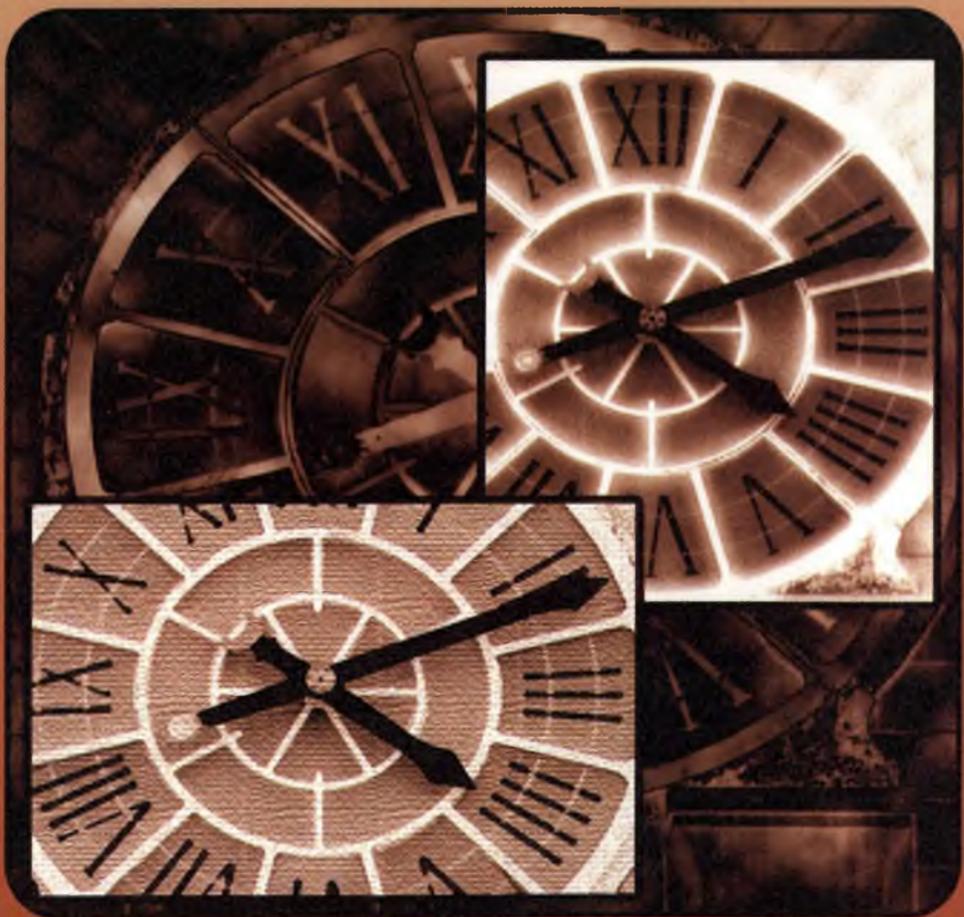


OCTOBER-DECEMBER

Q
2004

Daniel

THE
TRANSCENDENT END



A Devotional Bible-Study Guide
for Young Adults



<http://cq.adventist.org>

Daniel: The Transcendent End



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Daniel: The Transcendent End

- 1. To Eat or Not to eat10**
Hans Buddan, Tamara Crider, Tiffany Crider, Sharon Jones, Trevis Moorely, Kimberly Jones-Price
- 2. Nebuchadnezzar's image19**
Virgilio G. Argulla, Burkhard Olschewski, Philip Oreso, Maylan Schurch, Miranda Simkin, Cesar B. Tavaréz
- 3. The Fiery furnace28**
Nimrod Magati, Elijah Onyango, Ephraim Opuge, Richard Otieno, Jackline Owiti, Lameck Walala
- 4. Nebuchadnezzar's Judgment37**
Leticia Chaparro, John C. Cress, James A. Dittes, Kristi Geraci, Tom Owiti, Jarrod Ennis Patterson
- 5. Surprise party46**
Ashley Bohlender, Gina Dawn Jacob, Laura Rumsey, Clint Wahlen, Gina Devine Wahlen, Wendy Voth
- 6. An ancient Death Decree55**
Jordan Fiel C. Aba, Victor Brown, Estanley T. Casem, Marcelina A. Corpuz, Carmela Lacsá-Domocmat, Karen Holford
- 7. Daniel's History lesson64**
Catherine Anthony Boldeau, Larry Bonner, Brian R. Carlson, Jonathan Geraci, Finicilla Kharpran, Dan Solís

8. The Pre-Advent judgment	73
Andrea Bernoth, Jason Cork, Norma C. Goodlett, Beverly I. Henry, Ferdinand O. Regalado, Robert Wright	
9. The sanctuary Attacked	82
Deanne de Berg, Rich Carlson, Bronwyn Mison, Brenton Stacey, Kylie Stacey, Bruna Tawake	
10. The sanctuary Cleansed	91
Elizabeth Christina Collie, E. Isaac Collie, Henry R. Moncur, Andy Moya, Hamfreth Rahming, Ellen Sands	
11. God's Timetable	100
David Betty, André Dixon, Wayne Dixon, Christina McCalla, Katherine B. Walton, Kaaryn Sanon	
12. When Kings go to War	109
Cheryll Bird, Shasta Emery, Dawna Gerst, Sula Lane, Ashim Pheirim, Ronald Andrew Wallang	
13. The Time of the End	118
Donna Binger, Lani Edwards, Lawrence Morara Kiage, Judith Vucic, Albert A. C. Waite, Elliott A. Williams	

Welcome to *CQ's* World



The following pages represent the creative energy of a truly international group of Adventist young adults. The map above indicates the locations of the writers who have participated in *CQ's* writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School Bible study guide, four hundred individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 70,000. It is published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Indonesian, and Finnish.

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This Quarter's Illustrator



Melissa is a senior biology major at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California, and is planning to attend veterinarian school next year. Her great love for animals finds expression not only in her care for them at vet clinics and a wildlife rehabilitation center where she has worked while in college but also in wildlife photography. Melissa's college minor is photography, and she has received awards for wildlife photos she took while on a safari in Africa, which was sponsored by the Andrews University photography department in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Getting the Most Out of CQ

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the *Adult Bible Study Guide* find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Four hundred Adventist young adults contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about 70,000.

POINTERS FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passages on which each week's lesson are based appear in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.
3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the "Logos" pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.
4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.
5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:
 - "**Introduction**" is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.
 - "**Logos**" is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.
 - "**Testimony**" presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.
 - "**Evidence**" approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
 - "**How-To**" discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.
 - "**Opinion**" is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.
 - "**Exploration**" provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week's lesson.

CQ AND THE CHURCH

CQ is the General Conference-approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

To Eat or Not to eat



**“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path”
(Ps. 119:105, NIV)**

What Makes You Stand Out?

INTRODUCTION

1 Cor. 10:31

Did you know that two-thirds of the world's eggplant is grown in New Jersey? That is just one little-known fact about Jersey that makes it stand out from other places. What makes you stand out?

It's true: You are unique. You have 46 chromosomes in every cell of your body. Every chromosome carries many genes—the instructions for your growth and development. You inherit half of your genes from your mother and half from your father (and they from their parents) and the combination of all these genes makes each of us unique.

That's not all that makes you unique. Your environment also influences you. Every experience you've had since birth helps to shape your character and modify your behavior. How you were disciplined and educated, as well as the cultural traditions that you learned, all make you who you are. In turn, you influence others by your words and actions. Your experiences have an impact on others in a unique way. You stand out because only you can offer yourself—a unique genetic make-up influenced by your surroundings.

That is just one little-known fact about Jersey.

Daniel had been raised a certain way, and he knew that he should not defile his body with the king's meat or any other sin. He held on to the principles he had been taught, and his actions reflected that. Daniel was firm in his religion, that of an Israelite. The Babylonians had changed his name, but they could not change his nature. He was bold enough in the Lord to put his actions to the test: He asked if he could be given ten days to show that a diet of beans (or seeds) and water was enough to sustain him.

