-18).

*"I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me" (4:5, NIV).*

Here in Daniel is the story of what is perhaps the greatest conversion in history. Nebuchadnezzar's life so far had been one long line of successes. Through his military might he had conquered all opposition from surrounding powers. Wealth from these conquests flowed into his coffers, and with this wealth he built the greatest capital of the then-known world. Previous kingdoms, such as Assyria, boasted of their military prowess. But the boast of Babylon was its temples, gardens and palaces. Indeed, of the cuneiform tablets translated from that period, there are more which bear witness to the industry of Nebuchadnezzar as an architect and builder than as a mighty conqueror.<sup>1</sup> So it was not without justification that the king could say, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built" (v. 30, NIV).

But while Nebuchadnezzar was at the height of his powers, there came another dream. This time he could remember it. In the dream there was a tree which towered into the sky and its branches provided fruit and shade for all the earth. Then a Watcher from heaven descended, declaring that the tree should be cut down, and issuing this judgment on the one symbolized by the tree: "'Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him'" (vv. 15, 16, NIV). His sense of security shattered, the king sought an interpretation.

It's hard to imagine that Nebuchadnezzar would forget Daniel and bypass him in the search for an interpreter. It's more likely that the wise men of Babylon were too powerful and formidable to pass by, and if slighted, would pose a threat to both the king and Daniel. And undoubtedly the providence of God was involved, for here again a theme of Daniel is dramatically illustrated. The wisdom of man may seem to win out, but ultimately it is the wisdom of God that prevails.

*Does God "cut down" rulers of worldly governments today? Is the warning implied in the dream applicable to the average Christian today?*

## 2. The Interpretation and its Fulfillment (read Dan. 4:19-37)

*"Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue" (4:27, NIV).*

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The courtesy and sympathy which Daniel holds for this heathen monarch are shown by his reluctance to reveal the dream's meaning. He sees the king not as the cruel despoiler of his people, and therefore deserving of this humiliation, but as a recipient of God's love.

True to his duty to God, Daniel reveals the full meaning of the dream, yet indicates the way by which its fulfillment may be escaped. Daniel charges the king to change his ways so that his prosperity may continue, and judgment be avoided. Such is the conditional nature of divine announcements for good or evil (see Jer. 18:7-10). God is not bound by predictions of doom (remember Jonah), for He is unwilling that any perish, but wishes all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

Unfortunately, we often choose the hard way to learn a lesson. And Nebuchadnezzar was no different. For seven years he lived like a beast of the field, until he recognized God as supreme. This was the import of the dream and his experience, "that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men" (v. 17, NIV).

This is a testimony for all time, for both the oppressor and oppressed, that the heavenly Watcher has appointed a boundary beyond which evil cannot go. It cautions against making happiness dependent on anything other than God. It warns of the fatal mistake of declaring autonomy from the Creator. To people and nations God has given a probationary period, that if not seized, ends in judgment and destruction. For though God is willing for none to perish, for those who continually choose existence apart from Him, there is no life, no sanity at all.

*How would you summarize the new perspective Nebuchadnezzar gained through this experience? What is its significance for us? What can we learn from Daniel's call for the King's repentance?*

E. R. M.

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# The Eternal Key

compiled by William Fagal

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Daniel 4:34-37

"God has revealed in His law the principles that underlie all true prosperity both of nations and of individuals. . . .

"The power exercised by every ruler on the earth is Heaven-imparted; and upon his use of the power thus bestowed, his success depends. . . . And to each the words spoken to Nebuchadnezzar of old are the lesson of life: 'Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.' Daniel 4:27.

"To understand these things,—to understand that 'righteousness exalteth a nation;' that 'the throne is established by righteousness' and 'upholden by mercy' (Proverbs 14:34; 16:12; 20:28); to recognize the outworking of these principles in the manifestation of His power who 'removeth kings, and setteth up kings' (Daniel 2:21),—this is to understand the philosophy of history.

"In the word of God only is this clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations, as of individuals, . . . is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God's purpose."<sup>1</sup>

"At this time, before the great final crisis, as before the world's first destruction, men are absorbed in the pleasures and the pursuits of sin. Engrossed with the seen and transitory, they have lost sight of the unseen and eternal. For the things that perish with the using, they are sacrificing imperishable riches. Their minds need to be uplifted, their views of life to be broadened. They need to be aroused from the lethargy of worldly dreaming.

"From the rise and fall of nations as made plain in the pages of Holy Writ, they need to learn how worthless is mere outward and worldly glory. Babylon, with all its power and its magnificence, the like of which our world has never since beheld,—power and magnificence which to the people of that day seemed so stable and enduring,—how completely has it passed away! As 'the flower of the grass' it has perished. So perishes all that has not God for its foundation. Only that which is bound up with His purpose and expresses His character can endure. His principles are the only steadfast thing our world knows.

"It is these great truths that old and young need to learn. We need to study the working out of God's purpose in the history of nations and in the revelation of things to come, that we may estimate at their true value things seen and things unseen; that we may learn what is the true aim of life; that, viewing the things of time in the light of eternity, we may put them to their truest and noblest use. Thus, learning here the principles of His kingdom and becoming its subjects and citizens, we may be prepared at His coming to enter with Him into its possession."<sup>2</sup>

## REACT

In what sense, if any, can the standard of God's purpose be applied to a nation where church and state are kept separate, such as the United States?

1. *Education*, pp. 174, 175.  
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 183, 184.

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William Fagal is the director of the White Estate Branch Office at Andrews University.

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# The Conversion of Nebuchadnezzar

by W. Richard Leshar

Chapter four of Daniel is the last of four stories about Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel and his friends. The stories share a common conclusion that the Lord is superior over earthly powers. In the first instance, Daniel and his friends are declared superior to the other wise men by Nebuchadnezzar. In the second story, Nebuchadnezzar declares Daniel's God to be a "God of gods and Lord of kings" (Daniel 2:47). The third narrative concludes that "there is no other god who is able to deliver" in the way that the God of the Hebrews had delivered the three from the furnace. The final episode closes with Nebuchadnezzar praising the Most High as the everlasting ruler of the earth.

This sequence is actually a conversion story in four parts. The final step in the conversion is the focus of this week's study. The first part of the story in chapter four is a repeat of chapter two—Nebuchadnezzar, troubled by a dream, seeks the meaning from his wise men, and only Daniel can interpret it. Daniel concludes his interpretation with an appeal to the king to change his ways (4:27). What were the king's problems? Lack of mercy to the oppressed is the first identified. The second is apparent when the king loses his reason as he glorifies himself and his accomplishments (4:29-31). So, his problems were the way he treated people and the way he thought of himself. Others he oppressed; himself he exalted.

Those problems still confront us today. Their seriousness is demonstrated in God's seven-year judgment on Nebuchadnezzar. A voice from heaven declared that Nebuchadnezzar was to learn "that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will" (v. 32, RSV). If God is the ruler, then Nebuchadnezzar should obey His laws and change his attitudes and relationships to both God and man. Then Nebuchadnezzar could no longer regard himself as the center of things. As long as he saw himself in that way, he would use his power for self-centered purposes. He was the most powerful person in the world of his time, yet he learned the lesson which God set out to teach him. Nebuchadnezzar was converted and acknowledged that God was his ruler.

It is a lesson needed in the 20th century too. We do not have the power at our disposal that Nebuchadnezzar had. Nevertheless, each one of us has power to some extent, even without a position that bestows power. Personality, information, intelligence, affection, and skills are all examples of powers that we can employ. Each of these, and others, can be used to exalt the self, as Nebuchadnezzar did before his conversion; or they can be used subject to the rule of God, as Nebuchadnezzar did after his conversion. If we are converted, the results will be seen in how we relate to God, putting Him at the center of life instead of self, and how we relate to people, treating them with respect, dignity, mercy, and love.

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Daniel 4:27, 37

**"As with Nebuchadnezzar, our powers can be used to exalt self, or be subject to the rule of God."**

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W. Richard Leshar is the president of Andrews University.

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# The Paradox of Power

by Richard J. Foster

## HOW TO Key text: Mark 9:35

Power is a genuine paradox to believers. We love it, and we hate it. We despise its evil and appreciate its good. We would like to do without it, but we know it is part and parcel of human life.

Our ambivalence about power is resolved in the vow of service. . . . In the everlasting kingdom of Christ, low is high, down is up, weak is strong, service is power. Do you sincerely want to engage in the ministry of power? Do you want to be a leader who is a blessing to people? Do you honestly want to be used of God to heal human hurts? Then learn to become a servant to all. "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). The ministry of power functions through the ministry of the towel.

*Service means saying no to the power games of modern society.* We refute the voices that say, "It's O.K. to be greedy. . . . It's O.K. to look out for Number One. . . . It's O.K. to be Machiavellian. . . . And it's *always* O.K. to be rich."<sup>1</sup> We reject the use of power to dominate and manipulate. We discard the symbols of power and prestige that are used to intimidate others.

*Service means saying yes to true power harnessed for the good of all.* We affirm power that frees and liberates. We rejoice when power is used in the service of truth. Power made obedient to the purposes and ways of Christ is our delight.

*Service means discerning the powers, engaging the powers, and defeating the powers.* We serve people when we disarm evil and set the captives free. Through prayers and tears, fasting and lamentation, we wage the peaceable war of the Lamb of God against all that is contrary to God and His way.

*Service means obedience.* By obedience to the ways of God we come to know the heart of God. By entering the heart of God we are enabled to be of help to people. Wholeness reigns in us, which means effective service for others.

*Service means compassion.* Compassion puts us in touch with all people. "Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless."<sup>2</sup> Compassion gives us the heart to serve.

*Service means "servant leadership."*<sup>3</sup> Our management style focuses as much on meeting the needs of people as it does on getting the job done. We are able to bring out the best in others because we value them as individuals. Our leadership flows out of servanthood; our first and primary drive is to serve, and our desire to serve motivates us to lead.

## REACT

How does the vow of service relate to competition, be it in academics, athletics, business or any other setting?

From *Money, Sex and Power* by Richard J. Foster, pp. 228, 229.

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1. Michael Korda, *Success!* (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 4.

2. Donald P. McNeill, Douglass A. Morrison, and Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1982), p. 4.

3. See *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* by Robert K. Greenleaf (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

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A Quaker theologian, Richard J. Foster is the acclaimed author of *Celebration of Discipline* and *Money, Sex, and Power*.

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# Are We Immune to Power Fever?

by Myrna Castrejon

## OPINION

Key text:  
Daniel 4:12, 37

For centuries, the thirst for power has fueled the passions of men, driving them to formidable feats that have sometimes drastically changed the course of history. Great wars have been fought for no other reason than one person's (or group's) desire to exert control over others.

We don't even have to look too far back into history to pinpoint the effects of power—it is all around us today and it influences every aspect of our lives. For instance, the tension between today's two superpowers could potentially peak and destroy the world's population at the push of a few buttons. And what about the power business magnates exert upon our lives, to the point of determining what level of comfort we achieve and what kind of lifestyle we lead? The same is true of the government, whose influence is felt in the things we do, the way we think, and the things we can purchase.

When we realize the restrictions those in power can impose upon us, it's hard not to feel like a puppet, pulled by a number of strings in different directions. But power is not limited to people only. The greatest Power of all has no limit and its scope reaches far beyond any human power. In fact, all forms of power under the control of this infinite Power, and their continued existence depends on it. Nebuchadnezzar's story is not unique—magnates fail and nations fall when they refuse to recognize who the real source of their power is and start hungering for personal glory.

But what does all this mean to us who will likely never have control over a large empire, financial or political? A great deal. You see, power, like money, is not bad in itself, but only when it becomes the focus of our lives; when its pursuit becomes the driving force in our achievements. It is damaging because it is a selfish pursuit that makes us feel proud, deserving, and completely self-made. When legitimate pursuits become ends in themselves and not means only, they become obstacles between God and us. An over-zealous ambition in our careers, an obsession with greater income, a passion for earning the top grades in our classes, or a blinding desire for promotions and awards warn us that perhaps our lives need refocusing. Then we must examine our desires and compare our goals with eternal goals.

Nebuchadnezzar's experience is a great example of what power and pride can do and, consequently, the effect that reevaluating goals has upon a person's life. And it points out in a straightforward way who is really in charge of the strings that pull the world.

**“Sometimes it's hard not to feel like a puppet, pulled by a number of strings in different directions.”**

## REACT

In what practical ways might a successful business or professional person deal with the spiritual threat of pride and self-sufficiency?

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Myrna Castrejon was a senior public relations major at Andrews University at the time of this writing.

# OUTCOME OF ARROGANCE

“This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians” (Daniel 5:26-28, RSV).



מְנֵינְךָ

# Belshazzar

by Frederick Buechner

**INTRO-  
DUCTION**  
Scripture:  
Daniel 5

There were blocks of ice carved into peacocks, gods, galions in full sail. There were mounds of peeled shrimp and caviar, whole lambs roasted with their forepaws crossed like crusaders, suckling pigs cradled in lilies-of-the-valley and watercress. There were doves of whipped cream and meringue, a huge silver cake in the shape of a five-pointed star. Dwarfs and Nubians waited on a thousand guests. The sound of cymbals shivered across the teak floor where a sixteen-year-old virgin disported herself with a Barbary ape while the flames from basins of scented oil threw their shadows on the whitewashed walls of Belshazzar's palace.

It was all for the Persian ambassadors, who sat there with their absurd bonnets and their beards stiff with pomade. Belshazzar tried to read some clue to their secret thoughts in their little wedge-shaped smiles, but the smiles were as hard to decipher as their cuneiform inscriptions. He hadn't had a decent sleep for a week. His head was splitting. One of the eunuchs was nickering behind him like a mare in heat.

When the handwriting started to appear on the flame-lit wall, most people thought it was more of the floor show, and when Belshazzar offered an extravagant reward to anyone who could translate it properly, several senior ministers proposed various comic

obscenities before they saw the king was serious as death. So finally he had them summon Daniel (q.v.), his late father's pet Jew and an expert on evil omens.

Daniel pointed out that among other things, the tables were laden with sacred vessels that had been looted from the Temple in Jerusalem. Some of them were clogged with cigarette butts. A big golden one inscribed with a name too holy to be spoken had been used by a concubine who had made herself sick on too much shrimp. A magenta-wigged creature of indeterminate sex was wearing another as a hat.

Like worshiping gods made of wood and stone, Daniel said, all this was another example of Belshazzar's fatal habit of getting the sacred and the profane hopelessly confused. Pointing to the ice-carved idols whose faces had already started running down their shirtfronts, Daniel said that what the handwriting on the wall meant in a nutshell was: *The Party is Over.*

Sure enough, that very night, not long after the last guest had staggered home, Belshazzar was stabbed to death in sight of the Persian ambassadors with their wedge-shaped smiles, and just as the dwarfs were leading the exhausted ape home, Darius the Great, King of Persia, took Belshazzar's Babylon the way Grant took Richmond.

Excerpted from *Peculiar Treasures* by Frederick Buechner, pp. 16, 17. Copyright © 1979 by Frederick Buechner. Used by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers.

Frederick Buechner (pronounced BEEK-ner) is a Presbyterian minister and author.

Sunday, February 1 53

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# A Party, A Riddle, and a Dynasty Falls

by Barry L. Casey

**LOGOS** Theme: The consequences of a profane, arrogant way of life are demonstrated in the judgment on Belshazzar.

## 1. A Party Crashed (read Dan. 5:1-9)

Unlike Nebuchadnezzar before him, Belshazzar seems to have been content partying rather than annexing neighboring countries. He apparently lacked the skills and drive to be a military or political strategist of any note, for our only glimpse of him is this sobering episode on the night of his death. His desecration of the sacred vessels from the sanctuary in Jerusalem points to a kind of juvenile excess in the heat of the moment. The author's mention, in this chapter, of drinking wine and praising the gods of silver and stone seems calculated to establish a connection between dissolute living and idolatry, rather than to reveal the machinations of a brilliantly evil mind. Belshazzar isn't brilliant; he's a man who inherited his wealth and power rather than working for it. He really doesn't seem to have a clue about the deeper things of life. He knows enough, however, to be afraid of the hand that writes mysterious phrases on the wall.

## 2. Help on the Way (read Dan. 5:10-12)

In the midst of the din the queen (some commentators identify her as the queen mother) announces to the king and his court that there is someone who can interpret such omens. He was renowned in Nebuchadnezzar's court, she says, as someone who could interpret dreams, explain riddles and unbind spells. Interestingly, she has absolute confidence in Daniel (or Belteshazzar as Nebuchadnezzar called him), despite his being a foreigner and a worshiper of another god. In fact, she states that Daniel has "a godlike wisdom" and is imbued with "the spirit of the holy gods." Perhaps she had been a secret believer in Yahweh for years. In any case, she boldly claims Daniel can interpret the writing because he has the spirit of the gods, a spirit, she seems to imply, which the confused and ineffectual magicians and Chaldeans obviously do not have or they would have figured out the meaning of the phrase.

*Dreams have always played a key role in God's communication to people. What parallels are there between the queen's and Pilate's wife's experience (Matt. 27:19)?*

## 3. Enter the Riddle-Solver (read Dan. 5:13-16)

The king will try anything. So desperate is he that he immediately vows extravagant rewards for Daniel's services. Sensing that his doom is imminent, he attempts to bribe the "divine" through Daniel and thus avert his certain fate.

*Compare Belteshazzar's action to Balak's pathetic attempts to redirect Balaam's prophecy in a favorable direction (Num. 23, 24).*

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Barry L. Casey owns and operates a publications consulting service in Takoma Park, Maryland.

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#### 4. The Riddle Unraveled (read Dan. 5:17-30)

Daniel scorns the offer and sternly denounces the king's conduct. In his view, Belshazzar has not benefited from the example of Nebuchadnezzar who was raised to power, brought low, and restored to power—all at God's hand. Moreover, the king is stupid, his blindness akin to that of Rehoboam, the stupid son of wise King Solomon (1 Kings 12:1-20). Daniel's scorn for the king's impudence is matched only by his astonishment at the king's ignorance of the God who holds his very life and breath in his hands (v. 23).

The interpretation of the mysterious message is that Babylon, despite its power, is really a lightweight in history. It has been weighed and is found to be lacking in real historical and spiritual substance. It will fall and be destroyed.

The story seems to end in a strangely touching way. Having seen his fate and accepted it, the king appears to be liberated from his blindness and obstinacy to face his death with dignity. He offers the rewards and Daniel accepts, perhaps sensing that this is the king's belated attempt to be reconciled to the divine through Daniel.

*What characteristics do you see in the key characters of Daniel 5: Belshazzar, the queen, Daniel? Do they typify different approaches to life that people continue to take today?*

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# The Way to Unlimited Usefulness

compiled by David A. Borton

## TESTIMONY

Key text:

Daniel 5:20-22

"My brother, in doing the work of God you will be placed in a variety of circumstances which will require self-possession and self-control. . . .