Most people will not believe the benefit of a modest or temperate diet, nor how much it contributes to the health of the body, unless they try it. Daniel knew, however, that it wasn't the food that was sustaining him. It was God. Daniel demonstrated that if you glorify God in your words and actions, He will uphold you.

Daniel and his friends stood out in their refusal to eat the king's meat. New Jersey stands out by producing most of the world's eggplant. What makes you stand out? It's more than just your genes or how you were brought up. When you demonstrate your faith in God, don't be surprised what an impact you can make by standing out.

You Pick and You Choose!

LOGOS

Daniel 1

In the third year of Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, his kingdom was attacked by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The Lord granted Nebuchadnezzar the victory over Judah, and he carried off many of the sacred vessels that were used in the temple ceremonies. The spoiling of Jerusalem's treasures by the Babylonians was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy pronounced almost a century earlier (Isa. 39:6).

But it didn't stop there. Along with the sacred vessels from the temple, Nebuchadnezzar ordered his master of the eunuchs, his chief advisor Ashpenaz, to train certain young men for royal service. The king had specific criteria. He wanted the best of the best. The few who were chosen were going to be close advisors to the king, so they had to be the finest.

They had to be part of the royal family of Israel. These young men had to be acceptable to the king's highest standards. When it came to appearance, they had to be on the "Most Beautiful People" list. They had to be smart when it came to every subject placed before them. Because they were going to be in the pres-

They had to be the finest.

ence of the king himself, they had to be well behaved and self-disciplined. It was Ashpenaz's job also to teach these special, select few the language and literature of Babylon. Among those chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Changes to Be Made

When the king decided that he was going to use the young men from Judah, he knew that some changes had to be made. He couldn't leave them the way they were. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to make these young men as much as possible like other Babylonian subjects. The first change that was to be made was that of diet. As king, he felt since they were going to be treated as royalty, they should also eat from the king's table. Whatever meat and wine the king drank, they too were to take part in it. After three years they would be examined by the king himself to see if the king's food really "does a body good."

He also changed their names. As Hebrews and the chosen race of God, they all had meaningful and special names given to them to fit their personality, occupation, and ultimately determine the path of their lives. Their name, in other words, was a window to who they were. Each of the four Hebrew young men had notable and distinct names. Daniel's name meant "God is my Judge"; Hananiah meant

“Yahweh is gracious”; Mishael meant “Who belongs to God”; and Azariah meant “Yahweh helps.” Each young man’s name tied him to their Creator and Master, the God of Israel. By changing their names, Nebuchadnezzar could attempt to breach the tie that they had with their God. He gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar. This name meant “Bel protect (the king’s) life.” To Hananiah the name Shadrach was given. The name Shadrach was believed to be a corruption of Marduk. To Mishael the king bestowed the name Meshach, which was also believed to relate to one of the pagan gods. Azariah was given the name of Abednego, which meant “servant of the god Nebu.”

Put to the Test

After the king had completed the task of changing their names and ordering that their diet be changed, the three-year test period began. Daniel made up in his mind that he wouldn’t eat of the king’s food. He knew that eating of this food could not only destroy his body, but it could also destroy his mind and in turn hinder him from making wise decisions. So he asked if he and his friends could have a separate diet consisting of all things healthful such as fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and water. The eunuch hesitated, fearing that at the end of the test period the king would see that physically they had deteriorated and then would hold him responsible. But Daniel struck a deal with him. They would try their healthful diet for ten days, and if at the end of the ten days their eunuch saw that their physical health was questionable, they would continue with the king’s diet.

So the eunuch consented to the arrangement and gave the four boys the food they had asked for. At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his friends proved not only to be healthier than the others, but they were stronger also. Melzar, seeing this, decided that he would keep them on the diet, and he exchanged the king’s food for a diet that was more suitable. Honoring their decision not to defile their body in any way, God gave the four Hebrew young men wisdom and knowledge in everything they did. Along with wisdom and knowledge, He gave Daniel the gift to interpret dreams and visions.

The Results

At the end of the three-year period, Ashpenaz took all the boys to the king for their oral examinations. The king found that Daniel and his friends were superior to all the others. He was so impressed with their appearance and performance that he made them permanent members of his court. As they served the king, no matter what problem, question, or situation arose, the four Hebrew young men proved to be ten times more reliable than any of his other advisors.

These four, because they honored God, in turn were honored by Him. They didn’t hesitate to do what was right and by doing the right thing, they never for a second compromised who they were.

TESTIMONY

Dan. 1:8

Daniel and his friends had to make choices. Their choices were to serve Satan or to serve God. In Daniel 1 we understand that Daniel and his friends refrained from eating the king's meat. "Anything that lessens physical strength enfeebles the mind and makes it less capable of discriminating between right and wrong."¹

Daniel and his friends understood that they would lessen their ability to do the work required of them if they partook of the king's meat. They knew that they would "become less capable of choosing the good, and have less strength of will to do that which we know to be right"² if they ate the food presented to them.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah made the correct choice in refraining from the king's meat. They decided to use their abilities to do the work of God. They

**They knew that they would
"become less capable of
choosing the good."**

did not want to be unfit to accomplish the work God gave them to do. They were able to stand firm, have faith, and trust in God that He would deliver them because of their obedience to Him. Daniel and his

friends did not try to bend the rules or make excuses. They did what was instilled in them and what God had expected them to do.

Ellen White gives us some insight as to how this story relates to our lives, not just the physical aspect of proper diet, but how it affects our spiritual lives and our reasoning abilities. "Let none who profess godliness regard with indifference the health of the body, and flatter themselves that intemperance is no sin, and will not affect their spirituality. A close sympathy exists between the physical and the moral nature."³

"The character of Daniel is presented to the world as a striking example of what God's grace can make of men fallen by nature and corrupted by sin. The record of his noble, self-denying life is an encouragement to our common humanity. From it we may gather strength to nobly resist temptation, and firmly, and in the grace of meekness, stand for the right under the severest trial."⁴

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 346.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 43.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31.

The Best Way to Live?

EVIDENCE

Gen. 1:29; Dan. 1:15

Satan tries to find the best schemes to counteract many of God's plans. One such attempt lies in the original diet that God outlined at Creation. In Genesis 1:29, God says, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food" (NIV). Due to lack of vegetation after the Flood, God allowed humanity to consume certain animals. Satan, just as he got Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, has gotten humankind to go against God's original plan by eating every animal and drinking fermented drinks.

Despite Satan's overwhelming success, there are some who choose to follow God's way. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah successfully proved the wonder-working power of God's original diet. Daniel and his friends begged the steward for a diet of only vegetables and water to drink. This was what God had instructed at Creation. Daniel was optimistic that he would be healthier than those who ate from the king's table.

When the trial period was up, the result of the experiment was as clear as night and day. Daniel and his friends were exceedingly better than the rest of the youths.

"At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food" (Dan. 1:15, NIV). Because of their courageous stand for

God, they were rewarded with knowledge, learning, and wisdom. Once again, God's way triumphed over Satan's way.

This was just one example of the wonderful results of standing up for God. It is difficult to be a Daniel in today's world. Choosing to take a stand for God is tough. Today, many immoral and un-Christian acts are accepted as the norm, while some are even applauded. Standing as a group in the face of immorality, just as Daniel and his three friends did, greatly increases one's chance of being successful for God. Having a good prayer life also helps in maintaining a connection with God. He also rewarded Daniel and his friends, and will reward us with eternal life just as He promised. So next time temptation raises its ugly head, use the uncompromising nature of Daniel as a guide to overcome it.

**It is difficult to be a Daniel
in today's world.**

REACT

What do you find hardest about maintaining a healthful, balanced lifestyle and why?

Stand Firm and Succeed

HOW-TO

Dan. 1:4

Downsized, unfulfilled, stagnant. As the downtrodden entrepreneur prepares himself for the life-altering decision he must make, there are questions he must confront: Do I leave my job? Do I start my own business? With the real possibility of losing everything looming constantly overhead, the future businessman decides to step out in faith. He incorporates! His passion, perseverance, and commitment will be continually tested. How will he succeed? The principles are the same as for spiritual growth.

1. Prepare. Daniel's ability to stand firm didn't suddenly develop when he was faced with a choice about his diet. Daniel 1:4 tells us that there was "no blemish" (KJV) in Daniel's character. That feat is not accomplished overnight. It is a life-long process. Similarly, we can't expect suddenly to succeed in a business venture if we have not developed habits of thoroughness, perseverance, and determination in our work before starting a business. Character is revealed, not developed, during a crisis.

2. Remain firm in your decision. When starting a business, understand that obstacles will present themselves.

How will he succeed?

The businessperson, however, must remain firm and focused on his or her decision to succeed, just as Daniel remained firm in his decision not to

eat the king's meat.

3. Have faith in God. The budding entrepreneur steps out in faith when starting a business. He must have faith in his abilities to accomplish the task. More importantly he must have faith in God as did Daniel. Daniel stepped out in faith when he requested the assistance of the prince of the eunuchs. He knew God would sustain him.

How do you stand firm today? You must make a decision to follow your heart and then have faith that God will sustain you through any obstacles, challenges, or pressures.

REACT

1. What are the biggest temptations that lead to unbalance in living Christianity? How do you overcome them?

2. What advice would you give to your little brother or sister when you discover that they are hiding a large amount of junk food in their room for their own consumption? Why?

That Is the Question

OPINION

Gen. 1:29; Dan. 1:15

People today are obsessed with food and eating. Turn television on any time of any day and you will be bombarded with advertisements to eat—fast food, grocery store, restaurants, snacks—the list is extensive. Then the subsequent commercials are selling pills, meal replacements, and other guarantees to lose those unwanted pounds gained from the excessive eating.

Whether the question is: Do I eat? or Do I not eat? the answer appears to be a resounding: Yes, I eat! Unfortunately, when answering Yes, we tend to forget the possible consequences. Thereby many are diabetic, have acid reflux, are lactose intolerant, have heart conditions, are even overweight and obese, yet they continue to eat.

What does this mean as we reflect on Daniel and the choices he made? Basically, we can say No to food, television, bad habits, questionable friendships, etc. Daniel first purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's meat. Then he asked for assistance to accomplish his task. Third, Daniel took action, and finally, he had faith that God would bless and honor his decision. What do we learn from this? Once we have made the decision to follow our hearts in doing what we know is right, such as saying No to excessive eating, we can seek assistance from others to accomplish our goal. Then we must take action. There are several adages to support this: Talk is cheap, action speaks louder than words, and the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. Finally, we must have faith in God that He will see us through and bless us as we continue to trust in Him.

He had faith that God would bless and honor his decision.

Imagine the changes in television advertisements, weight-loss clinics, hospital emergency rooms, and funeral home parlors if we took to heart the lessons learned from Daniel. People would eat less; therefore there would be fewer commercials attempting to sell unhealthy foods. Weight-loss clinics would go out of business for lack of customers. Hospital emergency rooms would see fewer patients in diabetic distress or having cardiac issues. And because people would eat less and become healthier, some would live longer. Imagine that! The benefits that come from a single decision made from following the lessons of Daniel 1 would and can change society as we know it today.

EXPLORATION

Dan. 1:8-16

CONCLUDE

Making tough decisions or taking stands that are unpopular in the world around us requires enormous courage at times. When Daniel and his friends were faced with the question of whether to share the king's meat and wine, they remained true to their principles—even though their lives could have been the price exacted. This was the wisest choice for them, of course. It strengthened them physically and spiritually. But it also proved their worthiness and set a good example to those around them. We, too, can emulate their courageous actions and trust in God to give us the strength to persevere.

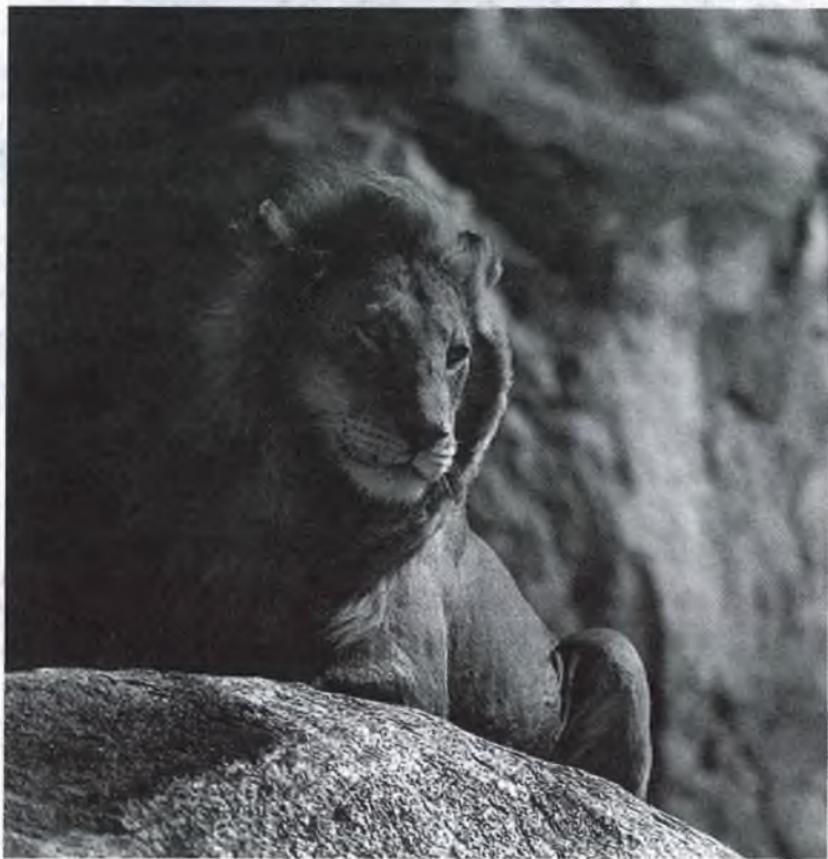
CONSIDER

- Keeping a journal for one week to list and reflect on the difficult choices you face, how you trust in God for guidance and strength, and what results. We can learn from both wise and not-so-wise decisions.
- Using a contemporary translation of Daniel 1 to turn the chapter into a short play to perform with some study partners or other class members. After the performance, lead a discussion about how this activity helped you better to understand what these Hebrew boys went through.
- Composing a collage of food and lifestyle images representing some daily choices you have to make that can either strengthen or weaken you physically and spiritually. Next to each image, copy a Bible verse that promises God's help.
- Doing a brief survey in your workplace, neighborhood, or school. Ask others to list their top five challenges in making wise and healthful choices instead of merely popular or pleasurable ones. Then tally the answers or categorize them and discuss the results with your class members.
- Creating a partnership with someone who may also need regular support to maintain a healthful lifestyle. Begin by choosing together just one or two behaviors to tackle, and plan some strategies for getting and giving help when those tempting moments come along.
- Selecting one of your favorite inspirational songs—either sacred or popular—with lyrics about being strong, faithful, or true to your God or others. Then over the next week or so, sing or hum a few lines whenever you're facing a difficult decision.

CONNECT

Christ's Object Lessons, chap. 22.

Nebuchadnezzar's image



“ ‘He changes the times and the seasons; he removes kings and raises up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding’ ”
(Dan. 2:21, NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

Dan. 2:27, 28

A lion met a tiger as they drank beside the pool.

Said the tiger to the lion, "Why are you roaring like a fool?"

"That's not foolish," said the lion, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"They call me king of all the beasts because I advertise."

A rabbit heard them talking, ran homeward like a streak.

He thought he'd try the lion's trick, but his roar was just a squeak.

A fox was walking by that way—had luncheon in the woods.