If you form too high an opinion of yourself, you will think that your labors are of more real consequence than they are, and you will plead individual independence which borders on arrogance. If you go to the other extreme and form too low an opinion of yourself, you will feel inferior and will leave an impression of inferiority which will greatly limit the influence that you might have for good. You should avoid either extreme. Feelings should not control you; circumstances should not affect you. You may form a correct estimate of yourself, one which will prove a safeguard from both extremes. You may be dignified without vain self-confidence; you may be condescending and yielding without sacrificing self-respect or individual independence, and your life may be of great influence with those in the higher as well as the lower walks of life."<sup>1</sup>

"Day by day God instructs His children. By the circumstances of the daily life He is preparing them to act their part upon that wider stage to which His providence has appointed them. It is the issue of the daily test that determines their victory or defeat in life's great crisis."<sup>2</sup>

"Not the great things which every eye and every tongue praises does God account most precious. The little duties cheerfully done. The little gifts which make no show, and which to human eyes may appear worthless, often stand highest in His sight."<sup>3</sup>

"He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."<sup>4</sup>

"Pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary. He who beholds the Saviour's matchless love will be elevated in thought, purified in heart, transformed in character."<sup>5</sup>

## REACT

How can we avoid the extremes of arrogance and feelings of inferiority when it comes to relating to authority in the church, school and government? What about in relation to fellow students and colleagues?

**"The little duties cheerfully done . . . often stand highest in God's sight."**

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 505, 506

2. *Desire of Ages*, p. 382.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 615.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 251.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 661.

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David A. Borton is a financial aid counselor at Andrews University.

# Awed and Odd

by Patrick B. Morrison

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," warned philosopher George Santayana. Belshazzar was among those condemned by this failure. He knew of his grandfather's dreams and his attempt to glorify himself in the place of God. He knew about Nebuchadnezzar's bout with madness as a result of his sins, and about his miraculous deliverance and conversion. Yet Belshazzar apparently ignored it all. He became proud and arrogant. He didn't learn the vital lesson that to turn your back on God is ruin.

Not that Belshazzar didn't have a chance to learn his lessons and take advantage of divine guidance. The prophet Daniel, who had been such an influence in Nebuchadnezzar's life, was still active in the Babylonian court. He could have told Belshazzar that the self-indulgent course he had begun would lead to ruin for himself and for Babylon. He could have opened God's will to Belshazzar just as he had done for Nebuchadnezzar—if Belshazzar had been willing to listen and change.

The Christian church has had its prophets, just as the rulers of Babylon had Daniel. But have we also failed to learn our lessons? Our prophets have tried to give us a vision of our destiny and mission in this world—that we are to be a prophetic voice, a priestly community, a people set apart. 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (RSV). Are we heeding this message? Will we learn from Belshazzar's experience before it is too late?

*The Interpreter's Bible*, commenting on 1 Peter 2:9 says, "The function of the church derives from its nature. To be sure, its primary business is to be the church, i.e., a genuine community of living disciples of Christ. Not that they will possess any of the qualities of the Christian life in perfection, but that they shall witness to that differential in spirit which faith in Christ makes. Further, they are to be a priestly community in which the worship of the God and Father of Jesus Christ will be not only a stated form of liturgy but a constant attitude, until all of life shall be brought into a sacramental relation with the Creator, Judge, and Redeemer."<sup>1</sup>

Are we disciples and imitators of Christ? Are we distinguishable from the masses we seek to evangelize? Another prophet to the church has said, "When we are what we ought to be we will appear odd."<sup>2</sup> Belshazzar's tragic story should cause us to reflect on our willingness to respond to the divine call.

## REACT

In what particular ways should we be "odd" in relationship to modern society?

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
1 Peter 2:9

"Our prophets have tried to give us a vision of our destiny and mission."

1. *Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 12, p. 111.  
2. *Education*, p. 289.

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# The Pitfall of a Pleasant Routine

## HOW TO

Key text:

1 John 2:15-17

When life becomes a comfortable, pleasant routine and the pastel dreams of youth stand framed in reality, too easily God is set aside and the memory of His sustaining grace is syphoned off by possessions and pleasures. As illustrated by the case of Belshazzar, money, power and fame, whether possessed or only desired, can usurp the rightful throne of God.

Occasional crises may come, shattering our misshapen view of reality, driving home the truth about what is important. But for most of us, these occasions don't determine the direction of our lives. It's the daily routine that is decisive.

So, how can the pitfalls of materialism be avoided in the routine of life?

1. **Keep in mind your economic station.** There will probably always be many above you with vaster wealth to give away than you could ever hope for. But there will also always be millions below you with needs that far exceed your own.

2. **As you see those in need, practice generosity.** As you do this, the truth of Jesus' statement that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) will become self-evident. The pleasure of possessions will be replaced by the joy of giving.

3. **Pray the famous prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi.** The version below is songwriter John Michael Talbot's adaptation of the traditional prayer.

"How can  
the pitfalls  
of materialism  
be avoided  
in the routine  
of life?"

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace  
Where there is hatred, let me show love  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is doubting, let me bring faith  
And Lord, make me an instrument of your peace  
Where there is darkness—your light  
Where there is sadness let me bring your joy.

Oh Divine Master, grant that I might seek  
Not so much to be consoled, but to console  
To be understood as to understand  
Not so much to be loved as to love another  
For it is in giving that we now receive  
It is in pardoning that we are now pardoned  
And it is in dying that we are now born again.<sup>1</sup>

E. R. M.

1. "Peace Prayer  
(St. Francis)"  
From the album  
*Come to the Quiet*.

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# The World's Last Night

by C. S. Lewis

The doctrine of the Second Coming has failed, so far as we are concerned, if it does not make us realize that at every moment of every year in our lives Donne's question "What if this present were the world's last night?" is equally relevant.

Sometimes this question has been pressed upon our minds with the purpose of exciting fear. I do not think that is its right use. I am, indeed, far from agreeing with those who think all religious fear barbarous and degrading and demand that it should be banished from the spiritual life. Perfect love, we know, casteth out fear. But so do several other things—ignorance, alcohol, passion, presumption, and stupidity. It is very desirable that we should all advance to that perfection of love in which we shall fear no longer; but it is very undesirable, until we have reached that stage, that we should allow any inferior agent to cast out our fear. The objection to any attempt at perpetual trepidation about the Second Coming is, in my view, quite a different one: namely, that it will certainly not succeed. Fear is an emotion: and it is quite impossible—even physically impossible—to maintain any emotion for very long. A perpetual excitement of hope about the Second Coming is impossible for the same reason. Crisis-feeling of any sort is essentially transitory. Feelings come and go, and when they come a good use can be made of them: they cannot be our regular spiritual diet.

What is important is not that we should always fear (or hope) about the End but that we should always remember, always take it into account. An analogy may here help. A man of seventy need not be always feeling (much less talking) about his approaching death: but a wise man of seventy should always take it into account. He would be foolish to embark on schemes which presuppose twenty more years of life: he would be criminally foolish not to make—indeed, not to have made long since—his will. Now, what death is to each man, the Second Coming is to the whole human race. We all believe, I suppose, that a man should "sit loose" to his own individual life, should remember how short, precarious, temporary, and provisional a thing it is; should never give all his heart to anything which will end when his life ends. What modern Christians find it harder to remember is that the whole life of humanity in this world is also precarious, temporary, provisional.

Any moralist will tell you that the personal triumph of an athlete or of a girl at a ball is transitory: the point is to remember that an empire or a civilisation is also transitory. All achievements and triumphs, in so far as they are merely this-worldly achievements and triumphs, will come to nothing in the end. Most scientists here join hands with the theologians; the earth will not always be habitable. Man, though longer-lived than men, is equally mortal. The difference is that whereas the scientists expect only a slow decay from within, we reckon with sudden interruption from without—at any moment. ("What if this present were the world's last night?")

Taken by themselves, these considerations might seem to invite a

## OPINION

**Key Text:**  
Daniel 5:26, 27

**"Any attempt at perpetual trepidation about the Second Coming will certainly not succeed."**

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C. S. Lewis was a professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University and author of several popular books on theology.

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**“Man, though longer-lived than men, is equally mortal.”**

relaxation of our efforts for the good of posterity: but if we remember that what may be upon us at any moment is not merely an End but a Judgment, they should have no such result. They may, and should, correct the tendency of some moderns to talk as though duties to posterity were the only duties we had. I can imagine no man who will look with more horror on the End than a conscientious revolutionary who has, in a sense sincerely, been justifying cruelties and injustices inflicted on millions of his contemporaries by the benefits which he hopes to confer on future generations: generations who, as one terrible moment now reveals to him, were never going to exist. Then he will see the massacres, the faked trials, the deportations, to be all ineffaceably real, an essential part, his part, in the drama that has just ended: while the future Utopia had never been anything but a fantasy.

Frantic administration of panaceas to the world is certainly discouraged by the reflection that “this present” might be “the world’s last night”; sober work for the future, within the limits of ordinary morality and prudence, is not. For what comes is Judgment: happy are those whom it finds labouring in their vocations, whether they were merely going out to feed the pigs or laying good plans to deliver humanity a hundred years hence from some great evil. The curtain has indeed now fallen. Those pigs will never in fact be fed, the great campaign against White Slavery or Governmental Tyranny will never in fact proceed to victory. No matter; you were at your post when the Inspection came.

Our ancestors had a habit of using the word “Judgment” in this context as if it means simply “punishment”: hence the popular expression, “It’s a judgment on him.” I believe we can sometimes render the thing more vivid to ourselves by taking judgment in a stricter sense: not as the sentence or award, but as the Verdict. Some day (and “What if this present were the world’s last night?”) an absolutely correct verdict—if you like, a perfect critique—will be passed on what each of us is.

We have all encountered judgments or verdicts on ourselves in this life. Every now and then we discover what our fellow creatures really think of us. I don’t of course mean what they tell us to our faces: that we usually have to discount. I am thinking of what we sometimes overhear by accident or of the opinions about us which our neighbours or employees or subordinates unknowingly reveal in their actions: and of the terrible, or lovely, judgments artlessly betrayed by children or even animals. Such discoveries can be the bitterest or sweetest experiences we have. But of course both the bitter and the sweet are limited by our doubt as to the wisdom of those who judge. We always hope that those who so clearly think us cowards or bullies are ignorant and malicious; we always fear that those who trust us or admire us are misled by partiality. I suppose the experience of the Final Judgment (which may break in upon us at any moment) will be like these little experiences, but magnified to the Nth.

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For it will be infallible judgment. If it is favorable we shall have no fear, if unfavorable, no hope, that it is wrong. We shall not only believe, we shall know, known beyond doubt in every fibre of our appalled or delighted being, that as the Judge has said, so we are: neither more nor less nor other. We shall perhaps even realise that in some dim fashion we could have known it all along. We shall know and all creation will know too: our ancestors, our parents, our wives or husbands, our children. The unanswerable and (by then) self-evident truth about each will be known to all.

I do not find that pictures of physical catastrophe—that sign in the clouds, those heavens rolled up like a scroll—help one so much as the naked idea of Judgment. We cannot always be excited. We can, perhaps, train ourselves to ask more and more often how the thing which we are saying or doing (or failing to do) at each moment will look when the irresistible light streams in upon it; that light which is so different from the light of this world—and yet, even now, we know just enough of it to take it into account. Women sometimes have the problem of trying to judge by artificial light how a dress will look by daylight. That is very like the problem of all of us: to dress our souls not for the electric lights of the present world but for the daylight of the next. The good dress is the one that will face that light. For that light will last longer.

**“The unanswerable and (by then) self-evident truth about each will be known to all.”**

Excerpted from *The World's Last Night*  
by C. S. Lewis,  
pp. 109-113.  
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# DANIEL'S DARING

"My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight" (Daniel 6:22, NIV).



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# Of Smiling Cats

by Esther F. Ramharacksingh Rosado

When I was much younger, I remember thinking about the "time of trouble" and all the persecution. I wasn't real sure I wanted to be alive to experience that awful time. I thought of the Christians who had been thrown to the lions in times past and of Daniel in the lions' den. He was fortunate to have survived, but I thought what a horrid night that must have been. The pictures I had seen of Daniel in the lions' den implied that he stood all night while the hungry lions stalked around him licking their chops, waiting for their evening meal. But then I heard Dick Duerksen, in a Week of Prayer sermon, visualize the scene in a much different way:

Imagine Daniel, now an aged man, being shoved into the lions' pit, yet his guardian angel gently lowers him to the earth below. And instead of Daniel standing all night, picture him at rest—not huddled in a corner, but enjoying the

warmth and softness of a lion's mane for his pillow, as the purring of the smiling cats lulls him to sleep.

Then, early in the morning, Daniel is awakened by his friend, the king, who calls down to him to see if he has survived the night. "Survived?" Daniel thinks. He had almost forgotten where he was. Had he not spent the night with smiling cats in the presence of angels? "Daniel," the king calls, "was the God you serve so loyally able to save you from the lions?"

"Yes indeed," comes Daniel's reply as he nuzzles his nighttime companions for one last time before being raised out of the pit for his happy reunion with the king.

Pastor Duerksen's picture of "smiling cats" taught me something new about God and His love for me—an old story with a new twist.

May the adventure of Daniel 6 teach us about commitment to principle through God's power and His love for us.

**INTRO-  
DUCTION**  
Scripture:  
Daniel 6

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# Defiance and Deliverance

**LOGOS** Theme: The divine lawgiver frustrates the persecuting program of the earth's highest lawgiver, and faithful Daniel is delivered from the lions.

## 1. The Plot (read Dan. 6:1-9)

*"Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel . . ." (6:3, 4, NIV).*

Although there is no indication of how much time passed between the fall of Babylon to Darius and the events of chapter six, logic would seem to indicate a relatively short period. Just long enough for Daniel to exhibit his administrative genius, but not long enough for him to shed his image as an outsider. The new government was no doubt still in transition, with Darius casting about for just the right combination of individuals and command structures to govern effectively. This need, together with Daniel's stellar performance, prompted Darius' decision to promote Daniel to a position of authority second only to his own. Unfortunately, support for this action was hardly unanimous.

Whether or not the other administrators and satraps disliked Daniel personally and resented his foreign origin, the king's proposal was a political threat to them. They were loath to allow an additional administrative level to separate them from the source of power. To these hungry power seekers, this was reason enough to plot Daniel's downfall.

The scheme concocted by the "committee of 122" may seem simplistic to modern minds, but in ancient terms it was quite daring. According to one commentator, "Change of governments sometimes led to religious riots because of antagonism to new systems of worship. A lull in religious activities could well be considered a safeguard against an uprising. . . . [It may be] that an emergency was claimed to be at the root of this strategy. This would explain also why Darius did not wait to consult with one of his presidents, the absent Daniel."<sup>1</sup>

*What qualities made Daniel a distinguished administrator? Is it possible for Christians to serve in governments today without compromising their faith?*

## 2. Daniel Defies the Decree (read Dan. 6:10-18)

*"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before" (6:10, NIV).*

Daniel's actions after the publication of the decree betray no flaunting of authority, no desire to provoke his enemies, no aspira-

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tions to martyrdom. He simply goes on carrying out his responsibilities—first and foremost to the heavenly Authority—“just as he had done before.” Daniel’s defiance of the decree is a calm assertion that his God is more important to him than any possible earthly consequences.

The conspirators left nothing to chance. They made sure the king knew he could not revoke his decree before they dropped their bombshell. Apparently, they were certain that Darius would not set a precedent and annul his own decree. This fact clearly points to Darius’ moral weakness. Like Herod and Pilate in a later time, Darius made some effort to rescue his innocent prisoner, but in the end his sense of justice and integrity crumbled in the face of hostile opinion. He was unwilling to take a stand for right if it meant the mere possibility of endangering his power and influence.

*Are there public expressions of faith that we, like Daniel, need to maintain regardless of the consequences?*

### 3. Daniel’s Deliverance (read 6:19-28)

“My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight” (6:22, NIV).

This story has a happy ending. But unlike the moral drawn in so many bedtime stories, God does not guarantee miraculous delivery from every danger for even the most faithful of His followers. Instead, the emphasis must be that God is *able* to deliver, “but as to whether he will or will not do so must ever be left in His hands to decide. He did not deliver Daniel from the decree of the king or from the terror of being thrust alive into the den of famished lions. In New Testament times he did not deliver John the Baptist. And in subsequent ages many martyrs left to perish were comforted as they recalled that one whose fidelity had been attested by Christ Himself had yet been permitted to suffer.”<sup>2</sup>

Daniel’s salvation was broadcast throughout the empire courtesy of Darius’ proclamation (vv. 25-28). Thus the people and cause of God were undoubtedly aided as they would not have been had Daniel been allowed to perish. The moral, then, is not that God will always save, but that He sees and remembers and works in all things for the good of those that love Him.

*How would you explain v. 24 to someone who accuses the biblical God of being vindictive? What point is this verse making in the context of the chapter and the entire theme of Daniel?*

L. R. C.

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1. Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), p. 134.  
2. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

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# Fearless Fidelity

by Robert J. Cruise

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Daniel 6:10

Daniel was a man with an "excellent spirit" (Dan. 6:3), and King Darius, having observed this quality, appointed him to be first in command over his kingdom. Others within Darius' administration, however, felt that this honored position should be reserved for one of their own, and certainly not a Jew. "The keen eyes of jealousy were fixed upon Daniel day after day; their watchings were sharpened by hatred; yet not a word or act of his life could they make appear wrong. And still he made no claim to sanctification, but he did that which was infinitely better—he lived a life of faithfulness and consecration."<sup>1</sup>

"The more blameless the conduct of Daniel, the greater was the hatred excited against him by his enemies. They were filled with madness, because they could find nothing in his moral character or in the discharge of his duties upon which to base a complaint against him."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the conspirators changed their tactics, attempting to turn Daniel's integrity against him. "The prophet's enemies counted on Daniel's firm adherence to principle for the success of their plan. And they were not mistaken in their estimate of his character. He quickly read their malignant purpose in framing the decree, but he did not change his course in a single particular. . . . With calmness he performed his duties as chief of the princes; and at the hour of prayer he went to his chamber, and with his windows open toward Jerusalem, in accordance with his usual custom, he offered his petition to the God of heaven. He did not try to conceal his act. Although he knew full well the consequences of his fidelity to God, his spirit faltered not. Before those who were plotting his ruin, he would not allow it even to appear that his connection with Heaven was severed. In all cases where the king had a right to command, Daniel would obey; but neither the king nor his decree could make him swerve from allegiance to the King of kings. Thus the prophet boldly yet quietly and humbly declared that no earthly power has a right to interpose between the soul and God. Surrounded by idolaters, he was a faithful witness to this truth. His dauntless adherence to right was a bright light in the moral darkness of that heathen court. Daniel stands before the world today a worthy example of Christian fearlessness and fidelity."<sup>3</sup>

**"Daniel would not allow it even to appear that his connection with Heaven was severed."**

## REACT

What specific actions in today's world parallel Daniel's practice of praying three times each day with his window open toward Jerusalem?

1. *The Sanctified Life*,

p. 42.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

3. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 540-542.

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# Living With Lions

by Steve Case

Nobody has ever mistaken me for Samson—or David for that matter. With their bare hands they were able to tear apart lions (Judges 14:5, 6; 1 Samuel 17:33-37). At zoos, I keep a healthy distance from the catlike carnivores. I can relate better to the unnamed prophet of Judah. A lion killed him but did nothing to his donkey, passing humans, or even those who retrieved his corpse (see 1 Kings 13:23-29). It's more difficult for me to relate to the story of Daniel and the lion's den. It often seems incredible, remote from my experience. Yet it carries a relevant message.

The apocalyptic book of Daniel actually contains two different kinds of stories. About half predict the future that culminates in the reign of God. They tell *what* will happen. The other half provide illustrations of what to do in light of this future. They tell *how* to live. From Daniel's predictions, it becomes obvious that persecution will come to God's people (Dan. 7:7; 8:24; 9:25-27). From Daniel's experience in the lions' den, we can gain courage to face persecution—even wild beasts!