Moral: Never advertise unless you have the goods.*

Think back over your childhood Sabbath School classes. Daniel and his three friends had a bit of a reputation for being in the public eye, didn't they? There was that time Daniel defied the king's decree by praying to God—political conspiracies landed him in a den of lions. We can assume that most of Babylon heard about one of the king's favorites being sentenced to a cruel death. They probably all heard about Daniel surviving the lions too.

Then there was another time when his three friends refused to worship an enormous statue the king had commissioned in his own honor. The king was furious and they were sentenced to death too. No doubt throwing three miscreants into an enormous furnace was something of a public spectacle. Or at least major news. I think it's safe to say that all four of them spent a lot of

**King Nebuchadnezzar
seems to have had
something of a temper.**

time advertising! And of course this week all four of them narrowly escape execution. (King Nebuchadnezzar seems to have had something of a temper.)

Watch how Daniel approaches the problem. When threatened with death, if he doesn't describe and interpret the king's dream, Daniel goes straight to the king and asks for more time to find the answers. Big advertising! But Daniel really has the goods; he gets the whole dream and its meaning. Not that he's about to take responsibility for it. "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets'" (Dan. 2:27, 28, NKJV).

Appointed as ruler over the entire province of Babylon, Daniel spent a lot of time advertising. But he certainly had the goods—he had God.

*Morris Venden, *Modern Parables: Stories That Make Spiritual Truth Come Alive* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1994).

History Twice Revealed

EVIDENCE

Gen. 41:32

King Nebuchadnezzar's and Daniel's dreams, found in Daniel 2 and 7, respectively, symbolize the four kingdoms, beginning with Babylon, that would rise from the earth. The interpretations for both dreams also foretell a fifth kingdom, an everlasting one. The king's dream used a statue divided into four distinct parts; Daniel's dream consists of four beasts. Since both these dreams had been interpreted in the same way, one might ask why God would have given two different symbolic dreams for one and the same interpretation.

King Nebuchadnezzar's statue was a revelation specifically for the king himself: "As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, . . . so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind" (Dan. 2:30, NIV). The symbolic head of gold perfectly fits Nebuchadnezzar and the image that he had set in his mind regarding his kingdom. The brilliant color and luxury of Babylon became legendary from the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

**Both dreams also foretell
a fifth kingdom.**

Archeologists have uncovered tablets upon which King Nebuchadnezzar had written these words: "Babylon—the city which is the delight of my eyes, and which I have glorified; may it last forever."* The king could have been somewhat disappointed when he had heard Daniel say that another kingdom would rise after Babylon. This means that his kingdom would be taken over by another, in opposition to what he had in mind.

Daniel's dream of the four beasts was revealed specifically for God's chosen people whom He intended to redeem. It has more emphasis on the fourth kingdom, that is, Rome, and the great conflict that would be arising from that moment until the end. We can conclude that God had given two symbolismisms for the apocalyptic prophecy to make way to two different perspectives that would eventually complement each other.

The Bible, however, gives us another reason that this is so. Regarding Pharaoh's two dreams about the famine, Joseph told him that "the reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon" (Gen. 41:32, NIV). God gave us total assurance and comfort that these things will definitely take place because the King of the everlasting kingdom has decided that it would be so.

*David Asscherick, *Revelation Promises Hope*, 2001.

Monday
October 4

More Light From Daniel 2

LOGOS

Daniel 2

A few blocks from the church I pastor is a tiny house with a sign in the yard: "Astrology and Palmistry Readings." None of my congregation (I hope!) stops there on the way to Sabbath morning worship. But others in my community do, enough to keep the little sign upright and painted. And those who let the palmist read their future are probably very concerned about what's to come. As was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

If you're like me, you can probably draw and label Nebuchadnezzar's dream image with your eyes shut. (But if you're like me, you have to look up the dates!) It's vital to revisit and review this great line of prophecy. But Daniel 2 has some other encouraging news too. For example, this chapter also teaches us that God can really reach the pagan mind.

As Daniel 2 begins, we see a young king who would never have attended an evangelistic series, would never have glanced through a copy of *Signs of the*

**God can really reach the
pagan mind.**

Times, would never have completed an online Discover Bible lesson, or would never have browsed Bibleinfo.com. No teen team could have gotten close enough to Nebuchadnezzar's

door to interest him in a Magabook. Yet Daniel 2:1-3 shows how the Creator brushed by all the barriers and entered that royal mind with a frightening dream. And this gives me courage for all the very nice, very intelligent people in my city who simply ignore God.

If His purposes—impelled by my prayers—permit, God can indeed reach them with His second item of encouraging news: Idolatry-based solutions to life's deepest problems are useless. Why is this encouraging? Because it's the truth. Adopting a no-idol policy takes the pressure off us, giving us permission to stop our weary pilgrimage toward yet another philosophy, yet another worldview, yet another mind-calming, magic-working mantra.

And idolatry's idiocy is suddenly becoming very clear to Nebuchadnezzar's wise men. Verses 4-10 positively vibrate with Chaldean panic. That's because at bottom there are really only two types of idolatry, and both are hopelessly dead-end. One says that a "small-g" god outside yourself can affect your life. The other kind of idolatry (of which Nebuchadnezzar himself seems to be high priest) says that you yourself are your own god. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built . . . by my mighty power?" (Dan. 4:30, NKJV).

Both ideas, of course, are based on self, on selfishness. If I'm worshipping a small-g god, I'm merely worshipping myself, because we always make our gods in our own image and after our likeness. Yet now, in the Chaldeans' tense debate with the king, everybody sees how silly their little-g gods have become.

The great Babylonian gods Bel and Marduk can't pierce the veil of the future. That privilege is reserved for a Hebrew teenager who, with death snarling at his heels, acts out this chapter's third piece of encouraging news: God's men or women, in the right place with the right attitude, can bend history upward. As he listens to his doom in verse 13, Daniel simply decides not to bow his head and shuffle toward the executioner. Verses 14-18 show the three steps he takes: He enters into dialogue with the opposition, he reaches out to believing friends for support, and he prays.

Daniel isn't a Lone Ranger or Rambo, who fights and wins alone. The sixth of Stephen Covey's seven habits of highly effective people is "synergize." Jethro taught Moses how to synergize—let others bear part of the burden. The fugitive David learned to synergize and gathered a faithful band of followers who gave him courage in the face of Saul's pursuits. Jesus chose not 12 hermits in 12 separate caves but a growing group of disciples, co-learners, and sent them out to synergize the world's believers into churches. And here Daniel dialogues with the king, and then synergizes with his friends and with God.

We need to do the same. After all, college classes and workplaces are now emphasizing the team approach—and people who can't work with a team aren't as welcome as those who can. And those who can have discovered a bonus: Teamwork is fun.

What greater happiness can a team experience than to help the world discover the final piece of encouraging news in Daniel 2: God can really predict—and will really rule—the future. Wherever the zigzag debate on the openness of God finally ends up—and it'll probably end only in a throne-room seminar given by God Himself—nobody can argue here that God doesn't know the future.

Deep within Russia in World War II, German Adventist soldier Franz Hasel sat at a small table in the office of his company commander. Showing the officer (a history teacher in civilian life) a picture of the image of Daniel 2, Franz asked him to confirm the line of kingdoms and the dates.

"Everything is accurate," the astonished officer replied. "But what does it mean?"

"The only conclusion a Bible student can come to," Hasel said, "is that the Fuhrer cannot win this war. It will not be possible for him to unite Europe under his leadership and establish his 1,000-year Third Reich. The Bible's predictions have proved accurate again and again. And if they're accurate here, it means that we're fighting a losing battle."

Tuesday
October 5

Churchcraft and Statecraft

TESTIMONY

Rev. 12:3

"We have come to a time when God's sacred work is represented by the feet of the image in which the iron was mixed with the miry clay. God has a people, a chosen people, whose discernment must be sanctified, who must not become unholy by laying upon the foundation, wood, hay, and stubble. Every soul who is

"The mingling of churchcraft and statecraft is represented by iron and clay."

loyal to the commandments of God will see that the distinguishing feature of our faith is the seventh-day Sabbath. If the government would honor the Sabbath as God had commanded, it would stand in the

strength of God and in the defense of the faith once delivered to the saints. But statesmen will uphold the spurious Sabbath and mingle their religious faith with the observance of this child of the papacy, placing it above the Sabbath which the Lord has sanctified and blessed, setting it apart for man to keep holy, as a sign between Him and His people to a thousand generations.

"The mingling of churchcraft and statecraft is represented by the iron and the clay. This union is weakening all the power of the churches. This investing of the church with the power of the state will bring evil result. Men have almost passed the point of God's forbearance. They have invested their strength in politics, and have united with the papacy. But the time will come when God will punish those who have made void His law, and their evil work will recoil upon themselves."*

REACT

1. How can you apply the issue of mingled iron and clay to your spiritual status?
2. What do you consider to be the prime tasks of the church and the state?
3. What do you think happens when the church and the state mix? What are some of the potential positives and some of the potential negatives?
4. Describe how God's kingship will be different from Nebuchadnezzar's in the following areas: (a) the king's attitude toward his subjects, (b) the subjects' attitude toward their king, (c) the path both king and subjects will follow toward resolving an issue on which they have differing views.

* *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, number 24, [MS 63], 1899.

Jesus and Me, a Winning Team

HOW-TO

1 Kings 19:18

You probably are in an environment in which all the people around you think differently, and maybe not just differently, they believe that what you believe is just an ancient concept, obsolete and ridiculous.

In that type of situation we feel as if we are seated in the middle of the yellow

**If you cannot see it, the
future will reveal it.**

side of the stadium with a small flag that has the emblem of the red team. This is the same situation as when Daniel and his friends were captured by the Babylonians. They had in their hands the emblems of

the lion of Judah, while the rest of the world believed that Judah was a defeated team.

Daniel 1 shows that the children of Israel decided to start the tournament winning the first game, even when they were in the minority in terms of quantity.

Daniel 2 tells us about another challenge for the prophets and his team members, to interpret the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar.

You probably think that you are alone against the world. Everyone, including your friends, is thinking that it makes no sense to maintain communication with a God that, sometimes, even you are not convinced really exists.

What Daniel did is what you must do when you think that you are in the middle of an avalanche that threatens to bury your faith:

1. Daniel 2:17. Find those who have your same faith. In every place you are you will find a few knees that have not bowed to the yellow team (1 Kings 19:18).

2. Daniel 2:18. Together with your friend in faith, ask the coach how to solve the problem. Actually, let the coach solve the problem and establish the strategy for the next move. God will answer if we ask Him with faith, knowing that there is a God in heaven who gives wisdom and knowledge to the wise.

3. Daniel 2:20. Be prepared to give to the Lord all the credit for the victory. Always remember that you and the Lord are in the majority, and that being on the side of the Lord makes you and your friends part of the winning team. If you cannot see it, the future will reveal it.

REACT

1. What belief is most difficult to maintain in front of your friends?
2. What does it mean for you being in majority with the Lord?

OPINION

Dan. 2:14-30; 1 Cor. 13:1-3, 8-12

Daniel 2 gives an interesting insight into God's fascinating plan for this world. God's masterpiece astonishes me, especially that events really happened as mentioned in Daniel 2. What was God's purpose in allowing Daniel to foresee the future?

I get the impression that often in their fascination, Christians focus too much on the prophecy part instead of realizing the greater concept behind God's actions.

**History isn't as important
to God as humanity is.**

Please don't get me wrong; prophecy is important and given for a purpose. But with all prophecy God's intention is something greater than mere foretelling. Daniel and his friends find

themselves once again in a critical situation. In this situation Daniel becomes dependent on the goodwill of another person.

Daniel doesn't leave his fate, or that of all the mystics, in the king's hands. He goes home and talks to God. Daniel is fully aware of the potential consequences of the king's actions, and instead of panicking he takes time out and asks God for wisdom. While Daniel dialogues with God, God reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him. After this encounter Daniel doesn't just hope or assume to know the king's dream. He is certain that God has spoken. This conviction enables him to approach Arioch. He doesn't say "I think I know." His response is firm: "I know the answer to the king's riddle." The outcome is another happy ending!

What importance would this story have if God weren't the main actor? Here is my point: God cares! Although He wants to give a glimpse into coming world events, He doesn't lose sight of humanity. History isn't as important to God as humanity is. God created human beings in His image for the purpose of relationship. We should always keep this in mind when studying and trying to understand prophecy.

Daniel was accustomed to living in a close daily relationship with God. Therefore he knew God and trusted Him. Trust can be proven only in dynamic relationships. A trustworthy relationship can't grow through casual acquaintances. Regular interaction is important. Knowing details of prophecy can be helpful in understanding present and past history. What good is it to me to know mysteries and history but not the plan God has for my life?

REACT

1. What is the difference between hope and trust?
2. What is the importance of knowing God and knowing the things of God?

The Man Behind the Curtain

EXPLORATION

Daniel 1; 2

CONCLUDE

Young Dorothy, along with the tin man, cowardly lion, and scarecrow, has been frightened almost comatose by the fire, thunder, and earth-shaking voice of the mighty Oz. Suddenly, they discover that the pyrotechnics and fanfare are only a show created by a simple man hiding behind a curtain. “Kinda like God,” agnostics growl. But, there’s a vast difference. God doesn’t stand behind curtains. He sweeps them aside to reveal not only Himself but the future. And as we gaze on His loving face, we lose the fear that’s been separating us from Him for centuries.

CONSIDER

- Placing a jar in your dorm or bedroom filled with clay and iron filings. (Check with your local machine shop for the filings.) Tell anyone who asks that it’s a visual aid for explaining the feet in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image.
- Clipping pictures or articles from a sports magazine in which a winning team or athlete is giving credit to his or her coach for the enjoyed success. Pay particular attention to why the coach is being praised. Relate that information to the God on whose team you play your life.
- Emailing your most trusted and admired friends, telling each how you appreciate his or her companionship. Then explain how their actions often reflect the actions of God in your life.
- Purchasing colorful beads from a craft store and creating a string of “prayer beads,” a common accessory in Muslim countries. Each bead represents a different prayer. Hold the stringed beads in your hand and, for each bead you finger along the string, share with God a reason why you love and trust Him.
- Creating a loosely organized “first-call” team made up of friends, family members, or fellow students whom you trust and admire. Give each of them a computer-printed card informing them that they’ll be the first people you turn to for support and advice when you face serious challenges in your life.

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, chaps. 39–44.

Glen Walker, *Prophecy Made Easy*; Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*;

Leslie Hardinge, *Jesus Is My Judge*.

The **Fiery** furnace



“ ‘When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you’ ” (Isa. 43:2, NKJV).

Passing Through the Shadow of Death

INTRODUCTION

Rev. 2:10

In the height of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the beleaguered citizens sought refuge in religious compounds to escape the brutal and notorious militiamen. One sultry morning in a church in the city, a small congregation of Christians gathered, led by their church minister and elders. They all took time to call on God to intervene in their current predicament.

As the prayers progressed, a stampede ensued on the nearby road. Men, women, and children forced their way into the already-packed building full of a praying congregation. Determined to pursue their enemy to the end, the terror gang stormed into the church and found to their amazement people consumed in earnest prayer. They mistook their concentration in prayer for defiance.

The commanding officer ordered the congregation to lie down and listen to his instruction, which was to follow, for fear of death. The whole congregation obeyed in haste. Securing all exits, the officer surveyed the room for anything they could find of worth, finding nothing except an old portrait of Jesus, which hung loosely on the wall. He knew that it was He whom they worshiped.

He then issued an instruction intended to make all of them suffer. The instruction was simple and clear: Walk to the portrait of Jesus, spit on it, and say, "Jesus, you are useless, and I want nothing to do with you." The officer then called on the pastor to start the procession. The pastor walked heavily up to the portrait, looked at it, looked around, and in complete defeat repeated the words, "Jesus, you are useless, I want nothing to do with you." The elders followed, then others. At last a young girl walked up slowly to the portrait, took the edge of her skirt and wiped away all the saliva. She then said, "Jesus, You are the most important person in my life. I am the one who is useless." She then walked slowly to the soldiers and said, "Shoot me now!"