To a first- or second-century Christian, the story of Daniel in the lions' den should have provided some encouragement. But that 600-year-old story might have seemed rather farfetched as the mouths of many lions continued to consume Christians in the Roman Coliseum. And what about today? Could I really sing with enthusiasm "Dare to Be a Daniel" when the lions dare to devour me?

Fortunately, however, Christians today are not persecuted by being thrown to lions. So we spiritualize the meaning of 1 Peter 5:8: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Which raises the question, "In what way is Satan seeking to devour us in 1987?" It seems much more preferable to be in a didactic discussion than to be a delectable dessert. Bring on the spiritual lions; save us from the "real" ones.

But are the metaphorical lions really less fearsome than literal ones? Some people we must deal with from day to day are as untamed and fierce as lions, and they can be a constant source of "persecution." Like lions, they prey on those who seem weak and vulnerable, or who threaten their power. Daniel's enemies attacked him from jealousy concerning his ability and political advancement (Dan. 6:1-9). Daniel's night in the lions' den was probably more peaceful than his days with the "wild beasts" he encountered at court.

So lions or no lions, the story of Daniel's rescue from savage and vindictive human enemies can give us courage when we suffer at the hands of others, and faith that God will be our strength and shield just as He was Daniel's.

## REACT

1. What "lions" do you face? What are your options in dealing with them?
2. Why did God protect Daniel in the lions' den, but let the early Christians be consumed in the Coliseum?

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
1 Peter 5:8

"How is Satan seeking to devour us in 1987?"

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Steve Case is an assistant professor of youth ministry at Andrews University.

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# Looking to God

by Marv Atchley and Margaret Stauffer

## HOW TO Key text: Daniel 6:10

When confronted with the story of Daniel and the lions' den, it is tempting to try to figure out how Daniel got to be so courageous, brave and unswerving—to see if it's a program we could copy.

But we believe this is the wrong way to approach Daniel 6. Behavior is not the place for us to start. In fact, emphasis on behavior may play into the devil's hand, because it puts the focus on ourselves, not on God. This is what the Pharisees did. Yet God says He doesn't look primarily on the external, the behavior; He looks inside at the heart, the attitude.

What made Daniel different from the Pharisees? He looked to God while they looked to themselves. Daniel was overpowered by the love and goodness of God—God's presence was with him. He had vivid, powerful examples of what God could do. He knew his friends had been delivered from the furnace. He had visions of events to come. Daniel revered God so much that he prayed three times a day, conversing with Him as with a close friend or respected mentor. This relationship with God sustained Daniel through the difficult and discouraging times of the Jewish exile in Babylon.

Daniel didn't try to do anything out of the ordinary when faced with the death decree. He didn't all of a sudden say, "I'd better pray ten times a day so God will be sure to listen to me." He went about doing what he'd always done, because he knew that the solution didn't rest with him. Like Job before him, he was content in the knowledge that if he stayed in God's hands, the best would come about.

**"Daniel trusted God because he knew God."**

All that *we* need to *do* is get to know God—that should be the focus of all our striving. Do we have poor concepts of God that need to be corrected? Do we feel, deep down inside, that God really isn't there for us? Or that He is harsh, demanding, and out to get us if we blow it? Do we go through the motions of obeying because we're afraid we'll ultimately be destroyed if we don't? That kind of God would not be worthy of worship. And if we have these pictures of God buried inside, it's no wonder we have a difficult time loving Him.

To change these pictures, or others like them, we need to confront them head on. Try describing what you think God is like after you get past the clichés. Maybe your descriptions belong with a harsh parent or punitive teacher rather than with God. Once you really know what you've been feeling about God, it's time to see if your pictures are true.

You can get to know God through the Bible, through openly sharing your questions with Him, and by seeing a glimpse of Him in special people. If we're willing, *God* is able to do the rest. That is what set Daniel apart. He trusted God because he *knew* God, and he knew that was all he needed to do.

## REACT

Does your mental image of God interfere with your relationship with Him? What is the "correct" mental image of God? How do we know?

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Seminarian Marv Atchley and counselor Margaret Stauffer are a husband and wife team who look at the interplay between theology and psychology. They are presently at Andrews University.

68 Thursday, February 12

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# The Darius Syndrome

by Mike Seaman

What if the lions had chowed down? What if Darius had arrived at the lions' den early in the morning and instead of hearing Daniel's voice had only heard contented lions licking their chops? As it happened, Daniel *was* saved and the king *did* issue a decree proclaiming Daniel's God to be the living God. So what? In such close proximity to a miracle, any king would have done the same. It wasn't an expression of great faith. If God had thought it best to refrain from sending his angel to aid Daniel in his predicament, perhaps Darius would have mourned his friend's death and then reemphasized his original decree that all men should worship him, the king.

King Darius was not completely without faith in the God of Heaven. He had just enough to keep him worried. Scripture informs us that Darius did not begin his mourning period the night he watched Daniel lowered in with the lions. Nor did he sleep peacefully. Instead, he worried. And wondered. Darius's faith hung in the balance that night. It all depended on what happened to Daniel.

The Darius Syndrome lives on. The faith of many Christians today is dependent upon how closely God's leading seems to coincide with *their* will rather than *His* will. We think we are willing to commit ourselves one hundred percent to the Lord. The problem arises when we realize that one hundred percent commitment means giving up something that we have always associated with our happiness.

To be less than totally committed to God presents an uncomfortable dilemma. There are implications for our lives that are implicit in the definition of God. God must be worshiped, revered, and obeyed. Otherwise we have not really made Him our God.

The first decree Darius placed his seal upon may indeed be the decree that many of us have issued. We may be proclaiming ourselves the only god that is to be recognized in our lives. There is only one way to change the decree. Submission to God. Submission to Him in good times and in bad times; when it makes us happy and when it doesn't; when we agree with Him and when we don't. If we are thrown to the lions someday, pray for His protection. And if the lions make us their midday snack, big deal. He knows what's best.

## REACT

What motivation do we have to submit to God if we can't count on Him delivering us when we are persecuted or threatened with death?

## OPINION

Key text:  
Romans 8:28-39

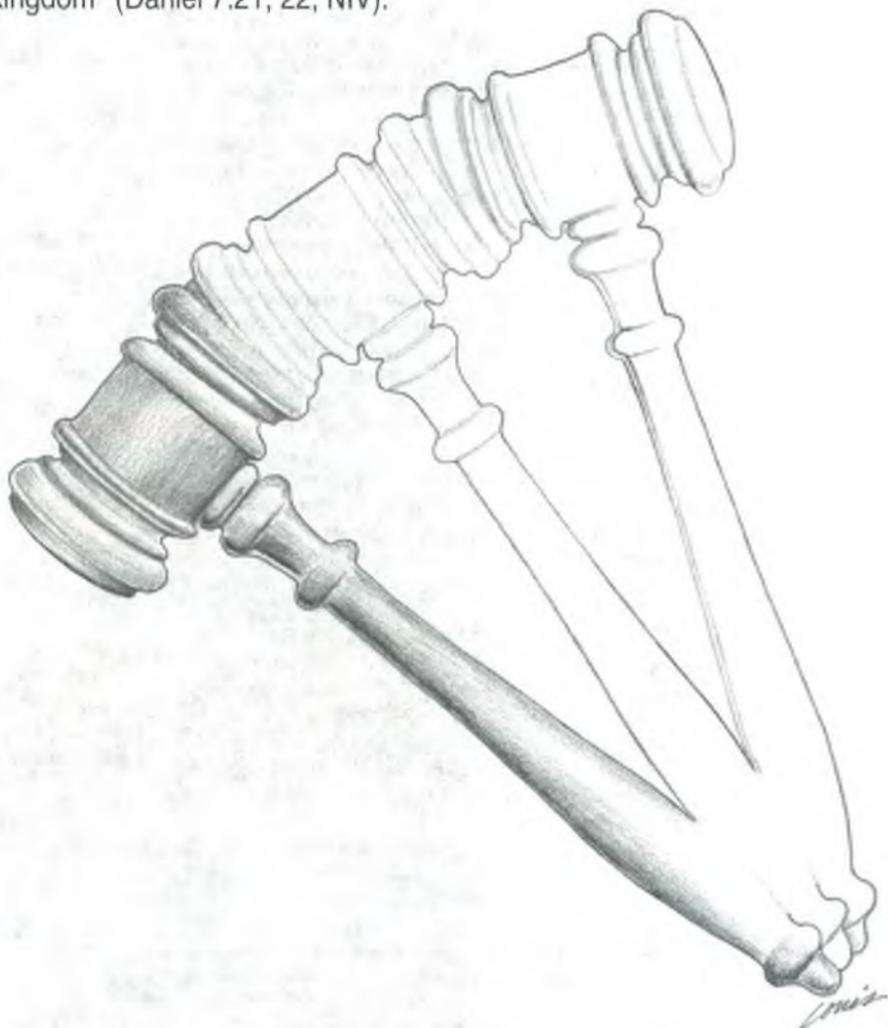
"Darius's faith hung in the balance—it all depended on what happened to Daniel."

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Mike Seaman is working on a Ph.D. in research and statistics at Andrews University.

# VERDICT FROM THE HIGHEST COURT

"As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom" (Daniel 7:21, 22, NIV).



# The Big Day

by Wilma Zalabak

The big day will come.

I mark it on my calendar.

I count back from it to today and note the daily assignments necessary to get ready.

I set aside time to do these assignments. I skip some things I might otherwise have done. My lifestyle changes.

Now it's the night before. The big day is tomorrow. All the assignments are done. I block out distractions and concentrate.

Oh, no! Is this a sore throat coming on? What if I should get sick and miss the big day?

I try to organize my thinking, but the telephone rings. Can I present worship for the elementary school tomorrow? No, sorry, not tomorrow.

I have waited anxiously for the big day. It will be my opportunity—my turn. What if the big day never really comes? Oh, but it will! Back to the preparation!

Now it's the big day, the day I've waited for, my day of opportunity. I will drive over

to claim my prize.

Hoot! Whistle! Rumble! As I brake hard, the train barrels past just inches from my front bumper.

I wait and think. There must be a conspiracy to distract and discourage me—first the sore throat, then a conflicting opportunity, then doubts that the day will ever come, and now this train!

But a few hours later, I emerge from my big exam with an "A."

The big day.

Test day.

Judgment Day.

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As you study this week, think about ways in which a test day parallels the judgment of Daniel 7. In what ways does the illustration fall short? The major purpose of our study will be to discover what kind of judgment is portrayed in Daniel 7, and what is involved in being prepared for it.

**INTRO-  
DUCTION**  
Scripture:  
Daniel 7

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Wilma Zalabak was a sophomore religion major at Southern College and a Bible instructor for the Collegedale Church at the time of this writing.

Sunday, February 15 71

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# The Coming of Divine Equilibrium

by Jerry A. Gladson

## LOGOS

**Theme:** The succession of violent, arrogant earthly powers culminates in the "little horn" power, which directly challenges God and oppresses His people. The divine court passes judgment against the "little horn," and the people of the Most High are given an everlasting kingdom.

### 1. The Vision (read Dan. 7:1-14)

*"Daniel had a dream and visions that passed through his head as he lay in bed" (7:1, Jerusalem Bible).*

This chapter, extremely important because it speaks the final word about the evil empires which have made history a brutal specter of violence, follows a familiar pattern. Beginning with a vision (vv. 1-14), it concludes with an interpretation (vv. 15-27).

Daniel doesn't set down all the details of what he saw; he claims this is the *r'sh milin*, the "essential contents," of the vision (v. 1). Four beasts rise from a churning, boiling sea. The number four, like the four rivers in Gen. 2:10-14 and the four horns in Zech. 2:1, represents the world as a whole. The first beast, a *lion* with eagle's wings, has its wings plucked, and the mind of a man given it (v. 4). A *bear* with three ribs in its mouth (v. 5) then gives way to a bizarre *leopard* with four wings and four heads (v. 6).

The *fourth*, a "terrible and dreadful" beast with iron teeth, however, galvanizes Daniel's attention (vv. 7-8, 19-22). Its imposing threat to the people of God is only halted by the judgment, complete with the commanding presence of the "Ancient of Days," a term applied to God, sitting upon His awesome throne. The *Son of Man*, the Messiah, then appears to wrest control of the kingdom from the worldly empires (vv. 13-14).

*Given Daniel's circumstances, what effect do you think this vision had on him? Does the vision still elicit the same response when we read it? Why or why not?*

### 2. The Interpretation (read Dan. 7:15-28)

*"And sovereignty and kingship, and the splendors of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. His sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty and every empire will serve and obey him" (7:27, Jerusalem Bible).*

The churning, violent *sea*, understood by v. 17 as the "earth," reflects the cosmic description of the world at the beginning of creation: "the earth was without form and void" (Gen. 1:2, RSV). Strife and disorder among nations, the setting in which the kingdoms arise, point to a world gone awry, requiring the Creator's hand (cf. Isa. 17:12-14).

Simply designated "kings" (v. 17) or "kingdoms" (v. 23), the four beasts are not specifically identified, heightening the mystery of the chapter. Since the vision is dated to Babylonian times (the first year

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of the vice-regency of Belshazzar, 554/553 B.C. [v. 1]), it seems plausible that these empires begin with Babylon (the lion). The bear therefore represents Medo-Persia, the leopard Greece (cf. Dan. 8:20, 21), and the fourth beast Rome.

Some preterist\* interpreters prefer, however, to identify the bear with Media, the leopard with Persia, and the dragon-like animal with Greece. Several ancient writings stand against this interpretation. 2 Esdras 12:11-13 and 2 Baruch 39:5, both apocryphal works from the close of the first century A.D., the Jewish historian, Josephus (*Antiquities*, 10.11.7), and several Talmudic and Midrashic passages equate the fourth kingdom with Rome. Ancient testimony, though, isn't consistent. As today, ancient readers of Daniel tended to identify its symbols with contemporary evils. When Egypt under the Ptolemies dominated the Near Eastern landscape in the third and second centuries B.C., the author of one of the Jewish Sibylline Oracles (3:329) felt sure the fourth beast, with "iron teeth," was Egypt!

Rome gives birth to ten kings (v. 24) and a sinister, parasitic horn which quickly gains center stage (vv. 20-25). Many, particularly preterist and futurist commentators,\* recognize in this horn the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ravaged the Jewish people from 168-165 B.C., outlawing the Sabbath and other festivals (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:41-64). But Adventists take the standard historicist view that it represents the work of the papacy, and call attention to the difficulties inherent in the Antiochus view, e.g. he was the eighth king in the Syrian line, not the eleventh (v. 24).<sup>1</sup> Hence the "time, two times, and half a time" (v. 25, RSV) are understood as the period of papal dominance, A.D. 538 to 1798 (1260 years).

The little horn, embodiment of evil, wreaks such havoc that only one thing can stop it—God. A note of triumph therefore dominates v. 26, "but the judgment was convened, and its dominion was removed" (lit. tran.). God, who graciously allows human freedom, knows when to pull in the reins. The judgment, by consigning the little horn to destruction and its dominion to the "saints of the Most High," settles the score and ushers in "an everlasting kingdom" (v. 27, RSV).

Adventists see special significance in the fact that this conclave takes place in heaven. With the heavenly books open, the court deliberates—*prior* to the setting up of the kingdom on earth. In wresting the kingdom from the evil powers, this pre-advent judgment gives reason for celebration, not fear: the verdict of the Highest Court concludes triumphantly in favor of the saints. Divine equilibrium at last prevails.

This week's lesson and others in this series remind us that ultimately the most important thing in the universe is the kingdom of God. Wild-eyed dictators and fanatical despots may shake their vulgar fists at God, but His will and His peace will overcome them all.

*Why do you think God allows the evil powers of the world to exploit, destroy, and overrun the good to the extent this vision depicts?*

\* See next week's Logos section for definitions of the terms preterist and futurist.

1. For details, cf. *Questions on Doctrine*, pp. 317-337.

# The Eternal Choice

by Teresa Scott Williams

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Joshua 24:15

The first vision in Daniel 7 emphasizes the experiences of God's people during the sovereignty of various world powers, and forecasts the ultimate victory of the saints and God's judgment upon their enemies. Just as God gave each empire its power and a chance to know Him, so He does for each individual today. "God exalted Babylon that it might fulfill His purpose. It had its period of test; it failed, its glory faded, its power departed, and its place was occupied by another."<sup>1</sup> Thus God takes away His power when He is rejected.

The actions of the "little horn," the final power envisioned, include "the breaking of God's commandments, and exalting himself above God."<sup>2</sup> "By substituting human law for God's law, Satan will seek to control the world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men."<sup>3</sup> This call is characterized as a choice between the timeless principles of God on one side, and the deceptions of Satan on the other. Today, this deception has taken people to a realm of compromise where truth and lies are mixed to promote a false concept of salvation. This concept deceives the professed Christian and results in a lifestyle consisting of a cycle of sin and forgiveness, with no growth toward a more Christ-like character. As each individual is faced with the choice between compromise and truth, the "character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion."<sup>4</sup>

How does God reward these choices of allegiance? Only those who have chosen God's timeless principles will enjoy the eternal reward. "One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven and came" —not to the earth, but—"to the Ancient of Days" (Dan. 7:13). This verse, Ellen White tells us, is not referring to Christ's second coming to earth, but to the Most Holy Place of the temple of God in heaven where the investigative judgment began.<sup>5</sup> "Only the professed people of God who have come before God with confession and repentance, will be considered in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment."<sup>6</sup> "The solemn day shall come when the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the Judge of all earth, and to every man should be rendered 'according to his work.'"<sup>7</sup> "Those who, like Daniel, purpose in their hearts to love and serve God, may pass by faith from the uncertainty and distress of the present life to the peace and security of life everlasting."<sup>8</sup>

## REACT

1. What are some specific half-truths or areas of compromise we are tempted to accept?

2. What internal evidence do you find in Daniel 7 that it is referring to an investigative judgment of the people of God?

1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 752.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 446.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 763.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *The Great Controversy*, p. 424.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 480.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 479.

8. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 750.

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# The Little Horn and the First Amendment

by Douglas L. Gates

The activities of the little horn of Daniel 7 should cause grave concern to conscientious Christians everywhere. Blaspheming, changing times and laws, and oppressing the people of God are his *modus operandi*. And whenever political power and religious intolerance have joined forces, as they do in the little horn, the consequences for Christians have been tragic.

In America, where religious freedom is rooted in our history, using political power to enforce religion is particularly offensive. Under divine influence, America's founding fathers realized that the only way to prevent it is by complete separation of church and state. So in the First Amendment to the Constitution, the government is prohibited from establishing a national religion—the implication being that the church will also stay out of politics.

This "wall of separation" seemed splendid enough as long as it kept the government from promoting the well-being of one religion over another.<sup>1</sup> Churches were free to function without fear of state interference, and even small denominations felt free to worship without the fear of persecution. Now, however, a conservative Christian element in society is disenchanting. According to them, the church/state wall "has been used to isolate all religious and Christian elements from every aspect of daily life that is touched by the government at any level. . . . What began as a barrier to any state church now serves as a barrier to all religion."<sup>2</sup> The time has come, these people feel, to rescue America from the grip of "secular humanism" and make her the great Christian nation she once was.