**All waited for the shot
to sound.**

All waited for the shot to sound, but it never did! The officer removed his cap and put it on her head. He wept as he clothed this hero who stood for a course unto death. His heart broke to know someone would be willing to die, and it was because of the young lady's resolve that the officer came to know Jesus.

All waited for the shot to sound, but it never did! The officer removed his cap and put it on her head. He wept as he clothed this hero who stood for a course unto death. His heart broke to know someone would be willing to die, and it was because of the young lady's resolve that the officer came to know Jesus.

To be moral simply means that we do the right thing no matter the risks and consequences that might befall us—even death. We make choices based on biblical values. We act not according to what is easy and fun to do, but to what matters eternally.

Sunday
October 10

The Hebrew Youth on the Plain of Dura

LOGOS

Daniel 3

After learning that he was “that head of gold” (Dan. 2:38, KJV), Nebuchadnezzar became proud. By making an image similar to the one in the dream—in size but not composition—he intended to show that his kingdom and reign would last forever and subdue all other kingdoms—hence, the complete gold.

The showdown at the plain of Dura involved worship, a most important consideration in the life of a child of God. He or she must worship only God. Worship lies at the very core of Christianity. It was important, then, at the plain of Dura, that the Hebrew youth refuse to worship the image because in doing so they would be denying the power of God and His existence. In bowing to the image, they would be exalting that image above God—a thing they could never do, knowing what God had done in their lives.

The Hebrew youth did not refuse to bow to the image because they disrespected the king’s command. In fact they respected the authority of the king, but they refused because bowing down would illustrate a devotion they could offer only to their God. This was a testimony that God would be able to deliver them. Throughout their lives the Hebrew youth had been instructed in the ways of the Lord and, in detail and emphasis, told about the deliverance He wrought for their

**The showdown at the plain
of Dura involved worship.**

forefathers in the wilderness with Moses. They thus were not only convicted of what the Lord had done but were also looking forward into the greater beyond for what He

had promised He would do for Israel if she remained faithful to Him: make them prosperous and blessed. They had faith that He would fulfill His purpose for their lives and that even if He didn’t save them from the furnace, then even their deaths would be a way of fulfilling His promises.

One can believe anything one desires to believe even if it is false. Knowledge, however, in one sense goes a step beyond belief and demands evidence to support it. Thus belief may be defined as trust, mental acceptance, or confidence that you choose to place in something. On the other hand, knowledge is coming to understand something through experience, association, and evidence. Belief depends on personal choice and decision over what is largely subjective; knowledge leans more strongly on information and reality derived from outside of yourself and therefore more objective.

“God never asks us to believe without giving us sufficient evidence upon

which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant.”¹

Thrown finally into the fiery furnace because of their strong conviction to worship only God, the Hebrew youth were softly and tenderly lifted up by the hands of the One who dwells in the fire and makes it His home. They were surprised that in the time that they were most troubled He was there with them; their surprise, however, was not as great as that of the king, who was shocked that they were “walking around in the fire” (3:25, NIV).

It is important to note at this point that it would have been entirely impossible for them to survive the fire without God. The presence of God—even when we experience problems—is the secret of our success. We need God to fight for us, to stick by us, and to walk with us, for on our own we will stumble and fall. When we call upon the Lord, He shall hear us, and even if He doesn’t save us from the furnace, He will be in the furnace with us.

God’s presence in the midst of the fiery furnace is symbolic of Christ’s coming to earth to save us in the midst of our multitude of problems. Christ came not to take us out of the world but that while in the earth we will have life in abundance when we believe in Him.

Peace is possible in the furnace only with God. “This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. . . . [It] is internal rather than external and was to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention.”²

Purification comes from being passed through fire. As in the case of gold, a saint who successfully passes through the trials of this world will in the end come out a better person—stronger, tougher, and able to face greater challenges. When we withstand temptation, we not only exercise our faith but also learn the skill of preparation for the next temptation. Illustrations of the purification and preparation process are multitude, to mention just a few:

1. From being shepherds, Moses and David were led into the noble task of leading God’s people.
2. After the dark, stinking prison Joseph was made a leader in a land of bondage.
3. The three Hebrew youth were promoted to higher levels of authority after the fiery-furnace experience.
4. Daniel’s prosperity after the lions’ den was immeasurable—he became so great that all were envious.

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 105.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 84.

TESTIMONY

Dan. 2:47

I believe that each one of us has been influenced by the fear of the Lord, as Nebuchadnezzar was for a while (Dan. 2:47). Because our hearts are often not cleansed from worldliness, the truth we receive is choked, preventing our growth.

The falling away from the gospel's counsel leads to self-exaltation. The king had the true knowledge of God. He knew God's capabilities and that He was the most powerful—in fact he admitted that no other god could reveal secrets as this God could. Yet he wanted the Hebrew youth to bow to the

Faith has muscles.

image he had created, an homage they could render to their Creator, and to Him alone.

The test that the Hebrew youth underwent is continually the same for us today. We are tested on our faithfulness in worship and in devotion to the God we profess to trust. It is sad to see men and women say they trust and love God when they are often inclined to do things completely unlike the character of God. We often do not practice the faith we profess. Words spoken in Daniel 8:16-18 are words of faith. Faith grows as it is exercised through prayer, Bible study, and self-examination. Faith has muscles.

"God has shown me that He gave His people a bitter cup to drink, to purify and cleanse them. . . . I saw that this bitter cup can be sweetened by patience, endurance, and prayer, and that it will have its designed effect upon the hearts of those who thus receive it, and God will be honored and glorified. . . . We must be partakers of Christ's sufferings here if we would share in His glory hereafter."*

The hereafter referred to above is eternal and should be the main driving force behind our fight with the enemy. We should be strengthened by the fact that even if the enemy will succeed in destroying the body, he will never deny us the promise of eternity that God has prepared for all who trust, know, and believe in Him.

REACT

1. Why does God teach us His ways by allowing suffering to come upon us? Is there any other way apart from this? Explain your answer.
2. How can Christians convey respect for civil authority when they cannot conscientiously follow the rules of government and society?
3. What kind of life events do you suppose prepared Daniel's friends to stand courageously in defiance of the king's orders?
4. How do trials contribute to the formation of our character?

*Early Writings, p. 47.

What Do You Know?

EVIDENCE

Gal. 5:22, 23; Col. 3:9, 10

I have come to believe that a Christian's life takes on a healthier balance when he or she *knows* God both intellectually and experientially; that is, when God is known from factual information and personal involvement and experience—knowledge based on what has been experienced and seen, touched and felt.

Paul witnessed to both kinds of knowledge, the intellectual and experiential. In writing to Timothy, he affirms that "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12, NKJV). Here he employs the Greek word that indicates acquired progressive knowledge received from facts, information, and data, that is, a knowing that engages the mind and intellect in thinking and decision making.

In writing to the Corinthians Paul stresses the other phase of knowledge when he declares, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 8:9, NKJV). Here "know" is the word used in the Greek that indicates perceptive knowing, knowing from personal experience and personal relationships and feelings.

Knowledge of the heart as well as the head, knowledge of relationship as well as of information—only such knowledge can withstand the test of challenge and be considered a knowledge that is unto salvation. The Hebrew youth had such knowledge. They knew God at an individual level; they knew Him from association and intellect. They knew what He was able to do. They knew God from what they had been told He had done for their forefathers and from what they had witnessed Him do personally.

Paul witnessed to both kinds of knowledge.

The Hebrew youths' knowledge of God, therefore, is the knowledge we are to develop, not a superficial knowledge that cannot stand the test of fire but a knowledge that goes beyond death into what matters not only at the moment but what is of eternal importance.

Knowledge of God has more to do with subjective relationship, as between one person and another, than theoretical contemplation. It involves our attitude toward God more than it does our acquaintance with information.

REACT

1. How can you tell whether your faith is based on feelings and circumstances?
2. In what way does obedience provide evidence of God?
3. How can someone cultivate a relationship with God that enables him or her to know Him more completely?

How to Stroll in a Fiery Furnace

HOW-TO

Heb. 11:11-14

As we near the close of this age, we are called to participate in the great controversy that has been raging since this world began. Our faithfulness to God is tested again and again.

How do we stand? How do we live a life of success against the problems that face us? The desire in every heart is to know how to stand amidst the multitude of problems that characterize our daily life. The ability of the Hebrew youth to stand did not begin at the furnace. It did not suddenly come

The ability of the Hebrew youth to stand did not begin at the furnace.

upon them as a miracle. It did not sprout out spontaneously. It was planted in them, it grew, and it was nurtured, developed, and looked upon with care.

Their ability to stand amidst the problems they faced was based on the following:

- They were loyal to God. Their loyalty was evidenced by their decision to stand and say No at a time when it was needed. They chose not to worship any other image or being but only one who had commanded them to worship Him.

- They knew in *whom* they had believed. Their knowledge of God was not superficial; neither was it circumstantial. They knew that even if God did not rescue them from the immediate furnace, He would still complete the good work He had started in them. They knew that even their death would be for the good. They loved and trusted God.

- They lived their faith. Faith and knowledge without action is dead. The Hebrew youth acted on their faith and knowledge of God by agreeing to die and perish in the fiery furnace rather than bow down to an image. They had no time to argue, compromise, or ask for time to think about it. They resolved then and there to be faithful.

We can stand up and be counted in times of trouble only if we have an intimate knowledge of God. We can gain an intimate knowledge of God through study of His Word and continued prayer. When we accept the Holy Spirit to lead in our lives, He directs our thoughts and we are enabled to stand amidst the rains. We become strengthened and our daily strength is supplied.

God is in control and nothing takes Him by surprise. He may not save us from the fiery furnace, but He will be there in the furnace with us. If we have an intimate knowledge of God, the world, like Nebuchadnezzar, will say, "No other god can save after this sort."

Stand and Be Counted

OPINION

Matt. 8:10; Luke 18:8; Acts 14:22; 1 Tim. 6:12

God has said in His Word that He will not do anything without letting His people know about it through His inspired Word. Humanity has tried to run away from reality. The skeptic's point of view does not change the truth about the prophecies that God has revealed and the events of the future. In Noah's time many did not believe concerning what he said, but it did not change a thing.

The three young Hebrews challenge us as Adventists today by their firm stand when their faith was tested. As Adventists how will our faith withstand the test?

Daniel was constantly in touch with his God, and God used him. He therefore managed to represent God. Worship is at the core of the controversy, yet how often we neglect prayer and its importance in our lives. No wonder Christ admonishes us to pray without ceasing. Those who will endure are those who will pray.

Prayer is not a preparation for work. It is work. It is not a preparation for battle—it is the battle.¹ If we have been unable to stand the small tests concerning worship today, are we going to be able to stand in the final test in Revelation 14:9-12?

"Satan is ever at work endeavoring to pervert what God has spoken, to blind the mind and darken the understanding, and thus lead men into sin. This is why the Lord is so explicit, making His requirements so very plain that none need err. God is constantly seeking to draw men close under His protection, that Satan may not practice his cruel, deceptive power upon them."²

Are we going to be able to stand in the final test?

"To each was given according to his faith. . . . It was through faith that the ancient worthies 'subdued kingdoms, . . . escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens' (Heb. 11:33, 34). 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith' (1 John 5:4)."³

What we are to remember is that Christ said, "I am with you always even to the end of the world," and this should strengthen us no matter what we are going through, no matter how tough. When God is in control, we should be encouraged that we shall pass through to the other side, no matter how threatening the storm is or how fiery the furnace may be.

1. Adapted from Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 503.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 513.

How-to's for Facing Fiery Trials

EXPLORATION

Isa. 43:2; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:7; Rev. 3:18

CONCLUDE

When the Hebrew young men were faced with the choice of renouncing their belief in God's supremacy or being thrown into the fiery furnace, what they believed to be true about God was more important than their lives. What they knew of God was larger than life itself. And as we cultivate a real experience with God, the reality of His presence and His peace accompanies us in our fiery trials just as surely as the Son of Man walked with the Hebrew youth in the Babylonian furnace.

CONSIDER

- Creating a conversation piece out of a small cardboard carton fashioned into a furnace. Dome the roof, make a chimney and door, paint it black, and add red tissue paper flames. Invite friends and family to describe their current fiery trials and favorite texts and Bible stories that help them.
- Using three columns to list Bible characters, the trials they went through, and how these trials strengthened their witness to the power of Jesus Christ. Put your name last on the list, and follow through with a description of your trials in the other two columns.
- Memorizing several songs for the special purpose of helping you resist temptations and find strength to face trials. Look for some new ones to learn in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, nos. 590 to 637.
- Researching the beneficial effects of forest fires. Using forest fires as an analogy for what trials can do in our lives, write an essay comparing positive effects of ordeals when we submit to God's plan for our lives.
- Comparing and contrasting the effects of heat and pressure on the production of a variety of minerals. Prepare a mineral collection that illustrates a number of principles related to heat and pressure. In this context, reflect on 1 Peter 1:7 and Revelation 3:18.
- Computing (approximately) the surface area of gold that would cover a statue 100 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 3 feet deep. At the cost of US\$350 (or the currency value in your home country) an ounce, if an ounce were hammered out to cover a square foot, how much would it cost to cover Nebuchadnezzar's statue?

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, pp. 503-513.

Nebuchadnezzar's Judgment



“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (Dan. 4:37, NKJV).

Here Today; Gone Tomorrow

INTRODUCTION

Dan. 4:35

"People on earth are not truly important. God does what He wants with the powers of heaven and the people on earth. No one can stop His powerful hand. No one can question the things He does" (Dan. 4:35, NCV).

No Internet messages or chat rooms. No CDs, TV, video games, or late-night movies. Water skiing, driving, rock climbing, shopping—gone. Air conditioner? Nope. Heat? Nope. Indoor plumbing? No way! Doesn't sound very good, does it? Your bed and pillow are out. Even your house has abandoned you. You're alone, all alone. In fact, you're nuts.

With a few short sentences from heaven, you've become an animal. Every human aspect of your life is gone, including your dignity. Every luxury is gone. And you didn't go from being a poor man to being an animal; you

Talk about a culture shock!

were the head honcho, the king—maybe the richest, most powerful man during your lifetime. Talk about a culture shock!

Once you were waited on hand and foot. Your every desire was granted. Now you're lower than your lowest subject. You're an animal. You rely on plants and instinct for your food. No more servants, and animals are not allowed through Taco Bell's drive-thru.

You sweat when it's hot, shiver when it's cold. No more breeze-bringing beauties with their fans on hot days for you!

All this to prove a point—a quite simple point, in fact: God is God, and you are not. He is the provider of everything, and you, most certainly, are not.

God means business. Nebuchadnezzar went through almost everything described above—in the world as he knew it—just to learn that concept. It may be simple, but it's vitally important.

God is God. You are not, and I am not.

That's one lesson I want to learn from history and not have to experience on my own.

A God of Many Chances

EVIDENCE

Ps. 149:4; James 4:10

We are a stubborn bunch. We see it in kids when you tell them not to touch something, but in their minds they are thinking: *Why can't I touch it?* That's what got us into this mess in the first place: the good old Adam-and-Eve syndrome. It is born into us, and Nebuchadnezzar was not any different.

He was a very powerful man. His name means "protect my boundary," and that he did. He not only protected it, he conquered more lands. But he met his match when the Lord allowed him to conquer Jerusalem. The Israelites got a "time out" in Babylon, where the king was

very cruel. He massacred more than 5,000 Jewish youth just because the Babylonian women sought them.¹ Nebuchadnezzar respected no one. He knew of God but did not believe in Him. He even took sacred articles

Knowing our potential,
He gives us many
opportunities.

from the temple of God to put in the treasure house with his gods.