Adventists today face an interesting dilemma in regard to church/state relations. As a people we have disturbing visions of secular and apostate religious powers joining forces, Sunday laws being passed, and violent religious persecutions. But we also see the moral decay around us and long for a popular return to Christian virtues and morality.

Adventists, it seems, are faced with two choices: 1) We can continue our historic stand in favor of religious freedom by calling for the complete separation of religion and politics. This choice means we must tolerate a certain amount of secular culture and morality. Or 2) we can join with those who encourage legislation to promote Christian principles in an effort to halt moral decline in this country. In considering this option we should recognize the fact that if the government and religion become partners, something similar to the little horn may reemerge. In fact, Revelation calls it "the image of the beast."

## REACT

1. What contributions might Adventists make to the Moral Majority movement? What cautions might they offer?

2. The author lists only two alternatives for conscientious Adventists in regard to church/state relations. Might there be other alternatives? Might biblical Christianity lead to different alternatives in different situations?

## EVIDENCE

**Key text:**  
**Daniel 7:25**

**"Whenever political power and religious intolerance have joined forces the consequences for Christians have been tragic."**

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1. Harold O. J. Brown, *The Reconstruction of the Republic* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1977), p. 31.  
2. *Ibid.*

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Douglas L. Gates was a senior premedical and theology major at Southern College at the time of this writing.

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# Fear of the End

by Carol Fawcett-Smith

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Daniel 10:12

"I'm not looking forward to the end of time. Are you?" I was stunned by my nephew's question.

"What exactly do you mean by the end of time, Michael?"

"Oh, you know," he responded, "all the beasts and powers of destruction before Jesus comes. What will happen to us? It scares me to think about it."

Michael was raised a Roman Catholic and, if in name only, he holds to this faith. Upon my conversion, I enthusiastically attempted to evangelize my family, but they were not only uninterested, they were hostile towards the Adventist message. But now, after six years in which I've been praying for him, my nephew is searching for truth.

I could understand Michael's fear. Who wouldn't be frightened by the description of the terrible and dreadful beast who with great vengeance devours and destroys the earth (Dan. 7:7)? How could I alleviate Michael's fears and share the hope of glory in a few minutes?

My experience with Michael taught me several points to keep in mind when sharing the prophetic interpretations of Daniel:

1. **First of all, allow the Holy Spirit to prepare hearts and convict souls.** Meet individuals where they are spiritually and proceed with caution.

2. **Make Jesus Christ the central focus of any biblical discussion, especially last-day events.** Individuals must be grounded in the saving knowledge of Christ before we can expect them to fully comprehend eschatology.

3. **Be clear in your discussion of the prophecies, the final judgment and destruction of the wicked, but avoid scare tactics and condemnation.** We do not have to use fear or terror as a means to the kingdom. Many times I have witnessed the biting remarks of church members who condemn the Catholic church, causing fellow Christians to permanently turn away from the Adventist message. It is not our responsibility to judge; the divine court of heaven will pass judgment.

4. **Present a balanced interpretation that includes sharing the good news of Daniel.** Daniel 7 not only speaks of the destructive power of beasts, it also includes a vital passage on the Ancient of Days and His judgment in favor of the saints. Remember that God's character is on trial and present a loving God who has mercy and justice for all.

Daniel himself first expressed fear and distress over the interpretations of his visions (Dan. 7:15, 28). But God granted him peace, understanding and strength (Dan. 10:12, 19). And Michael, though at first frightened and perplexed, now looks forward to the end of time and to the second coming of Christ.

## REACT

What methods might we use to keep our Bible studies Christ-centered instead of beast-centered?

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Carol Fawcett-Smith was working in the division of religion at Southern College at the time of this writing.

"How could I alleviate Michael's fears and share the hope of glory in a few minutes?"

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# A Prophecy of Hope

by Kevin Rice

A few years ago, while rummaging through the glove compartment of my newly acquired hand-me-down car, I found two manuals. One was a technical manual with all the numbers and specifications a mechanic would need to know to fix my car. The other was the owner's manual that described how to drive it. It explained how to start the car, how to use the heater and the window wipers, and where to put the gas, the oil, and the air for the tires. The two manuals were written for different people, but both are necessary for a total understanding of the car.

In the book of Daniel, there are two prophecies that tell about the same period of history. The first, in chapter 2, is the dream about the statue, which Daniel interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar. It has the kind of information a historian would look for, such as the political characteristics of each of the kingdoms. God designed the dream to awaken the king's sense of responsibility in world history.

The second prophecy, in chapter 7, is Daniel's own dream. It is about the spiritual characteristics of the kingdoms and God's people. Daniel saw the faithful persecuted and dominated by each of the four kingdoms, especially the fourth. But he also witnessed the final victory of God's people and the destruction of the powers that tormented them. This is a message of hope and strength for us.

Both dreams are about the same historical events, they even have the same beginning and ending, and both are necessary for a complete picture of history and the future. However, they were given to different audiences.

Both prophecies foretell a time when the world powers are subdued, and history changes drastically. But the prophecy of Daniel 7 reveals more information about God's people. Dominion is given back to Christ, and the kingdom given Him is unlike the others because it will never be destroyed. And although the political powers are allowed to live on a little longer, the important historical development is not political. It is the establishment of the everlasting kingdom which the saints will possess forever.

So why are there two prophecies? Because both are important for a full understanding of human history, just as both manuals are important for a full understanding of my car. The key is in Daniel 7:16-18. God wanted to assure His people that although they may meet with persecution, very soon He will prevail and they will share the kingdom with Him "for ever, even for ever and ever" (7:18). Daniel 2 is a prophecy of history; Daniel 7 is a prophecy of hope.

## REACT

How did Jesus apply the apocalyptic teaching about the kingdom of God (see for example Matt. 4:17; 12:28; 24:9-14)? What is the significance of His teaching about the kingdom for us?

## OPINION

Key text:

Daniel 7:16-18

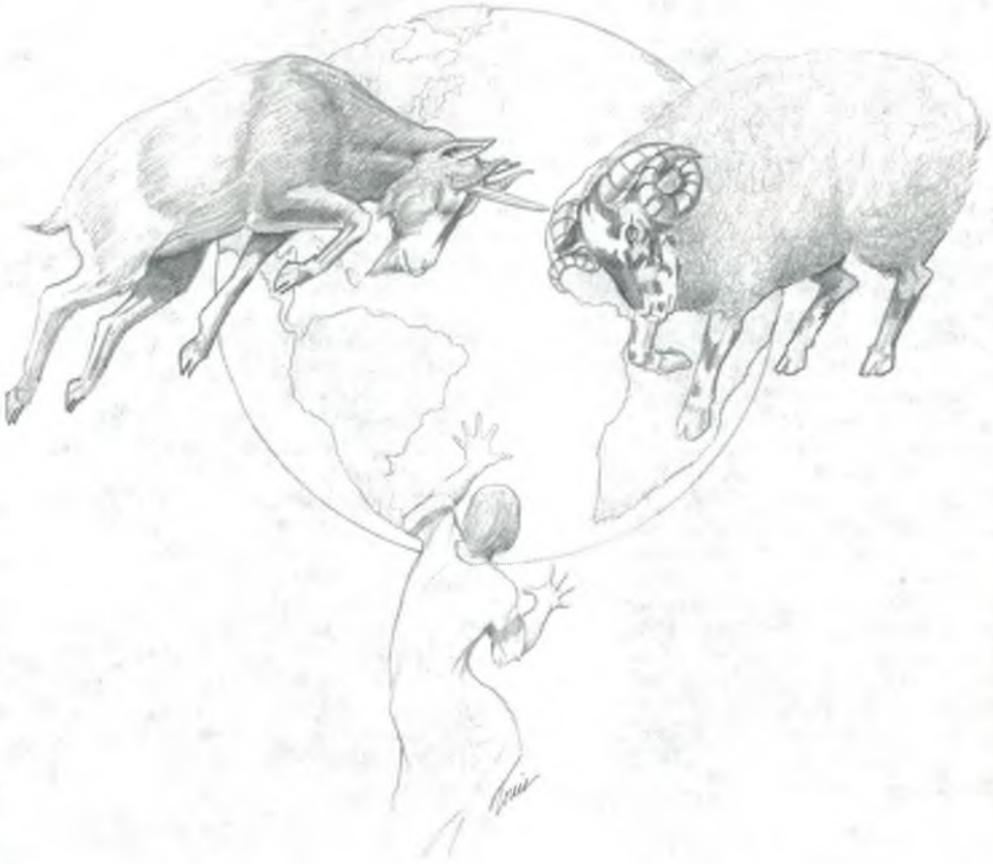
"Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 are both necessary for a complete picture of history and the future."

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Kevin Rice was a senior premedical chemistry major at Southern College at the time of this writing.

# THE SANCTUARY RESTORED

“And he said to him, ‘For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state’ ” (Daniel 8:14, RSV).



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# Unique

by Alden Thompson

The 2300 days and the cleansing of the sanctuary—a unique Adventist interpretation?

Yes. Nobody else interprets Daniel 8 the way Adventists do, for the Adventist interpretation is bound up with the early Adventist experience.

And we should note a striking parallel: Nobody else interprets the Old Testament the way Christians do, for the Christian interpretation is bound up with the disciples' experience with Jesus.

Comparing the early Christian experience with that of the early Adventists can help us discover the meaning of Daniel 8 for our day. Both experiences involved eager anticipation of a kingdom followed by bitter disappointment. In each instance the disappointment was transformed into a new movement. That new movement claimed fresh insight into old prophecies; it focused on Jesus and a deeper understanding of law, sin, and gospel.

In short, a living experience of faith dramatically affected the interpretation of Scripture. The essential message in both instances was an ancient one, only the application of

Scripture was unique.

Jesus said He had come to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matt. 5:17). "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12, RSV). Unselfish love. That was Jesus' message. Nothing new. He simply was law and prophets in the flesh.

Adventists believe God has called us to raise that theme to fresh prominence. In 1861 our first formal basis for fellowship was a simple covenant "to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> That was all—not twenty-seven points, just two.

How does 1844 relate to that simple formula? In brief, the transformed Disappointment resulted in a fresh emphasis on judgment and sanctuary, not as doctrines with independent value, but as landmarks pointing to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

The 1844 packaging was new and unique. But the message is very old. Centuries ago God came in the flesh to recover that lost message. Today He has called a remnant to spread the word again—for the last time, we hope.

**INTRO-  
DUCTION**  
Scripture:  
Daniel 8

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1. Richard Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1979), p. 96.

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# Daniel's Appalling Vision

by Aiden Thompson

**LOGOS** **Theme:** When the turmoil of nations embroils God's sanctuary, He sends a message of reassurance, a promise of restoration to His bewildered saints.

## 1. The Vision (read Dan. 8:1-14)

*"For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state" (8:14, RSV).*

When Babylon's King Belshazzar still ruled the world, Daniel saw another vision of future kingdoms. As with the visions of Daniel 2 and 7, the vision of chapter 8 transcends earthly politics to climax in the realm of the sacred.

The message reverberating throughout the book of Daniel is that of consolation: God's side wins. In Daniel 2, the kingdom of God (the stone) overwhelms all other nations and fills the whole earth. In Daniel 7, the Ancient of Days summons to court the kingdoms of the world, rules in favor of the saints and hands them the kingdom. In Daniel 8, a violent earthly power is swept aside and the downtrodden sanctuary is restored.

The vision of Daniel 8 begins with the battle between the ram and the he-goat, but moves quickly past the victorious goat, the broken great horn, and the four conspicuous horns which replace it. A little horn appears. Expanding its power and authority, it tramples down everything in sight, finally desecrating the sanctuary itself.

The vision closes with a question: "How long will the sanctuary suffer abuse?"

"For 2300 days," comes the response. "Then the sanctuary will be put right."

In other words, God still holds the upper hand. Though the enemy prevails longer than we might wish, God will restore his sanctuary.

*What would be the impact of the vision if one saw it on video—with-out reference to history books or the interpretation which follows?*

## 2. The Interpretation (read Dan. 8:15-26)

*"Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end" (8:17, RSV).*

In Dan. 8:15-26, Gabriel interprets the vision of 8:3-14. It's hard to quarrel with him when his interpretation is clear. But at a number of key points, Gabriel is ambiguous or silent. That's why Daniel 8 is subject to a variety of interpretations. It's helpful to recognize the difference between certainties and ambiguities.

First, the certainties in Gabriel's interpretation: The ram is Medo-Persia, the he-goat is Greece. Gabriel names these explicitly (vv. 20, 21). The he-goat's great horn is the first king of Greece; the four horns are four kingdoms which follow. Though Gabriel gives no names this time, the references point unmistakably to Alexander and the four generals who divided up his kingdom (Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander, and Lysimachus). On these points commentators agree.

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Unanimity ceases, however, when we come to the ambiguities. Space prohibits our discussing all the possible interpretations here, but at least we can note the primary problems: Who is the little horn and where did he come from (vv. 8, 9)? What is meant by the Hebrew word *tamid*, translated by the RSV as "the continual burnt offering" (vv. 11-13)? What is the "transgression that makes desolate" (v. 13, RSV; cf. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15)? To what time period does the "two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings" refer (v. 14, RSV)? And finally, when is the "time of the end" (vv. 17, 19)? This is perhaps the most crucial question, for Gabriel said the vision was "for the time of the end" (v. 17).

Was the "time of the end" when Antiochus Epiphanes (the little horn?) polluted the Jerusalem temple for three years in 167-164 B.C., offering a pig on an altar to Zeus erected over the altar of burnt offering? Or did the "time of the end" begin in 1798 when the pope (the little horn?) was taken captive? Or is the "time of the end" still future when the final antichrist (the little horn?) appears?

Surprisingly, one's interpretation of the "time of the end" may be determined more by one's view of God than it is by the text of Scripture. And how one sees the "time of the end" plays a key role in the interpretation of the other "ambiguities" in Daniel 8.

Modern "liberals" who see no personal divine involvement in human history and who deny the possibility of predicting the future, place the events of Daniel 8 in the past (preterism). For these preterists, "the time of the end" was the period when Antiochus polluted the temple (167-164 B.C.). Quite apart from its skeptical view of prophecy, a major problem with the preterist view is that it does not take seriously Jesus' reference to the prophecy of Daniel as still being future (Matt. 24:15).

Many modern "conservatives" who believe God sees and determines all things in advance, look to the future (futurism) as "the time of the end." These futurists—in particular, the so-called dispensationalists—see Antiochus Epiphanes as a type of the final antichrist who will play a key role in world history. They believe in the restoration of a literal sanctuary in literal Jerusalem. In that setting the final events will be played out. The major problem with futurism, especially dispensational futurism, is that it adjusts Scripture to fit a predetermined view of how God relates to the world.

Early Adventists also believed that God is the master of history. They saw in the prophecies of Daniel a single divine plan of history (historicism) predicting the "end" and the "restoration." Following an historicist approach to Scripture, Adventists have said that "the time of the end" began in 1798 (the conclusion of the "time, times, and a half a time" of Dan. 7:25). From this perspective, the end of the 2300 days and the "cleansing" of the sanctuary (see KJV of Dan. 8:14) came in 1844. A major problem with the Adventist historicist view is relevance—both 1798 and 1844 seem like a long time ago.

After the Great Disappointment, Adventists still expected the "end"

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of "the time of the end" to come quickly, signaled by the return of Christ. But Christ did not return as soon as expected. Does the passage of nearly a century and a half now make Daniel 8 irrelevant to us? The delay led Ellen White to make the following comment in 1883: "The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me."<sup>1</sup> Bible writers, too, expected the last things to occur in their lifetime (see 1 Thess. 4:15-18; 1 John 2:18; Rev. 1:1). This suggests that our conviction that we are living in the time of the end, as well as the seriousness with which we take Daniel 8, should not be diminished by the distance between us and 1844.

*Imagine what believers in earlier times might have thought and believed about "the time of the end." What did the early Christians think when they saw Jerusalem fall in A.D. 70? What did the Jews in the days of Antiochus believe about "the time of the end" when they faced the death penalty for keeping the Sabbath and saw a pig being offered in the Jerusalem temple? Finally, what did Daniel himself believe when he heard Gabriel tell him that the vision was "for the time of the end"?*

### 3. Reaction

*"And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I rose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it" (Dan. 8:27, RSV).*

Daniel doesn't tell us why he was so shaken up by the vision. A clue may be found in Daniel 9—next week's lesson—where Daniel prays at some length about the "sanctuary" which lies desolate (9:17). In response, Gabriel appears again and says that he has come to explain the vision (9:23).

Apparently Daniel is appalled that the sanctuary was not to be put right immediately. He has been reading from the book of Jeremiah and understands that the time of Israel's captivity is supposed to be over (Dan. 9:2). Yet the Medo-Persian empire must pass into history; the kingdom of the Greeks must come and go; and when the little horn finally arrives on the scene, it will still be 2300 days before the sanctuary is restored—or will it be 2300 years?

Small wonder that Daniel was sick certain days. He just couldn't handle a delay like that. Gabriel brought him fresh insight into the vision of Daniel 8. But that belongs to the study of Daniel 9 next week.

*Does a delay of some 140 years since 1844 affect our understanding of the "time of the end"?*

*Is there a practical message from Daniel 8 which does not require a knowledge of history and dates?*

1. *Evangelism*,  
p. 695.

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# The Advocate

by Alden Thompson

The judgment/sanctuary doctrine in Adventism (for which Daniel 8 provided the impetus) is a sobering doctrine. For some it can be discouraging. But there is hope too. In a vision in 1880,<sup>1</sup> Ellen White found comfort when she was pointed to Zechariah 3:1-5. Her mature reflections on this passage are found in the chapter "Joshua and the Angel" in *Prophets and Kings*.<sup>2</sup>

"Satan knows that those who ask God for pardon and grace will obtain it; therefore he presents their sins before them, to discourage them. Against those who are trying to obey God, he is constantly seeking occasion for complaint. Even their best and most acceptable service, he seeks to make appear corrupt. By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he endeavors to secure their condemnation.

"All who have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen, and faithful, and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of the Saviour. Not one soul who in penitence and faith has claimed His protection, will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power.

"As Joshua pleaded before the Angel, so the remnant church, with brokenness of heart and unfaltering faith, will plead for pardon and deliverance through Jesus, their Advocate. They are fully conscious of the sinfulness of their lives, they see their weakness and unworthiness; and they are ready to despair.

"The tempter stands by to accuse them, as he stood by to resist Joshua. He points to their filthy garments, their defective characters. He presents their weakness and folly, their sins of ingratitude, their unlikeness to Christ, which has dishonored their Redeemer. He endeavors to affright them with the thought that their case is hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes so to destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations, and turn from their allegiance to God.

"But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves up to be controlled by the satanic agencies. They have repented of their sins, and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition; and the divine Advocate pleads in their behalf. He who has been most abused by their ingratitude, who knows their sin and also their penitence, declares: 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. I gave My life for these souls. They are graven upon the palms of My hands. They may have imperfections of character; they may have failed in their endeavors; but they have repented, and I have forgiven and accepted them.'"<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

How does Zechariah 3:1-5, and Ellen White's comments on it, affect your concept of the investigative judgment?

**TESTIMONY**  
Key text:  
Zechariah 3:1-5

**"While the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves up to be controlled by the satanic agencies."**

1. See *Life Sketches*, p. 324.  
2. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 582-592.  
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 588, 589.

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# Interpretations Old and New

by Alden Thompson

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Daniel 8:14

The history of the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8 makes for fascinating reading. Whether the "little horn" originated from one of the winds or from the horns has occasioned considerable debate. At the turn of the century, a "new" view of the Hebrew word *tamid* sparked such divisive debate that Ellen White intervened to tell her brethren the point was insignificant and not worth the quarrel.<sup>1</sup>

But one aspect of Daniel 8 continues to draw the attention of Adventist interpreters, namely, the meaning of the word which the KJV translates as "cleansed" in v. 14. The RSV does not state that the sanctuary will be "cleansed," but rather that it will be "restored to its rightful state." Most other modern translations follow the RSV's lead. Because Adventists speak of a "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary beginning in 1844, a point clearly sparked by the KJV language, the departure of modern translations from that terminology can be unsettling to some.

The KJV translation apparently is based more on the ancient Greek (Septuagint) and Latin (Vulgate) versions than on the Hebrew. When the RSV translators interpreted the text to mean that the sanctuary would be "restored to its rightful state," they were basing their translation on the Hebrew text and were attempting to translate the Hebrew verb *nitzdaq*, which occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament in this form.

"The doctrines  
of judgment  
and sanctuary  
do not rise  
or fall with  
a particular  
interpretation  
of Daniel 8:14."

Some have argued that the Adventist application of Daniel 8:14 to the "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary is called into question by the more accurate modern translations of the Hebrew text. Yet the Adventist judgment/sanctuary doctrine hardly takes its content from Daniel 8. Rather, it is "suggested" by the KJV of Daniel 8:14. The doctrine in its developed form is a synthesis of material from Leviticus 16, Daniel 7, and Revelation 14, to mention the more prominent biblical passages. The book of Job also plays a role by suggesting the cosmic setting in which the saints serve as witnesses for God in the great struggle between good and evil (see *Education*, pp. 154-156). Finally, Zechariah 3 provides a basis for the Advocate's role in defending the saints against Satan's attacks (see "Testimony" section).

The book of Hebrews in the New Testament (especially chs. 1 and 2) provides a good biblical example of a doctrinal position synthesized from diverse biblical material—and not always cited strictly according to context. Hebrews 2:5-9, for example, states that "for a little while" Christ was made lower than the angels, a creative citation of Psalm 8 from the Greek Bible, not the Hebrew. Modern translations of the Hebrew text of Psalm 8 render the verse as saying that man was created "a little less than God"—quite a different thought. To insist that the author of Hebrews uses the Hebrew text of Psalm 8 instead of the Greek would make nonsense of the author's illustration. And his overriding point—that Christ is superior to all angelic beings—is thoroughly biblical regardless of his use of particular passages of Scripture.

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In a similar manner, the doctrines of judgment and sanctuary are thoroughly biblical; they do not rise or fall with a particular interpretation of Daniel 8:14. To be sure, the KJV "cleansed" in Daniel 8:14 proved to be a catalyst for the Adventist understanding of judgment and sanctuary. But two points are worth emphasizing: First, Daniel 8 has provided very little of the content for the judgment/sanctuary doctrine. Second, while the doctrine is firmly fixed as an Adventist landmark, our understanding of it has not remained static—nor are we finished with it yet.

### **REACT**

1. Do the modern translations of Dan. 8:14 undermine the Adventist doctrine of judgment?

2. For doctrine, is it safer to rely on a synthesis of texts than on the exact interpretation of one particular text?

3. Does a fresh perspective or even a new interpretation of a text necessarily modify one's understanding of the doctrine involved?

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1. See the article "Daily" in *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*.

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# Judgment, Grace, and Obedience

by Alden Thompson

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**Matthew**  
**18:23-35;**  
**Luke 19:1-10**

It wasn't easy convincing my British insurance agent that three traffic citations in five years was a decent driving record in America. Finally he acquiesced—reluctantly. I got my insurance.

Several months later we rolled into Edinburgh from our country cottage south of the city. The road was wide; traffic was light. We were making good progress.

A car approached in the opposite lane with vigorously flashing headlights. We drove on, puzzled. But as the road narrowed, suddenly we understood—radar trap, policeman.

In America, radar traps are expensive—always. I pulled over, my “good driving” speech to the insurance agent ringing in my ears. Now I sat speechless, awaiting my doom.

Peering at my brand new British driver's license, the officer commented: “You're a visitor here, aren't you, Mr. Thompson?” Sheepishly I admitted it. “We're making note of a few things,” he continued. “But don't worry. Nothing at all will happen. Have a good day.”

That was all—not even a lecture on the dangers of speeding.

Grace, pure grace, to a wickedly careless American driver. Did I reform? Mostly. I like British policemen; they're nice. Ever since then, I've tried harder to be obedient (at least in Britain).

Does grace always work reformation? No. The ungrateful servant in Jesus' story (Matt. 18:23, 24) learned that a fearful judgment follows grace—if grace does not soften the heart.

**“Grace is  
the mother  
of grateful  
obedience.”**

The fear of judgment can motivate a certain painful obedience. But we don't like pain; neither does God. Grace is His preferred means, for grace is the mother of grateful obedience. Read the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). It was grace that sparked repentance and transformed his life.

## REACT

Can gratitude for God's gracious gift overpower the fear of judgment? Should it? (See 1 John 4:19.)

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# Present Truth

by Alden Thompson

In his *God Cares*, vol. 1, Mervyn Maxwell remarks that Jesus' disciples must have been very surprised to hear that the "abomination of desolation" (Dan. 8:13) was still future. The popular view applied the prophecy to Antiochus Epiphanes.<sup>1</sup> However, the noncanonical Jewish book of II Esdras (12:11, 12) convincingly shows that first-century Jews were shifting their attention from Greece to Rome as Daniel's fourth kingdom. Antiochus was dead; Rome was not!

Jesus' proposal of a new interpretation leads Maxwell to exclaim that "old interpretations are *bound to be inadequate*" [italics his].<sup>2</sup> While perhaps overstating the need for change, Maxwell's point represents good Adventism—though it has not gone unchallenged. In the 1880s a wave of conservatism threatened our growing edge. Uriah Smith, for example, resisted even so slight a change as replacing the Huns with the Alemanni as one of the ten kingdoms of Daniel 7.<sup>3</sup>

When Ellen White challenged such dogged conservatism, she wasn't worried about mere Huns or Alemanni, but about major doctrinal emphases (righteousness by faith) and the interpretation of key passages of Scripture (Gal. 3). She urged the brethren not to insist that "the instructors in our schools . . . teach only what has been taught hitherto." "That which God gives His servants to speak today would not perhaps have been present truth twenty years ago, but it is God's message for this time."<sup>4</sup>

Could that mean for Daniel 8 that we lay aside our preoccupation with dates and charts, build on the foundation of the 1844 experience, and focus on the content of our message: God's care for His people? As early as the 1850's Ellen White wrote: "Time has not been a test since 1844, and it will never again be a test."<sup>5</sup> The prophecies which led God's people to and through the Disappointment were not ends in themselves, but a means to an end, namely, an experience with God.

Adventists have a marvelous opportunity to present Daniel in a consistent and coherent manner. Each prophecy focuses on the climax of history. Other conservative interpreters struggle with the meaning of "the time of the end" in Daniel 8, but the 1844 experience enables us to speak of a cosmic application and of a "time of the end" in our day.

## REACT

How can the church effectively come to grips with "new" interpretations of Scripture while being faithful to our Adventist heritage? What happens if we lose our growing edge?

## OPINION

Key text:  
Proverbs 4:18

Maxwell: "Old interpretations are *bound to be inadequate*."

1. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 1 (Mountain View: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1981), p. 270.

2. *Ibid.*  
3. Richard Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1979), p. 186.

4. Cited in "Appendix A" of A. V. Olson, *Thirteen Crisis Years* [revised ed. of *Through Crisis to Victory*] (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1966, 1981), p. 282 [273, 274].  
5. *Early Writings*, p. 75.

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# EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place" (Daniel 9:24, RSV).



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# Daniel and the Disc Jockey

by Frank B. Holbrook

**INTRO-  
DUCTION**  
Scripture:  
Daniel 9

"Say, preacher! Is there a Bible prophecy that proves Jesus was the Messiah?"

The question startled me. I had just stepped inside the control room of a radio station in Norfolk, Virginia, where I had substituted for the pastor's regular broadcast. I was entering to retrieve my records when the announcer boomed out his question.

"My name's Phil," he responded with a chuckle to my questioning eyes. "I want to talk with you." He waved me into silence before I could speak and turned back to the microphone and his Sunday morning talk and music show.

With another record spinning, Phil produced a folding chair from somewhere and motioned me to a seat beside him at the console.

"You see, I'm a Jew," he continued. "I was reared in an orthodox Jewish home, took my education in a Catholic university, and married a Baptist girl! And I *have* some questions! Is it really so—there's a prophecy in the Bible that proves Jesus is the Messiah?"

"Yes, Phil," I said, "there is, indeed, a marvelous prophecy in the book of Daniel that foretold when the Messiah would appear. It was given hundreds of years before the event. I'll show you." Opening my Bible to Daniel 9:24-27, I laid it on the console where he would see it and began to read the passage to him.

It seemed only seconds, and his hand went up for silence as

he returned to his show. I came to be grateful for these periodic interruptions. As an intern of less than two years service, my experience was limited. No study-guide or Bible commentary lay at hand to consult. But God's Spirit was there, and the breaks gave me time to pray silently and to think what next to say in response to Phil's comments and questions. In this manner, for nearly an hour, we studied together Daniel's prophetic portrayal of the Messiah, the subject of our lesson this week. Phil was thoughtful when I left.

I discovered that he didn't have a Bible—in fact, Phil had never owned a Bible! The following Sunday I laid a new Bible in his hands with a card for one of the Bible correspondence courses. I'll never forget how awestruck he appeared when he held the Scriptures in his hands for the first time! How reverently, how carefully he turned its pages! How respectful!

I wish I could report that Phil accepted the Messiah as his personal Saviour after that first encounter with Daniel—like the Ethiopian eunuch after his encounter with Isaiah 53 under the tutelage of Philip. I was transferred shortly to another part of the state and lost contact with Phil. I can only pray that Daniel's introduction of the Messiah to my disc jockey acquaintance eventually matured into a permanent saving friendship.

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# The Coming Resolution

**LOGOS** Theme: Concerned because the seventy years prophesied for Judah's captivity was nearly ended, Daniel humbly prays that God will act quickly to restore Jerusalem and the sanctuary. God's message is that it will be seventy weeks of years after the decree to restore Jerusalem until the decisive resolution of the problem of sin and the coming everlasting righteousness.

## 1. Daniel's Prayer (read Dan. 9:1-19)

*"O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Thine own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name'" (9:19, NASB).*

The opening lines of Daniel's prayer (vv. 4, 5) present two contrasting truths which are elaborated throughout the prayer. These truths are 1) that God is absolutely steadfast in His faithfulness to His covenant with Israel, and 2) that Israel has ever been fickle in response.

In vv. 16-19, Daniel employs several verbs ("turn away," "listen," "open," "forgive," "take action," "delay not") in urging God to honor His promise to restore Jerusalem physically, and restore His exiled people to their homeland, despite their unworthiness.

*On what basis does Daniel appeal to God for action?  
What can we learn about prayer from Daniel's example?*

## 2. Gabriel's Mission (read Dan. 9:20-23)

*"While I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me. . . .*

*"And he gave me instruction . . . and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight and understanding.*

*... So give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision'" (9:21-23, NASB).*

The message from heaven brought by Gabriel deals not only with the concern of Daniel's prayer, but also gives Daniel further insight on "the vision" (v. 23), a reference to the vision of Daniel 8. The thematic connections between Daniel 8 and 9 make it clear that Gabriel's explanation in chapter 9 should be understood as an elaboration on chapter 8. In both chapters, Daniel is concerned about the fate of his homeland and of his people. Foremost in both is the issue of restoration from exile. A princely leader is prominent in both. And the problem of time is prominent in both, in the sense that the only dangling thread in the angelic interpretation of the vision of Daniel 8 is *time*—and it is with a concern about *time* that Daniel 9 begins.

## 3. The Messiah and the Seventy Weeks (read Dan. 9:24-27)

*"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place'" (9:24, NASB).*

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Seventy weeks would equal 490 days, or years, if the year-day principle is applied. Many scholars believe that the idea of seventy weeks of years or 490 years, is implicit in the Hebrew wording itself (see the RSV translation). If this is so, vv. 24-27 might be considered a literal explanation of 8:1-14, and the year-day principle need not be invoked here.

Adventist interpreters point out that the root meaning of the Hebrew word translated "decreed" is "cut-off." The 490 years could then be understood as being "cut-off" from the previously unexplained time period of 8:14—2300 days/years. The fact that our current translations render the term "decreed" or "marked out" (NEB) rather than "cut off" presents a difficulty for the Adventist view. However, it is a recognized principle in understanding ancient Semitic languages that the verbs in these languages develop from concrete meanings in the direction of abstract concepts as time goes on. Thus, it may be inferred that in Daniel's time the word still carried its original, concrete meaning of "cut-off," rather than the more abstract meaning of "decreed" which developed in later usage. But regardless of how this verb is translated, the thematic connections between Daniel 8 and 9 noted above remain clear.

The starting point Gabriel gave for the 490 years was "the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (v. 25). At least three major decrees were given for the post-exilic restoration of Israel—Cyrus' decree in 538 B.C., and Artaxerxes' decrees in 457 B.C. and 444 B.C. No decree makes explicit reference to the restoration and rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem itself, but Adventist interpreters have taken the 457 date because the decree in that year provides for a degree of political autonomy for Jerusalem (see Ezra 7:25). The 538 edict dealt with rebuilding only the temple, and the 444 decree added nothing essential to what had already been mandated in 457.

According to v. 25, "Messiah the Prince" or "an anointed one, a prince" (RSV) was to appear at the conclusion of the first 69 weeks of the prophecy, or 483 years after the starting point. If we take 457 as the starting point, 483 years takes us down to 27 A.D. (remember there is no "zero" year in the transition from B.C. to A.D. dates!). And that is when Jesus of Nazareth began His public ministry. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ made atonement for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness. Though our world has not yet experienced it in the tangible, empirical sense, "everlasting righteousness" and "an end of sin" were guaranteed by Jesus' atonement made at Calvary and His triumphant resurrection.

The Evidence section brings out more details on the Messianic fulfillment of vv. 24-27. Here we should comment briefly on the conclusion of the 70 weeks—34 A.D. Adventist interpreters usually cite the stoning of Stephen as symbolic of the Jewish nation's rejection of the gospel and thus the end of the time period "cut-off" for that nation. It cannot be established historically that the stoning of Stephen took place precisely in 34. Nevertheless, during this general

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time period, the Jewish leadership rejected the message preached by the apostles, and in so doing, excluded the good news about Jesus from the Jewish faith.<sup>1</sup>

Daniel 9 concludes with a reference to the work of the "abomination of desolation," which Jesus applied to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (see Matt. 24:15ff). However, it is appropriate to return in our thinking to v. 24 as the conclusion of the chapter's message—the good news of God's resolution of the problems that plague the human condition.<sup>2</sup>

*What do the following passages suggest about the New Testament perspective on the fulfillment of Daniel 9:24: John 12:31, 32; 1 Cor. 15:24-27; Rev. 12:10?*

*See The Great Controversy, pp. 325-328 and The Desire of Ages, pp. 233-235 for further clarification of the historic Adventist interpretation of the time prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9. List the assumptions involved in arriving at this interpretation. Are they valid?*

1. Informed Adventists should be aware that dedicated scholars of other faiths interpret Daniel 9:24-27 in ways entirely different than Adventists do. A brief, helpful summary of the major non-Adventist approaches to this chapter may be found in the commentary by Joyce Baldwin (InterVarsity Press, 1978), pp. 172-178. A comparison of the various views and their strengths and weaknesses could be a worthwhile way of discussing this week's lesson.

2. The commentary in this article was compiled and adapted by the editors from the following sources: Larry Mitchell, "Daniel's Dilemma: Time Running Out" (unpublished manuscript); William H. Shea, *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy* (Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, 1986), chapter 3; Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), pp. 198-235.

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# Toward a Better Understanding

"There is need of a much closer study of the word of God; especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work. We may have less to say in some line, in regard to the Roman power and the papacy; but we should call attention to what the prophets and apostles have written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit has so shaped matters, both in the giving of the prophecy and in the events portrayed, as to teach that the human agent is to be kept out of sight, hid in Christ, and that the Lord God of heaven and His law are to be exalted. Read the book of Daniel. Call up, point by point, the history of the kingdoms there represented. . . .

"When we as a people understand what this book means to us, there will be seen among us a great revival. We do not understand fully the lessons that it teaches, notwithstanding the injunction given us to search and study it.

"When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart."<sup>1</sup>

## REACT

1. Does the need for better understanding of Daniel suggest that past Adventist understandings may be in part incorrect?

2. Is it our interpretations of Daniel and Revelation that make the Adventist church relevant today? What would our church stand on without these doctrines?

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
John 8:32

**"When we understand what Daniel means to us, there will be seen among us great revival."**

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1. Excerpted from *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 112-114

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text:**  
**Acts 16:30, 31**

Faith is not blind; it rests on evidence. Faith in Jesus of Nazareth rests in part on His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Eight points are made about the coming Messiah in Gabriel's revelation to Daniel:

1. The Messiah (by means of His death) would make true atonement for sin (v. 24c).
2. The Messiah would thereby bring in everlasting righteousness to mankind (v. 24d).
3. The Messiah would minister that everlasting righteousness to penitents from a new sanctuary—the heavenly sanctuary. The inauguration of that sanctuary is referred to in vv. 24, 25 as the anointing of an holy of holies.
4. The Messiah was to appear and be anointed for the service of His public ministry at a particular time—in A.D. 27—according to the chronology worked out in verse 25b by the year-day principle.
5. The Messiah was to die in the midst of the 70th week (vv. 26a, 27b). However, His death would not be a natural one, for He was to be cut off by some other person or persons. He was to be killed.
6. The Messiah would die alone, abandoned and rejected (v. 26b).
7. The Messiah would strengthen the covenant God had made with His people (v. 27a).
8. The Messiah, in the midst of the final week when He was to die, would bring the sacrificial service of the temple to an end as far as its theological significance was concerned (v. 27b).

**“This passage can be identified as a deeply Christocentric prophecy.”**

From this review it can be seen that the prophecy truly is Messianocentric. Looking at the events predicted in Daniel through the eyes of the New Testament, we see their fulfillment in the career, death, resurrection, ascension, and present ministration of Jesus Christ. Examined from this point of view, this passage can be identified as a deeply Christocentric prophecy.

A prominent part of the experience of the Messiah described by this prophecy points to His death: (1) the nature of that death (He was to be killed by somebody else); (2) His experience in that death (abandoned and rejected); and (3) the results that were to flow from that death (atonement, righteousness; an end to the old sanctuary ministration, and the commencement of a new sanctuary ministration).

This emphasis upon the Messiah and His experience ranks this passage alongside the other great Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament that point to Him as the suffering servant of God (Ps. 22; Isa. 53).

## REACT

What role do the Old Testament prophecies play in establishing your own faith in Jesus? Why are the prophecies important?

Adapted from  
*The Seventy Weeks,  
Leviticus, and the Nature  
of Prophecy* (DRC Series,  
1986), Ch. 3.

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# Grounds for Appeal

by Bonnie L. Casey

Except on Christmas and our birthdays, none of us likes encounters based on need. Like the superpowers, we prefer to bargain from a position of strength, so we're uncomfortable confronting someone on the clear, if unspoken, assumption that they have something we need that we cannot supply for ourselves.

Yet, in the normal course of life, we not only must at times show ourselves needy, it's sometimes wise and even healthy to do so.

The unwise never learn this. Consider the woman who rushes from room to room cleaning her house before the housekeeper arrives. "I don't want her to think I'm a slob!" she wails as she stuffs dirty clothes under the bed.

Lest you reckon men are immune to this syndrome, I've known one or two he-man types who would drive around town in ever-more-desperate circles for an hour rather than pull over and ask for directions.

Maybe this aversion to admitting need explains why beggars and the homeless who sleep on scraps of cardboard in city parks are such invisible people to the rest of us. We walk past them quickly without looking, or we look through them as though they weren't there. The lack of wherewithal they represent, their abject need and their public admission of it, offend our faith in the secular gospel of self-reliance.

But God's insistence on, and delight in, petitionary prayers—prayers that speak of our needs and ask God for help—give the lie to this attitude. God commands us through His Son to ask for what we need. This, of course, implies that we have needs that our own best efforts can't supply.

The terms underlying this divine/human contract knock the pins out from under our self-sufficiency. We are to come confessing our needs and acknowledging that God's gifts are granted as a result of His trustworthiness, not our worthiness. You might say, when you approach the throne of God, don't stop in the anteroom to primp in front of the mirror. It's not necessary and it won't do any good. Approach God boldly. Tell Him what you need and trust Him to do for you what you can't do for yourself.

Daniel was a wise and spiritually mature man who knew this truth. His prayer in chapter 9 is a model of appealing to God on the basis of His mercy—not our merit.

**HOW TO**  
**Key Text:**  
**Daniel 9:18**

**"When you approach the throne of God, don't stop in the anteroom to primp in front of the mirror."**

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# The Year of the Lord's Favor

## OPINION

**Key Text:**  
**Luke 4:16-21**

"He [Jesus] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'

"Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'" (Luke 4:16-21, NIV).

In this dramatic scene, Jesus set the tone of His messianic mission and revealed the platform of His new kingdom. Some scholars believe that Jesus' hearers would have interpreted the "the year of the Lord's favor" as an announcement of the eschatological Year of Jubilee.

In Old Testament law, the Year of Jubilee was the culmination of the "sabbatical year" system designed to maintain social justice and environmental quality in Israel. Every seven years the land was to be given a sabbath—no planting was to be done (Lev. 25:1-7). The Year of Jubilee was to take place at the conclusion of a cycle of seven sabbatical years, or 49 years. During the Year of Jubilee, which was proclaimed with trumpet sound on the Day of Atonement, land was to return to its original owner, debts were to be canceled, slaves were to be freed, the land was to lie fallow, and prisoners were to be released (vv. 8-17). In sum, the Year of Jubilee provided for systematic rectification of economic and social injustice; it was a time of restoration and liberation.

The extent to which the jubilee stipulations were actually put into practice is uncertain. However, the concept was apparently kept alive in Judaism, and the text which Jesus read from Isaiah (61:1, 2) that Sabbath in Nazareth was one of the passages used for reading at the commencement of the jubilee year. Furthermore, evidence from the Qumran community writings suggests that some first-century Jews believed that the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, pointed to an eschatological Year of Jubilee. This last-day jubilee would be the inauguration of a era of justice and liberation brought about through the leadership of a divine personage. Also, the oppressors of God's people would be destroyed—it would be "the day of vengeance of our God" in the language of Isaiah 61:2.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Jesus' announcement in the Nazareth synagogue must have had an electrifying impact. The carpenter's Son was announcing that the eschatological Year of Jubilee, described by Isaiah and foretold by Daniel, was to be realized through His own person and work. He would bring about the end of transgression, atonement for wickedness, and everlasting righteousness promised at the conclusion of the 70 weeks or "seventy 'sevens'" (Dan. 9:24, NIV).

But while Jesus declared Himself to be the fulfillment of His

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**"The  
carpenter's  
Son was  
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that the  
eschatological  
Year of Jubilee  
was to be  
realized  
through His  
own person  
and work."**

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hearer's apocalyptic hopes, His method of fulfilling those hopes was radical and unexpected. It seems significant that Jesus apparently stopped His quotation of Isaiah 61:2 in mid-sentence. He left out the part about the day of vengeance of our God. If He had quoted that phrase, He would have been identifying Himself with the zealots among His listeners who were agitating to use their own swords to execute the Lord's vengeance.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' mode of revolution was different. He came to heal, liberate, and forgive, not condemn and destroy. He lived out the jubilee principles of justice and compassion and taught His followers to do the same. The cross, the ultimate embodiment of God's reconciling love, would be His method for drawing all people to Himself and giving them the freedom and newness of life prefigured by the Year of Jubilee.

Not only did Jesus fail to whip up revolutionary fervor in the expected way, He went on to point out that sometimes enemies of Israel are more in tune with divine purposes than the chosen people. His policy toward the Gentiles was redemption, not retribution, and that was more than the pious Nazarenes could take. This radical voice had to be silenced, so they tried to push Him over a cliff (see Luke 4:24-30).

Though nonviolent, Jesus was nonetheless revolutionary. As inaugurator of the eschatological Year of Jubilee, He introduced into human history "a new regime, whose marks would be that rich would give to the poor, the captives would be freed, and men would have a new mentality . . . if they believed this news."<sup>2</sup> The community which would form under His Lordship was, like Him, to embody the jubilee principles in its ongoing corporate life.

The Messiah of Daniel 9 extends the "the year of the Lord's favor" to us. He beckons us to join His new regime, to be a community of believers in which peace, justice, and mutual care are the guiding principles; a community which through its witness and outreach seeks to extend the spiritual and tangible benefits of the jubilee to all people.

D. F. M.

## REACT

What specific applications of the Year of Jubilee stipulations should Christians make today?

**"Jesus lived out the jubilee principles of justice and compassion and taught His followers to do the same."**

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1. J. Massyngaerde Ford, *My Enemy Is My Guest* (Marynoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), pp. 53-60.

2. John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 39.

# THE COSMIC BACKGROUND

“Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. ‘Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed,’ he said. ‘Peace! Be strong now; be strong’ ” (Daniel 10:18, 19, NIV).



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# Struggling to Save

## INTRO- DUCTION Scripture: Daniel 10

Being God isn't as easy as some people think it is. At least that's the impression we get from the "behind the scenes" glimpse into spiritual reality given us in Daniel 10. God hears Daniel's prayer, but the divine agent sent with the answer is unable to get through for three weeks! Opposition from the prince of Persia thwarts the heavenly messenger, who is finally able to make it to Daniel's side only when the heavenly prince Michael comes to his aid.

Why couldn't God just snap His fingers and make everything work out? Why couldn't He at least match the speed of Federal Express in sending His message to Daniel? More than that, why would He allow the fulfillment of the prophet's hopes and dreams to be deferred for centuries, and still remain unfulfilled in our own time? Daniel doesn't explain the reasons for these limitations on divine omnipotence. He doesn't tell us why Michael has to *struggle* in the working out of His purposes. But the best clue seems to lie in the realm of human freedom. Since God won't use force in relating to His free creatures, that leaves Him with only cooperation and persuasion to work out His plan, and that makes the process complicated and time-consuming.

God is able to give Daniel encouragement, insight, and strength to cooperate in the divine program. But He is not able to supply instant answers or work out His plan without time and struggle.

Writing from a Nazi prison camp, a situation even worse than Daniel's, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in the following poem, says something about the limited God of Daniel 10, a God who saves through struggle, suffering, and weakness.

### CHRISTIANS AND PAGANS

Men go to God when they are sore bestead,  
Pray to him for succour, for his peace, for bread,  
For mercy for them sick, sinning, or dead;  
All men do so, Christian and unbelieving.

Men go to God when he is sore bestead,  
Find him poor and scorned, without shelter or bread,  
Whelmed under weight of the wicked, the weak, the dead;  
Christians stand by God in his hour of grieving.

God goes to every man when sore bestead,  
Feeds body and spirit with his bread;  
For Christians, pagans alike he hangs dead,  
And both alike forgiving.<sup>1</sup>

Our study of Daniel 10 this week will necessarily touch on some of the chapter's fascinating historical and literary features. It also will point us to a God who hears prayer and responds, and yet confounds our expectations in the way He responds.

D. F. M.

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1971), pp. 348, 349. Reprinted by permission. Copyright 1953, 1967, 1971, by S. C. M. Press, Ltd.

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# Heaven Responds

by Lyndon McDowell

## LOGOS

**Theme:** Daniel receives strength and courage as God reveals His power at work behind the scenes on behalf of His people.

### 1. Daniel's Period of Fasting and Prayer (read Dan. 10:1-4)

*"In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia . . . I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks" (10:1, 2, NIV).*

Twenty-one days is a long time to fast and pray. Most of us would have given up. But as an angel once said to Ellen White, "Ye let go of the arm of the Lord too soon. Press your petitions to the throne and hold on by strong faith. The promises are sure."<sup>1</sup> Daniel held on.

The answer came on a specific day, the only clearly identified calendar date in the whole book: Nisan 24, 535 B.C.<sup>2</sup>

Daniel began his fast twenty-one days earlier on Nisan 3. Babylonian records inform us that that day was a general day of mourning, "All the people went around with their hair dishevelled."

But Daniel's concern was about his people in Jerusalem. The Samaritans had hired anti-Jewish lobbyists to thwart the building program (Ezra 4:5). Now Cambyses, an evil-tempered destroyer of temples,<sup>3</sup> co-regent with his father Cyrus, was given the position of King of Babylon which gave him control of Judea as well. Heaven recognized the danger and unseen agencies were put into action.

*Why is "persevering" in prayer important? Why doesn't God always respond immediately (see also vv. 12-14 and 2 Cor. 12:7-10).*

### 2. The Son of God Appears to Daniel in Vision (read Dan. 10:5-17)

*"I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude" (10:5, 6, NIV).*

Heaven's vital interest in human affairs is plainly seen. The Son of God Himself comes to speak to Daniel and to assure him that help was being provided.

The physical signs accompanying a vision (see vv. 8, 17) often confirm the faith of witnesses. In the early years of Ellen White's ministry, James White would invite people to come forward and test whether she breathed during her visions. Daniel Bourdeau, who did not at first believe in the visions, held her mouth and nostrils closed for ten minutes with no signs of discomfort on her part. "Since that time," he stated, "I have not once been inclined to doubt the divine origin of her visions."<sup>4</sup>

*Are the observed physical characteristics of a prophet in vision necessarily evidence that the vision is genuine? Why were they good evidence in Ellen White's day?*

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### 3. Words of Comfort Spoken (read Dan. 10:10-12)

*"Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them" (10:12, NIV).*

How often we see ourselves as alone in the world and feel as though heaven has forgotten us. We sense our sinfulness and feel condemned. Even great Christians have such experiences. Daniel felt that way. Now Jesus Himself assures him of heaven's love and concern.

*Can you recall experiences when, after perhaps a time of sorrow or despair, God provided assurance of His concern for you? How was the assurance given?*

### 4. The Plan of Action Explained (read Dan. 10:13-20)

Heaven uses persuasion, not coercion. Michael, whose name means "Who is like God?" came to assist Gabriel to prevent injury to the cause of God's people. Perhaps in the guise of men they spoke in some of the councils or perhaps there was a quiet prompting in the mind of king or counselor at crucial times in the discussion of what policies to support. We do not know. Neither do we know when or how, in answer to our prayers (or lack of prayer), government policies are influenced for good or ill.

It is both interesting and significant that the vision comprising chapters 11 and 12, the two chapters in Daniel that we find most difficult to understand, is preceded by the longest and most encouraging introduction (chapter 10) of any of the visions. Besides that, this introductory chapter has the most historically specific date of any in the book.

The angel closes with another personal assurance to Daniel. "Both Michael and I who have come in answer to your prayer were the ones who spoke to Darius the Mede.<sup>5</sup> Remember how the satraps forced him to put you in the lions' den? We are with you now in this emergency, too" (see v. 11:1).

The same God who responded to Daniel's prayer is the God we serve. The Michael who stood with Daniel is the same Michael who will stand up for His people in the last days of crisis (12:1). No matter how discouraging the circumstances may seem to be, take courage. Heaven will respond to your prayers.

*In what way does chapter 10 give us confidence in the prophecies of chapters 11 and 12?*

*What does this chapter say to you about God?*

1. *Early Writings*, p. 73.  
2. For dating and historical arguments see W. H. Shea, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 225ff.  
3. So Herodotus III. Some historians are less severe on Cambyses. See J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire*, p. 49.  
4. Arthur White, *The Early Years*, p. 358.  
5. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 557.

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# The Curtain Drawn Aside

## TESTIMONY A Standard Against the Enemy

Key text:  
Romans 8:28

"Angels help and protect those who walk humbly before God. Never will our Lord betray one who trusts in Him. As His children draw near to Him for protection from evil, in pity and love He lifts up for them a standard against the enemy. Touch them not, He says; for they are mine. I have graven them upon the palms of My hands.

"Untiring in their opposition, the Samaritans, 'weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius.' Ezra 4:4, 5. By false report they aroused suspicion in minds easily led to suspect. But for many years the powers of evil were held in check, and the people in Judea had liberty to continue their work.

"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 influence at work on the mind of Cyrus; and before the contest closed, Christ Himself came to Gabriel's aid. . . . All that heaven could do in behalf of the people of God was done. The victory was finally gained; the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, and all the days of his son Cambyses, who reigned about seven and a half years."<sup>1</sup>

"Never  
will our Lord  
betray one  
who trusts  
in Him."

## The Shaping of Events

"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."<sup>2</sup>

## REACT

Do you think it is important for Christians to pray for God's influence on government leaders today? What specifically should we pray for and why?

1. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 571, 572.  
2. *Education*, p. 173

# Strange Occurrences

by Jon Dybdahl

Most commentators on the book of Daniel are less than excited about chapter 10. A review of the volumes on Daniel sitting on my bookshelves demonstrates that the authors generally dedicate fewer pages to this chapter than to any other in the book. I find this puzzling, for these 21 verses deal with issues which are interesting, vital, and in some cases unique in the Bible. Let's look at three important issues found in the strange occurrences of this chapter.

Daniel's book contains two basic kinds of literature—stories about Daniel and apocalyptic visions and dreams dealing with the future. Chapter 10 is the only chapter which is different. It unveils what is going on behind the scenes. The great battle (controversy) between good and evil forces on a national level is clearer here than anywhere else. This controversy furnishes an explanation for history and portrays the history behind history. This very real struggle is lengthy and involves repeated fighting. What happens in nations and their relationships with each other is just an outward manifestation of invisible spiritual warfare.

The chapter also gives a description of the type of beings involved in this controversy. They are called "the prince of the kingdom of Persia," "the prince of Greece," and "Michael." Most students of Daniel agree that these combatants are not literal princes from the royal lines of Greece, Persia, and Israel. They are supernatural beings of great power who are sponsors and governors of the literal human rulers of these kingdoms. Daniel's "prince" is Michael (10:21), who elsewhere is called one of the "chief princes" (10:13). Most Christians interpret this to refer to Jesus. No other Scripture passage states so explicitly that otherworldly beings are directly involved in the affairs of nations. Daniel 10 forms a background for Paul's declaration that we "wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

Finally, chapter 10 has very detailed descriptions of Daniel's religious experience and practice. The prophet initially explains his mourning and the partial fast (no delicacies, meat or wine) that he kept for three weeks. For the same period of time he did not anoint himself—the practice was considered a luxury and a sign of joy. When Daniel does see the vision he tells what he sees, hears, and experiences. He chronicles his bodily reaction and conversations with the divine messengers who meet with him. Daniel's experience goes from a deep sleep on the ground, to trembling, to speechlessness, to difficulty in breathing and loss of strength, to frank conversation with the supernatural beings. It is an interesting chronicle of human encounter with the divine.

All three of these topics in Daniel 10 are difficult and strange for technological people of the twentieth century, but the effort to understand them will bear fruit and new insights.

## EVIDENCE

Key text:

Ephesians 6:12

**"This controversy portrays the history behind history."**

1. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 571, 572.
2. *Education*, p. 173.

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# The Power—and the Limitations—of Prayer

by Beatrice S. Ne

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Daniel 10:12, 13

Daniel's marathon session of fasting and prayer (Dan. 10:2, 3) is an amazing example of both the power and the limitations of prayer. What his prayer accomplished—and did not accomplish—is both thrilling and sobering. The "great conflict" which distressed Daniel appears to be the struggle of Gabriel with the kings of Persia—Cyrus and his son, Cambyses (vv. 1, 13, 20) over the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple (review "Logos" for details).

In response to this conflict, Daniel fasted for three full weeks (vv. 2, 3). His three-week fast coincides so exactly with Gabriel's 21-day struggle with the prince of Persia that it seems reasonable to conclude that Gabriel went into action in response to Daniel's fast.

What happens in response to the "effectual, fervent prayer" of a righteous person? If Daniel's story is an indication, all the forces of heaven go into action. Yet how many Christians would gladly fast and pray for three weeks or three months if they could thereby be sure that a marriage would be saved, a lost child reclaimed, an enemy purpose stopped! A three-week prayer marathon seems like nothing compared with years and years of unanswered prayer. Why is heaven so slow in coming?

Some prayers are easy for God to answer, such as prayers for temporal needs. But there is an area in which the sovereign God has limited His own sovereignty—He has given each human being sovereignty over his own will. He has drawn a circle around each person in which He will not invade without permission. And in this respect, God is limited. Note the striking restrictions on divine power in vv. 13 and 20: the mightiest beings in heaven are frustrated by human will.

Daniel's three-week prayer marathon was not lost, however. Though death prevented his continued effort in the spiritual struggle, God registered those prayers. When the hostile prince, Cambyses, came to his end, God found a cooperative king to carry out His purpose—Darius I. Fifteen years after Daniel's fast, his prayer was answered—the temple was rebuilt.

What can we conclude from the evidence in Daniel? Without question, effectual, fervent prayer has powerful results. It calls into action the greatest forces in the universe. It unleashes the power of angels and of God Himself.

Yet it seems that in matters of human will we cannot expect instant answers. It may take years of persistent supplication for results to come. We cannot even be sure that  $x$  amount of effort will yield  $y$  results. But we can pray with the assurance that every earnest prayer is heard in heaven, that our prayers unleash the greatest powers of heaven, and that through prayer we cooperate with God Himself in His struggle against evil.

## REACT

Is uncertainty about whether a prayer will bring results a lack of faith? What is the value of prayer if it doesn't bring results?

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# Christ and the Powers

by Jim Wallis

*The theme of conflict between cosmic powers in Daniel 10 is also found in the New Testament. In Daniel 10, the heavenly agent Michael combats the "prince of Persia" in behalf of God's people. In the writings of Paul, Christ engages the "principalities and powers." Jim Wallis discusses in today's reading the significance of Christ's redemptive confrontation with the powers.*

**OPINION**  
**Key Text:**  
**Colossians**  
**2:13-15**

The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ reveal most clearly the true nature of the powers of the world in their enmity to God and, at the same time, bring about the end of their domination of human life in the most decisive defeat in history. As the apostle Paul puts it:

He disarmed [at the cross] the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him (Col. 2:13-15).

For Paul, salvation in Christ is not important merely in relation to personal sin but is especially meaningful as liberation from slavery to the powers of the world.

By living so freely and humanly in the midst of the fallen powers and a captive humanity, Christ shatters the myth and illusion of the absolute authority of the powers. The illusion that their dominion and ultimate value is at the center of history is the chief weapon of the rebellious powers; this delusion was rendered impotent by Christ's demonstration of his own freedom in relation to them. He treated them for what they were rather than for what they claimed to be.

Christ's demonstration of true freedom and genuine humanity against the powers of the world led him, as such a life will do, to a cross. Christ's moral independence, his freedom from the slavery of the powers, rebuked and provoked them. He challenged their claim and rule, and not even to save his own life would he submit to their idolatrous pretensions and slavery. The appearance of one so genuinely free and authentically human so exposed and threatened the fallen powers of the world that they acted in collusion to kill him.

The cross is a sign of that freedom in which death is swallowed up in victory. Christ's resurrection from the dead vindicated his manner of life and death, seals his victory, and provides the ground for others to live freely and humanly in the midst of the powers by their "being in Christ." . . .

The church witness to the victory of Christ consists in creating new patterns of life free from the rule of the powers, debunking them, reducing their authority, and taking them only as modest, limited, purely instrumental agents of service and submission to human life. Paul reminds us that we are at war with the powers, not in a state of détente. Christ has invaded their territory and domain and we are his agents and representatives [see Eph. 6:10-13].

. . . We are not asked to defeat the powers. That is the work of Christ, which he has already done and will continue to do. Our task is to be witnesses and signs of Christ's victory by simply standing firmly against the seduction and slavery of the powers.

**"Christ's demonstration of true freedom and genuine humanity against the powers of the world led him to a cross."**

From *Agenda for Biblical People* by Jim Wallis, pp. 46-49. Copyright © 1984 by Jim Wallis. Used by permission of Harper & Row Publishers, Inc.

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# THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

"With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him" (Daniel 11:32, NIV).



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# Falling by Sword and Flame

by Andrew P. Woolley

Among the stories of martyrs who died for God's word are several accounts of faithfulness from the middle of the second century B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes, felt by some to be the "contemptible" ruler of Daniel 11:21 (RSV), championed the Syrian cause against Judaism, trying to turn all the Jews into Greeks.

One story from this period is particularly poignant, even if a bit embellished in places. It appears in the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees, and illustrates well the stamina of believers who "stand firm" in spite of the threat of falling "by sword and flame" (Dan. 11:32, 33, RSV).

A Jewish woman and her seven sons had been arrested and tortured for not eating pork according to the king's command. Angered by their adamant refusal to cooperate with his program, Antiochus ordered that huge cauldrons be heated over open fires. Before the eyes of his mother and six brothers, the first son had his tongue cut out, was scalped and mutilated, then roasted alive.

To everyone's horror five more brothers followed, each insistent on obeying God and each delivering a statement of hope in the resurrection.

Finally only the youngest brother and his mother remained. Antiochus asked her to convince the boy to save his life.

After much urging from the king, she agreed to persuade her son. She leaned towards him, and flouting the cruel

tyrant, she said in her native language: "My son, take pity on me. I carried you nine months in the womb, suckled you three years, reared you and brought you up to your present age. I beg you, child, look at the sky and the earth; see all that is in them and realize that God made them out of nothing, and that man comes into being in the same way. Do not be afraid of this butcher; accept death and prove yourself worthy of your brothers, so that by God's mercy I may receive you back again along with them."

She had barely finished when the young man spoke out: "What are you all waiting for? I will not submit to the king's command; I obey the commandment of the law given by Moses to our ancestors. And you, King Antiochus, who have devised all kinds of harm for the Hebrews, you will not escape God's hand. . . ."

The king, exasperated by these scornful words, was beside himself with rage. So he treated him worse than the others, and the young man died, putting his whole trust in the Lord, without having incurred defilement. Then finally, after her sons, the mother died (2 Maccabees 7:26-31, 39-41, NEB).

A fascinating story, probably not factual but nonetheless true. It illustrates attempts to remain faithful during crises of sword and flame, and the decisions one must make in the encounter between faith and temptation.

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture:  
Daniel  
11:1-39

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# Uncivil Wars and Sounds of Victory

by Douglas R. Clark

## LOGOS

**Theme:** In the conflict between powers to the north and south of God's people, a "king of the North" emerges who "vents his fury against the holy covenant" and exalts himself above every God. He is resisted firmly by the people who know their God.

Daniel 11 has resisted easy interpretation for centuries and continues to generate a wide variety of opinion. In some ways it resembles a hologram around which cluster scholars and preachers of every stripe, whose varying perspectives and theological goals color the image they observe. Depth perceptions differ, tints and hues define the profile differently from various angles, and shades and shapes take on nuanced variations depending on the point of view. And although interpretations do vary, most commentators are fairly well entrenched in their vantage points, few being able sympathetically to look over someone else's shoulder.

Perhaps just as frustrating about this chapter is the absence of devotional appeal. In fact, we basically read of northern and southern kings who battle things out in a coldly calculated fashion, leaving behind a trail of death and destruction. The chapter shows little or no concern for leading us to the path of life. In the words of one evangelical commentator: "We do not see how [Daniel 11] could be used for a sermon or sermons."<sup>1</sup>

As part of the larger section of Daniel 10-12, chapter 11 prophetically chronicles events surrounding kings of the north and south, and might tentatively be divided into three parts.

### 1. The Last of the Persians (read Dan. 11:2-4)

Daniel here recognizes four of the numerous Persian kings who follow Cyrus. These evidently deserve special mention, particularly the final one, Xerxes, whose wealth and fame are widely known. Alexander the Great then merits notation as "a mighty king." Finally, we read of the dissolution of his kingdom to the four winds.

### 2. Skirmishes Between Kings of the North and Kings of the South (read Dan. 11:5-20)

Verses 5-20 record an ongoing battle between successive northern and southern rulers. The minute detail characteristic of this account is unusual, but it provides a fascinating picture of warfare and plunder, espionage, official deception, court intrigue, and political skulduggery. Opponents trade victories and swap family members and integrity in order to gain national advantage.

### 3. The "Contemptible" King of the North (read Dan. 11:21-39)

The final king of the north, "a despicable person," occupies the remainder of Daniel 11. Verses 21-35 relate his illegitimate rise to power, his military exploits and embarrassments, his seductive diplomacy, and his rascalion treatment of God's people and their place of worship. "A little help" does arrive, however, and the perse-

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cutions do result in refinement and purification among the "wise."

Less concerned with offensive actions than offensive attitudes, vv. 36-39 depict the king's proud claim to fame and his idolatrous and blasphemous opposition to the God of Israel. The final verses predict further conflict with the king of the south and other nations, all of which culminates in the king of the north's inglorious demise.

Having outlined the chapter, we are still faced with the two questions mentioned above: 1) What does it all mean? 2) So what? How is it relevant for me as a Christian living in the modern world with problems of my own? Ancient kings of the north and south, territorial battles, political treaties—who cares?

There are so many attempts at responding to the first question that I will only outline the range of possibilities. Two major explanations have been suggested. On the one hand, many feel that Daniel 11 is actually history written as prophecy. The author thus describes Persian, Greek, Syrian (northern), and Egyptian (southern) affairs. The central character—the king of the north in vv. 21-45—would be Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) whose exploits are at times quite compatible with events recorded in Daniel. This explanation isn't popular among evangelicals because it appears to be a deception on the part of the writer. Supporters respond that this is all for literary effect and part of the genre of the book.

Most conservatives feel that Daniel 11 consists of detailed predictions of future rulers and power struggles. Unfortunately, there is very little agreement as to who's who and what's what in the application of the predictions. The majority of these commentators take the position that Dan. 11:2-13 at least covers the Persian and Greek periods of history, in addition to a portion of the period of Syrian and Egyptian conflict. After those verses, with "time, times and the dividing of time" to think about it, opinions vary in at least 2300 different directions. Some see the Antichrist early on, some in v. 36ff., others in v. 40ff. Protestants find papal Rome in large sections of the chapter. At times interpreters try to squeeze historical facts into ill-fitting molds in order to prove their point.

The history of Adventist interpretation is quite varied as well. From our beginnings even up to the middle of this century, debates were vigorous, often generating more heat than light, over whether Turkey or the Papacy constituted the king of the north.<sup>2</sup> The *SDA Bible Commentary* itself takes a cautious, tentative stance with respect to some of the issues at stake, but Adventist commentators today generally lean toward applying v. 14 and after to Rome. For example, the collection of taxes in v. 20 is understood as a reference to the emperor Caesar Augustus who taxed the world at the time of Christ's birth (see Luke 2:17). The "contemptible king" of v. 21 would then be Augustus' successor, Tiberius, who was an "eccentric, misunderstood and unloved person."<sup>3</sup> The "prince" of the covenant (v. 22) would be Christ, and the opposition to the holy covenant

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(vv. 28, 36) would be a reference to the medieval papacy.

But after all, maybe it is not so important to identify all the actors on the stage of Daniel 11. Perhaps the essential message of the chapter lies elsewhere anyway. Is it possible, in response to the "so what?" question, that relevance for us grows out of relevance for the first people to hear these words? Can we learn something from looking at their situation and how, under God, they sought to cope? For them the chapter signaled, during a time of crisis and collapse, that God was still in charge, that evil would be overcome in a final, ultimate sense. Life could go on in a meaningful way in spite of tragedy and oppression. "Apocalyptic is a language of crisis . . ." intended to inspire hope. The "essential message has a relevance in every age of crisis, not least our own."<sup>4</sup>

Yes, uncivil wars have gone on and may continue to go on between powers of the "north" and the "south" in human history (and even between commentators on Daniel 11!). But perhaps we come closest to understanding this chapter by listening for the sounds and assurance of victory.

*Reread verses 31-39. What are the characteristics of the king of the north and of those who resist him? Is this passage applicable to any powers or conditions present in today's world?*

1. H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1949), p. 525.

2. See the copyrighted paper by Donald E. Mansell, "The Historical

Development of Seventh-day Adventist Teaching Concerning Armageddon, and the King of the North," 1985. Mansell is a book editor at Pacific Press.

3. *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 870.

4. D.S. Russell, *Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), p. 6.

# The Time Is Now

by Steve Yeagley

Before devoting all of your time and energy this week to using Daniel 11 to unlock the mysteries of the future, consider the searching words of James White: "There are those who think more of future truth than of present truth. They see but little light in the path in which they walk, but they think they see great light ahead of them."<sup>1</sup>

Prophecies which apply to the past and future are significant, but only as they make an urgent impression on the heart in the present. In referring to Daniel 11, Ellen White makes this very point.

"But who reads the warnings given by the fast-fulfilling signs of the times? What impression is made upon worldlings? What change is seen in their attitude? No more than was seen in the attitude of the inhabitants of the Noachian world. Absorbed in worldly business and pleasure, the antediluvians 'knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away.' Matthew 24:39. They had heavenly warnings, but they refused to listen. And today the world, utterly regardless of the warning voice of God, is hurrying on to eternal ruin.

"The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place."<sup>2</sup>

Undoubtedly, the most crucial time in all of prophecy is the present. As finite beings, the only moment we can claim for our lives is the here and now. Set aside the last-day events chart and open your Bible. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2, RSV).

As we see ourselves nearing the closing scenes of Daniel 11, the most pressing question is not about historical and political particulars. Rather, it is, "Have I chosen *today* to accept the Savior, and walk in the light of His love and grace?"

## REACT

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a detailed knowledge of last-day events? Is such knowledge possible?

**TESTIMON**  
Key text:  
2 Corinthians  
6:2

**"Undoubtedly,  
the most crucial  
time in all of  
prophecy is  
the present."**

1. *Review and Herald*,  
Nov. 29, 1877.  
2. *Testimonies  
for the Church*,  
vol. 9, p. 14.

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Steve Yeagley was a senior religion major at Southwestern Adventist College at the time of this writing.

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# The Abomination of Desolation

by Ron Jolliffe

**EVIDENCE**  
**Key text:**  
**2 Thessalonians**  
**2:1-12**

Daniel 11:31 (also 8:13; 9:27; 12:11) refers to the "abomination of desolation," a phrase which has intrigued students of the Bible for generations. The interpretations of this term include (a) Antiochus Epiphanes who, in 167 B.C., overran the Jewish temple, built an altar to Zeus over the original altar, and sacrificed a pig upon it (1 Maccabees 1:54); (b) the surrounding of Jerusalem by Roman armies (Josephus, *Antiq. X.xi.7*; Luke 21:20; and Ellen White in all her references<sup>1</sup>); (c) the Pope, the mass, and/or the Roman Catholic church (Protestant reformers, SDA writers other than Ellen White, and others); (d) Islam (L. E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 766); (e) an eschatological climax begun by the enacting of a Sunday law by the United States government (independently published SDA pamphlet).

It appears likely that the term "abomination of desolation" is an alteration of a phrase referring to a pagan deity, *Ba'al of Heaven*. The Hebrew word for "idol" was substituted for *Ba'al* and is usually translated abomination. The replacement word for "Heaven," the word translated "desolation," sounds very much like the Hebrew word for heaven. Thus the phrase in Daniel is used as a polemic against some false god which was said to be the god of heaven.

**"The variety of interpretations make some feel uncomfortable."**

The variety of interpretations is not exhausted by the brief list given above. The possibilities make some feel uncomfortable because they do not all point to one unique fulfillment. It may be, however, that this is the reason apocalyptic literature continues to capture the attention of people in various cultures over many centuries. The very ambiguity allows each generation to recognize its own role in God's plan and to know that in spite of how things may appear to be going at the moment, God is still in control and His kingdom will intervene and destroy the abomination that makes desolate. The promise remains that God will set up His own kingdom where nothing can ever hurt or destroy.

## REACT

According to the author, there are even disagreements among Adventists over interpretations of Daniel 11:31. Does this inhibit or nullify our prophetic mission?

1. *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, p. 26; *The Great Controversy*, p. 26; *Review & Herald*, December 20, 1898; Manuscript 126, 1901; Letter 103, 1904.

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Ron Jolliffe is an assistant professor of religion at Southwestern Adventist College.

# Rethinking Expectations

by W. Rob Sheppard

Talk about confusion! Everywhere I turned for an explanation of Daniel 11 and 12 I met with differing views. I had looked forward to college and seminary as an opportunity to have the meaning of Daniel unlocked for me. But while much classtime was spent on Daniel 1-9, very little was spent on chapters 10-12. The literature on Daniel 10-12 wasn't much help either. Those chapters were either avoided, or were a haven for self-made prophets. I asked myself, "Can anything good come out of those chapters?"

But then I discovered I was asking the wrong questions. I gave up my expectations of what I thought those chapters should be saying and let them speak for themselves. No, I have not unlocked the mysteries of the various kingdoms, nor have I erased all doubts about the future. I have, though, found four significant truths that encourage me and enhance my view of God's character.

**1. God never gave prophecy to equip me to become a prophet.** The greatest value of prophecy is not so much what it tells me in advance, but the confidence I gain in God when the prophecy comes to pass. Besides, the batting average of attempts to figure out future events from Daniel 11, such as the rise and fall of Turkey, Russia, Israel, etc., is not too good.

**2. God gave this vision to "encourage" Daniel (10:19).** Evidently Daniel was fasting and praying over the fate of Israel. The vision in chapters 10-12 would have encouraged him in at least two ways. The answer to Israel's dilemma was first a vision of the lovely character of Christ (10:5-9). Interestingly, it was the same answer God gave to Moses (Ex. 34:5-8), Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-8), and John (Rev. 1:10-20) when they prayed about Israel's dilemma. The second source of encouragement was the truth that in spite of the evidence, God had not forsaken Israel, but He was continually guiding in its affairs.

**3. God is in control.** This awesome God who controls the universe is not so busy that He neglects to lead Israel. Daniel was assured of this by seeing how accurately God's prophecies had already been fulfilled.

**4. Trials can produce hope and courage.** In the midst of apparent calamity, when the enemy of God seems to have sure victory, "the people who know their God will display strength and action" (Dan. 11:32, NASB). This is precisely the issue Ellen White was addressing when she said: "Hope and courage are essential to perfect service to God. . . . God is able and willing 'more abundantly' (Hebrews 6:17) to bestow upon His servants the strength they need for test and trial. The plans of the enemies of His work may seem to be well laid and firmly established, but God can overthrow the strongest of these. And this He does in His own time and way, when He sees that the faith of His servants has been sufficiently tested."<sup>1</sup>

## REACT

Compare the Ellen White statement above with Daniel 11:35. Why is "testing" necessary for God's people?

**HOW TO**  
Key text:  
Daniel 11:32

"Everywhere I turned for an explanation of Daniel 11 and 12, I met with differing views."

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 164.

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# The Problem of “Everlastic” Prophecy

by Douglas R. Clark

## OPINION

Key text:  
Isaiah 40:6-8

An ancient Chinese proverb says: “Prediction is a very difficult business, especially predicting the future.”<sup>1</sup> I want to adapt the aphorism by suggesting that the *interpretation* of predictions is a very difficult business, especially interpretations of the future. There may well be a blind side to the way some Christians try to map out future (and even past) events in light of biblical “prophecies.” Is it possible that misplaced emphasis has at times eclipsed some of the power and richness of this material, including apocalyptic passages like many found in Daniel?

Apocalyptic literature, characterized as it is by the symbolic, the esoteric and enigmatic, has become a mine of many possible interpretations. In the words of one professor, “What makes apocalyptic unbeatable is that it’s so reheatable.” One need only investigate the history of Adventist interpretations to discover numerous positions on one future (or even past) event or another, let alone the interpretations of the rest of Christianity. At the core of this diversity is the problem of what I call “everlastic” prophecy. This approach might also be called the “daily newspaper hermeneutic”—the widespread practice of searching the news media for “fulfillments” of prophecies.

“Prediction is a very difficult business, especially predicting the future.”

Although this practice has earned its place in the history of interpretation because of its time-honored usage, and because it may help confirm the meaning of certain texts of Scripture, one needs to be aware of potential pitfalls inherent in the approach. In the first place, one of the reasons such a variety of interpretations exists is a subconscious compulsion indiscriminately to pick and choose which event fulfills which prediction. Often commentators superficially squeeze data, facts, and information into unwieldy molds, thus bending and twisting historical realities.

Second, jumping to early conclusions regarding some predictions can be embarrassing. How many times have apocalyptists had to eat crow over a prediction that flew the coop? A quick glance at history provides a great preventive for those with a taste for crow! Long ago James White advised that we “tread lightly” in considering future events. After tentatively affirming in 1877 our position on Turkey as the king of the north, he cautioned: “But what will be the result of this positiveness in unfulfilled prophecies should things not come out as very confidently expected, is an anxious question.”<sup>2</sup> They didn’t; it was.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, some of the ongoing attempts to nail down future events assume a kind of veiled gnosticism (the heresy that salvation comes through special knowledge shared only by a spiritual elite). The impression is given that the most important aspect of these prophecies has to do with knowing or identifying the unknown. Prophets, then, are perceived as divine forecasters whose primary task involves predicting events far beyond their time and circumstances.

In all these ways prophecy becomes “everlastic”—continually stretched this way and that by varied interpretations which come and go, generate excitement and then fail to pan out. The problem is

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that we miss so much of the message and meaning of prophetic and apocalyptic literature by overlooking what these words meant to the people who first heard them and the prophetic call for response couched in that proclamation. The following, although referring more broadly to prophetic books in general, has significance for Daniel as well:

"A study of the Old Testament prophets that consists primarily of lifting selected passages here and there out of their historical context and arbitrarily applying them to our day—as if the prophet spoke exclusively for our benefit—is fraught with grave danger. In fact, this procedure is responsible more than anything else for the fanciful interpretations that distinguish the teachings of certain religious groups."<sup>4</sup>

How, then, should we view these prophecies so that we leave the element of divine foresight intact, yet focus upon the central message for ancient worshipers and for us? We can move toward an answer only by dealing with further questions. What is a "prophecy"? How much does it have to do with foretelling (prediction)? How much with forthtelling (proclamation)? What did God intend to convey of Himself to the people who first heard the words proclaimed? In what kinds of crises did God attempt to communicate hope and assurance, to call for loyalty and steadfastness? Do these resemble crises we endure individually or as a group today? How do the principles from the prophets affect me today? Is the God of the ancient believers the same as ours? Does knowing Him (whether or not we know who the king of the north is) assist us in making sense out of a confusing and cruel world? Does God stay by in hard times? How? Do I have a reason to live with hope even during oppression? Can I participate in the divine plan to remove oppression forever from human experience? How?

Prophecy: "everlastic" or everlasting?

**"What makes apocalyptic unbeatable is that it's so reheatable."**

1. Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Cognitive Dissonance in the Prophetic Tradition of the Old Testament* (New York: Seabury, 1979), p. 4.

2. James White, *Review and Herald*, Nov. 29, 1877. Interestingly, this article was cited in the *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 at the conclusion of its treatment of Daniel 11 on p. 877.

3. See the copyrighted paper by Donald E. Mansell noted in the footnotes of the *Logos* section of this week's lesson.

4. Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, F.D. Nichol, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1955), p. 38.

# STARS OF THE FINAL DRAMA

“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3, NIV).



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# Journal Entries

by Andrew Allen

*November 16*

Last week the State militia took over the college. We can't make any outside calls to friends or relatives and all our radios and TVs have been confiscated.

I'm not sure what to think. I worry that this could be the end of time and that things could get ugly. But there really doesn't seem to be any cause for concern. The military is treating us very well—so far.

Lots of kids here on campus were glad the government took over. Things were crazy around here for awhile, but they sure have calmed down since the governor brought in the troops. Teachers and students were arguing, and even fighting sometimes. The church has been getting a lot of bad press. All the talk about religious freedom being a two-edged sword seems to be cutting the wrong way.

It's really been dangerous attending a Christian college, but now the militia is standing guard and no one is throwing anything at us anymore.

I was kind of worried when all the soldiers in trucks and jeeps rolled in because I thought they would censor all religious debate. Boy was I wrong! Actually, the State

is sending in experts on various religious topics.

This sure isn't what I expected "The End" to be like.

*November 25*

Still can't leave the campus. Today I received word that my parents have been moved to a camp, sort of like a religious retreat. The letter said they were being treated well.

Just three weeks ago this country was in an uproar, but since the declaration of martial law, we've been told that things have returned to normal.

I have had to listen to lectures on religion, morality and patriotism every day nonstop over the last two weeks.

Something frightening is going on. To a large degree what these speakers have to say makes sense, but something isn't quite right. I can't put my finger on why, but it worries me that so many students agree with all that's being presented.

I'm being treated well. I'm eating well and get plenty of exercise. This certainly isn't what I expected. Strange. I wonder what will happen next?

So far, winter has been mild.

**INTRO-  
DUCTION**

**Scripture:  
Daniel 11:40—  
12:13**

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Andrew Allen is a graduate student in communications at Andrews University.

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# A Tale of Two Kings

by Roy C. Naden

LOGOS

**Theme:** The attack on God's people and truth will culminate in a time of trouble of unprecedented intensity. But the faithful will be delivered and those who die will be resurrected to life eternal.

## 1. The Climaxes (read Daniel 11:40—12:3)

*"There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered"* (12:1, NIV).

And so we end where we began, with a tale of two kings. The last part of Daniel is a mirror image of the first. At the beginning we saw a great power sweep down from the north to attack the glorious holy mountain. At the end we see a repetition of the same strategy. But whereas at the beginning God's people were made captives and transported to an enemy's land, at the end the attack is foiled, the king of the north comes to his end, and there is no one to help him.

These verses were often the basis of evangelistic sermons in the early decades of our church. The king of the north was usually designated as Turkey. After Turkey's decline some began to name Russia as the king of the north. But during the 1950s in the writings of George McCready Price and others, a far more logical explanation began to circulate. Because the book of Revelation is the apocalyptic twin of Daniel, the eschatological chapters of Revelation—especially 12-17—were seen as the natural explanation of the eschatological sections of Daniel. Daniel 11:40-45 was interpreted as symbolic of an ultimate spiritual conflict, rather than designating specific earthly powers in our time.<sup>1</sup> This view is now quite widely accepted.

In the time of Daniel the king of the north was Babylon, the nation that took Israel's southern tribes captive. The king of the south was Egypt, the nation that had been first host then captor of Israel. The kings of the former power wanted to be treated like God, and worshiped by their citizens (see Daniel 3) while the latter can be characterized by the comment of a Pharaoh, "I do not know the Lord" (Ex. 5:2). Thus interpreted we have symbolized a great *religious* power and an *atheistic* power each spreading itself across the world and seeking domination throughout the world, a quest made more attainable in the time of the end by sophisticated facilities of travel and communication.

The glorious land of the Old Testament is a symbol of the church in the Christian era. The church is attacked unsparingly in the "time of the end," but during this time there is significant progress in the preaching of the gospel. Even some of the former enemies of the church (spiritual Moab and Edom, etc.) accept the last warning message and hasten to the place of safety, the church (11:41). The good news of the gospel comes from the east and north (both these points of the compass are used in Scripture as points of heavenly origin (see Matt. 2:2; Rev. 7:2; Eze. 43:2; Ps. 48:2; Isa. 14:13) and in its

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loud cry lightens the earth with its glory (Rev. 18:1-4). In retaliation the king of the north prepares a final attack and pitches his tents as close as possible to the tents of the righteous in the glorious holy mountain (11:45). This is Armageddon (Rev. 16). There is no military battle however, just the assembling of the two great forces of earth, those who stand for King Jesus and those who stand against Him, and in this setting the king of the north is totally overthrown. There is no one to help him.

It is during this sequence of events that Jesus stands up (12:1) because His mediatorial work in the heavenly sanctuary is complete, and cries, Those who are holy will be holy forever and those who are filthy will be filthy forever, and I'm coming quickly with my rewards for everyone (see Rev. 22:11, 12).

During the ensuing chaos of the seven last plagues (Rev. 16) the faithful are fully protected by God. They are sealed with a seal of protection during this entire time of trouble. Then Jesus returns, the resurrection of the righteous takes place and in their bestowed immortality shine like the stars of heaven. Eternity has just begun!

*How would you summarize what the "time of trouble" will be like, in view of Dan. 12:1-3? What does this passage elicit more of in you—fear or hope?*

## **2. The Epilogue (read Daniel 12:4-13)**

These last verses constitute an epilogue to the book. Gabriel's final words are for Daniel to seal the prophetic sections of the book until the "time of the end"—of which he had just spoken so dramatically. From verse five, Daniel takes up his narrator's role again. Gabriel's words are recorded from Daniel 10:20 clear through 12:4.

In vv. 5-13, Daniel reports a conversation between himself and two strangers standing by a stream. Daniel wanted to know "how long" (cf. Dan. 8:13; Rev. 6:10) it would be before all these tragedies climaxed in the return of the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom of glory. Three time periods are then mentioned, the first (time, times and half a time) we link with the same time period in Daniel 7 and Revelation 11, 12, and 13; the other two (1,290 and 1,335 days) are somewhat ambiguous. Perhaps of the latter two we should say with Daniel, "I heard but I did not understand" (Dan. 12:8). All that really matters is that we, with Daniel, will stand in our "appointed place" with Jesus around the throne "at the end of the days" (Dan. 12:13).

*Refer back to Andrew Allen's "journal entries" in the Introduction for this week. What are your reactions, in the light of this week's Scripture study?*

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1. See George McCready Price, *The Greatest of the Prophets*, p. 314.

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# Living Now for the Final Drama

selected by William Fagal

## ESTIMONY

Key Text:  
Daniel 12:3

"Many say, 'If I knew Jesus would come in five years, I would make it my first business to win souls to Christ; for this would be the all-important consideration.' And these very persons may not live two years, or even one. We should first seek God, and his holiness. . . . We know not the precise time when our Lord shall be revealed in the clouds of heaven, but he has told us that our only safety is in a constant readiness,—a position of watching and waiting. . . . We are to perform each day's duties as faithfully as though that day were to be our last.

"We are not doing the will of God if we wait in idleness. To every man he has given his work, and he expects each one to do his part with fidelity. . . .

"God has no use for listless souls. Ministers sometimes tell the people that they have nothing to do but believe; that Jesus has done it all, and their own works are nothing. But the word of God plainly states that in the Judgment the scales will be balanced accurately, and the decisions will be based on the evidence adduced. . . .

"We have only a little while to urge the warfare; then Christ will come, and this scene of rebellion will close. . . . As never before, resistance must be made against sin,—against the powers of darkness. The time demands energetic and determined activity on the part of those who believe present truth. . . .

"Be patient, Christian soldier. Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come. The night of weary waiting, and watching, and mourning is nearly over. The reward will soon be given; the eternal day will dawn. There is no time to sleep now,—no time to indulge in useless regrets. He who ventures to slumber now will miss precious opportunities of doing good. We are granted the blessed privilege of gathering sheaves in the great harvest; and every soul saved will be an additional star in the crown of Jesus, our adorable Redeemer. Who is eager to lay off the armor, when by pushing the battle a little longer he will achieve new victories and gather new trophies for eternity?

"We must not become weary or faint-hearted. It would be a terrible loss to barter away enduring glory for ease, convenience, and enjoyment, or for carnal indulgences. A gift from the hand of God awaits the overcomer. Not one of us deserves it; it is gratuitous on his part. Wonderful and glorious will be this gift, but let us remember that 'one star differeth from another star in glory.' But as we are urged to strive for the mastery, let us aim, in the strength of Jesus, for the crown heavy with stars. 'They that be wise shall shine as the firmament, and they that win many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.'"<sup>1</sup>

## REACT

What determines whether or not our names are "written in the book": the "evidence adduced" concerning our works, or the unmerited, gratuitous favor of God? (Compare also John 5:24; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; 1 John 4:10-18.)

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William Fagal is director of the E. G. White Estate Branch Office at Andrews University.

"It would be a terrible loss to barter away enduring glory for ease, convenience and enjoyment, or for carnal indulgences."

1. *Review and Herald*, October 25, 1881.

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# In the Midst of the Conflict

by William Shea

All commentators agree that the last five verses of Daniel 11 have not been fulfilled yet. Among those who put the fulfillment of these verses in the future, there are two main views. One holds that the actions of the king of the north or Antichrist will be fulfilled by a single individual who will rise to rule in the Middle East. He will desecrate the Jewish temple that is supposed to be rebuilt, and he will persecute the Jews who live in modern Israel. The church will not have anything to do with these events because it will have been raptured out of the world secretly before they occur. This view has become very popular in the evangelical world through the influence of books like Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

One major problem with this view is that it misses a central point in the prophecy, the attention focused upon God's people in the end time. They are not outside of the world looking on at its events like passive spectators at a sporting event. They are intimately involved in those events—they are representatives of God in them. This is emphasized by the first two verses of the next chapter where one of the two groups of saints that enters God's kingdom is to come out of the very tribulation caused by God's final enemy. (The other group comes out of the grave.) The same point is made by Jesus in Matthew 24 and by John in Revelation 13, 14. John saw this same final conflict in terms of those who would symbolically carry either the Mark of the Beast or the Seal of God.

Seventh-day Adventist interpreters have taken the view that the symbolic figure of the king of the north represents a body of people, a power, and not just a single individual. This is in harmony with and parallel to the way in which the symbols of the metals, beasts, and horns are used in the other prophecies of Daniel. When it comes to identifying the power represented by this figure, however, there have been some disagreements within the church. James White felt, for example, that the power signified here was Rome. Uriah Smith, on the other hand, introduced the view in Adventist literature in 1877 that the king of the north represented Turkey, a view which carried the day until the end of World War I. At that time the powers of Europe fought the Turks and the Turks lost. But Jesus did not come as He was supposed to when the king of the north came to his end, even though one battle was fought right at Megiddo or Armageddon.

These events and others in the course of world history have led to a reevaluation of the significance of this prophecy. We should realize that the positions we take on such matters are not final and cannot be until the actual events prophesied come to pass. In general, however, there appears to be a present-day emphasis upon the spiritual nature of this coming conflict. Earthly political events may be involved, but the point of special importance is that this is ultimately a conflict between spiritual powers of the greatest magnitude, Christ and Satan. We have the opportunity of joining ranks with our heavenly commander in carrying out His work in the world in this important time.

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Daniel 11:14–  
12:1

**“The most important point is that this is ultimately a conflict between spiritual power of the greatest magnitude.”**

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At the time of this writing, William Shea was a professor of Old Testament at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

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# Quelling End-Time Fears

by Roy C. Naden

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Hebrews 12:2

Every "How To" section of the lesson quarterly is basically an attempt to show how to *apply* the biblical message, not just *read* it, or *meditate* on it, or even just *understand* it. Somewhere along the path of spiritual growth there must be an action of the will, one must *do* something.

And at that point we often find our greatest difficulty. We are by nature doers. The moment Adam and Eve found themselves in desperate need they did something, they tried to cover their nakedness and make themselves appear respectable. We still resort to doing when in a corner, but often we do the wrong thing.

Take our lesson this week. The thought of a time of trouble so great there is nothing in history with which to compare it, cannot but give even the hardest soul a pang of fear. What will be our response to this fear? We will all do something. Some will get busy about secular things to put it out of mind. Some will get busy about religious activities to quell their fear.

But those kinds of doing are not the answer. You see an illustration of how to do and how not to do at the foot of the cross. The soldiers were working. They kept at it until the end of the day when another squad of soldiers relieved the ones who had nailed our Lord and the thieves to their crosses. The religious leaders were busy too, working right through Thursday night and into Friday morning. They enjoyed a momentary respite during Friday, but late in the afternoon they took up their work again, and Sabbath or no Sabbath they kept right on working to make sure Jesus never left the tomb. Yet the workers were lost! Only a small group of followers faced the panic of this time of trouble appropriately: they ceased from their works, and just stood beholding Jesus.

It is by beholding that we are changed. No work that we can perform could purchase even a second of eternity. That comes to us as a gift. Jesus purchased our eternal life. Jesus offers us our eternal life as a gift. We accept it by faith as a gift and then begin the Christian life of trust and obedience.

As Charles Wesley wrote so poetically:

Not the labors of my hands  
Can fulfill thy law's demands  
Could my zeal no respite know  
Could my tears forever flow  
All for sin could not atone  
Thou must save and thou *alone*.

If you feel the fear rising, quell it not by working but by looking at Jesus.

## REACT

Is *some* fear of the time of trouble a good thing?

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# Those Who Are Wise Shall Understand

by Richard M. Davidson

Dan. 11:40-45 provides one of the most insightful biblical depictions of the forces that are now jockeying for power in the world. I am deeply indebted to at least two diligent Bible students who dared to challenge traditional Adventist views and wrote ahead of their times, setting forth the Christ-centered hermeneutical keys which unlock these verses.<sup>1</sup> Instead of seeing here literal nations engaged in actual combat in Palestine, as many well-meaning Adventists have insisted, these authors show how, after the cross, prophetic references to Palestine, Israel, and Israel's enemies must be interpreted *spiritually* and *universally*, not *literally* and *locally*. Thus after the reference to the cross in Dan. 11:30, 31, the king of the north symbolizes the ideological force in opposition to God which assumes a religious garb—it is spiritual Babylon, counterfeit religion (see Jer. 1:13-15; 4:6; 6:1, 22; Rev. 17-18). The king of the south is another ideology opposing God and His people, but without religious pretensions—it is spiritual Egypt, irreligion, secularism, atheism (see Isa. 30:1-18; Ex. 5:2; Rev. 11:8).

Today in the "time of the end" we find ourselves in the crossfire between secularism and false religion. Daniel 11:40-45 tells us what will happen. The king of the north (false religion) will win the battle against the king of the south (secularism), and then he will turn his guns against spiritual Israel—the "glorious land."

But he is alarmed by tidings from the east and the north—the directions from which came the divine agents of literal Babylon's destruction (see Jer. 50:9; Isa. 41:2, 25; 46:11). This is the loud cry of Rev. 18, the message announcing the imminent judgment of the false religious system and the imminent deliverance of God's people. These tidings infuriate the king of the north and precipitate the death decree (v. 44), but just as he is poised for his final attack upon "the glorious holy mountain"—Mt. Zion—"he shall come to his end, with none to help him" (v. 45).

Dan. 12:1-3 spotlights the same period of time as 11:45, but from the perspective of God's activity on behalf of His people. "At that time" probation closes ("Michael shall stand up") and the investigative judgment is concluded ("everyone whose name shall be found written in the book"). The "time of trouble" begins (parallel to 11:44, 45a) but afterward God's "stars" in the cosmic drama shall be delivered, resurrected, glorified, and immortalized (parallel to the end of the king of the north, 11:45b).

## REACT

If Old Testament prophecy is spiritualized in the Christian era, is it then possible to make absolute, unchangeable applications of the prophecies to particular entities or movements?

**OPINION**  
Key text:  
Daniel 12:10

**"Today we find ourselves in the crossfire between secularism and false religion."**

1. I refer especially to Hans LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), and Louis Were, *The King of the North at Jerusalem* (reprint, Berrien Springs, MI: First Impressions, 1985).

Richard M. Davidson is an associate professor and chairman of the Old Testament department at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

Friday, March 27 123

# Linda Hernandez babies her patients.



**Meet Linda Hernandez,  
registered pediatric nurse,  
storyteller and part-time big  
sister at Porter Memorial  
Hospital in Denver.**

"I think the Adventist philosophy of healing really comes to life in the pediatric department.

It's so obvious that children need more than medicine to get better. They also need love, comfort and reassurance.

We have a saying in our unit. *Don't just treat the symptoms—treat the child.* And we do. In fact, we've found that a simple hug is sometimes the best medication we can administer.

The joy of seeing a really sick child get better is my reward for working here, and I know my colleagues feel the same. Together, we're living Christ's words. "If you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto Me."

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Brenda and Elmer come from two different backgrounds. WWC provides personal financial packages for each of them.

## It isn't their bank accounts that got them here.

Coming from a middle-income family meant that Brenda's parents earned too much for her to qualify for the government's PELL grant, but not enough to make financing her education a breeze. "Without my personal financial aid package," she says, "it would have been really tough on my parents — especially since my brother is in college, too."

Elmer came to WWC from Costa Rica. "The college's work-study program matches my earnings dollar for dollar — up to \$1,000," he says. "I've also been able to work full-time in the summer while taking

classes, and the college's Smart Start program gave me a free room to live in for the summer."

Brenda and Elmer are where they want to be. Getting the Christian education they want. And the financing packages to make it possible.

Want to know more? Call or write today to find out how you can get in on WWC's nearly \$5 million in financial aid.

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