Why Nebuchadnezzar? All in all God loves His creation and, knowing our potential, He gives us many opportunities. It is our choice to follow them. Nebuchadnezzar was no exception. God proved to him that He was powerful by giving Daniel the wisdom to know and interpret his dream and by saving Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fire. Even then Nebuchadnezzar still classified Him as "the God of someone else." He couldn't fully see the picture. "The heart that is not transformed by the grace of God soon loses the impressions of the Holy Spirit."²

Nebuchadnezzar was made as an animal. Some say that he experienced lycanthropy, the belief that human beings can be transformed into animals. The original meaning of lycanthropy referred to the transformation of a human into a wolf, or werewolf. It is now customary to apply the term to other animals as well. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar's animalistic character to come out in physical form. When he acknowledged his true state, he was released from the bondage of looking like the animal he truly was before.

REACT

What animal would you be if God changed you to look like the person you are? Explain your choice.

1. <www.jewishencyclopedia.com>.

2. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 519.

Monday
October 18

Memoirs of a Tamed Tyrant

LOGOS

Daniel 4

The Authorship of Daniel 4

Daniel didn't write everything in the book that bears his name. In the opening verse, the real author of chapter 4 identifies himself as King Nebuchadnezzar.

Rather than taking the inductive route, allowing narrative tension to build toward a final moment of resolution, Nebuchadnezzar gives away some of the good stuff in his story right from the start: "It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me" (Dan. 4:2, NIV).

Why This Story? Why Now?

The Holy Spirit inspired Daniel to cut and paste this portion of his employer's memoirs into his own book, but, to the casual reader, the book seems a mishmash of unrelated pieces: prophecy here, vision there; here a story, there a story. As one digs deeper into Daniel, however, the divine purpose and pattern emerges. The visions and prophecies point us through history to the time of the end; the stories show us how to live in light of the end.

Conversion in Stages

Like most of us, Nebuchadnezzar's recognition that God is in control of our lives and not we ourselves occurs over time. In chapter 1 the king is impressed that four young Hebrew captives could outshine his own dean's list on a diet free from cholesterol, intoxicants, and MSG—so impressed that he

The king is so impressed
that he drafts these guys
for his team.

drafts these guys for his team.

In chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God's existence and power to reveal mysteries through dreams. Daniel and his three colleagues get promotions.

Chapter 3 tells the story of a backsliding king. Nebuchadnezzar builds a huge statue in the likeness of you-know-who and "invites" everyone to bow to it. Of course, Daniel's three friends, loyal to YHWH, refuse.

By the time the smoke from the fiery furnace clears, the king declares Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God the best. Just when you think he's finally learned his lesson, however, the king, his tyrannical tendencies intact, declares that anyone who trash-talks the Hebrew God will have "their houses

turned into piles of rubble” (3:29). Not the best evangelistic strategy.

The Dream

In spite of his long association with Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar calls first for the astrologers. When their ineptitude becomes embarrassingly evident, Daniel, with God’s help, steps in.

Nebuchadnezzar’s tentative relationship with YHWH is underscored in Daniel 4:8, 9. Daniel “is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god” (verse 8, NIV). Like many people today, Nebuchadnezzar will acknowledge the existence and power of God, even call on Him in difficult situations, but not fully surrender his life, choices, and future to the control of the Almighty One.

The Interpretation

The point of the dream is devastatingly direct (read verses 24-26) as Daniel interprets it. Nebuchadnezzar will lose his sanity, authority, reign, and influence. Homeless and friendless, he will graze among the beasts of the field for a period of seven years. Only when he is willing to acknowledge the rule of YHWH over his life will his former prestige and power be restored.

The Outcome

A year after the dream and Daniel’s interpretation, it happens just as the prophet predicted. The king’s boasting is cut short by a voice from heaven executing the sentence previously pronounced. Nebuchadnezzar snaps, is driven from the palace, and spends the next seven years in the woods with wild animals.

The Lesson

At the end of seven years, looking like a cross between Rip Van Winkle and Big Foot, the once mighty king of Babylon raises his eyes to heaven and his wits return. The first words he utters in the better part of a decade are praises to God.

Obviously, but certainly not suddenly, the king has come to internalize the prophet’s exhortation: “Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed” (verse 27, NIV). Returning from the fields, he sums up his experience with these words: “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” (verse 37, NIV). Slowly, inexorably, over a period of scores of years, a tyrant is tamed, and a lost soul is redeemed by the grace of God.

Daniel and his prophetic friends tell us clearly that, in the time of the end, another tyrant will exalt himself and attempt to compel the worship of others. How shall we live in and through such times? Just ask Nebuchadnezzar!

Conversion — Uncloaked

TESTIMONY

Acts 3:19; 1 Cor. 5:17

Conversion can generally be defined as a change. When we glimpse into a portion of the life of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel, we find one of the clearest examples of the true conversion experience.

First, true conversion is not forced upon an individual. Though Nebuchadnezzar recognizes Daniel's God's power (Dan 3:28, 29), he never makes a commitment to serve Daniel's God solely. He simply acknowledges that God is a powerful being. "It was right for the king to make public confession, and seek to exalt the God of heaven above all other gods;

**True conversion is not
forced upon an individual.**

but in endeavoring to force his subjects to make a similar confession of faith and to show similar reverence, Nebuchadnezzar was exceeding his right as a temporal sovereign. He had no more right, either civil or moral, to threaten men with death for not worshiping God, than he had to make the decree consigning to the flames all who refused to worship the golden image. God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve."¹

Next, a rejection of self has to be brought about. After seven years of madness, Nebuchadnezzar finally sees his own condition in the light of God's image and comes to his senses (4:33, 34). "Through the power of Christ, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God. This change is in itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.'"²

Finally, one has to come to the realization, sometimes through unfortunate circumstances, that God is just (4:34-37). Nebuchadnezzar recognizes the righteousness of God and learns his lesson. "Those who pass through the experience of true conversion will realize, with keenness of perception, their responsibility to God to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, their responsibility to make complete their recovery from the leprosy of sin. Such an experience will lead them humbly and trustfully to place their dependence upon God."³

1. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 510, 511.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 476.

3. *My Life Today*, p. 176.

Trust and Obey, Hear and Do

HOW-TO

Prov. 11:2; 16:18; 18:12; 29:1, 23; John 10:14, 27, 28

The Bible is very clear: "A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy" (Prov. 29:1, NIV). Nebuchadnezzar had many opportunities to recognize God. He affirmed who the true God is (Dan. 2:47) when Daniel revealed and interpreted his dream, which he had forgotten. He also confirmed that God never forsakes His own when God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace. Yet, in spite of these experiences, Nebuchadnezzar still hardened his heart in pride, and God had to humiliate him for seven years when he lived with the beasts. His proud and haughty heart led to his fall.

We also face the same fate if we indulge in pride and arrogance. We also recognize, however, that obedience to God and humility of heart lead to honor. In the same way that God and Nebuchadnezzar honored Daniel and his three companions for their faithfulness to God, so shall we be honored if we remain faithful.

The Christian life is primarily a life of stewardship. We live for God because we belong to Him twice, by creation

We live for God because we belong to Him twice, by creation and redemption.

and redemption. We are not our own; rather we owe all to God. To avoid Nebuchadnezzar's fate, we should:

1. Trust and obey: The song says, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey." We must trust (have absolute confidence in) God and know with certainty that what He says is true and what He commands is for our own good. We can take God at His Word. It is impossible to obey God if we do not trust Him. By our obedience to Him, we confirm that we trust Him. Nebuchadnezzar did not obey God because he did not trust Him; instead he trusted himself and the magicians, the astrologers, the soothsayers, and Chaldeans.

2. Hear and do: Jesus said that "he who does the will of my Father" will enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 7:21, NIV). We are Jesus' brothers if we do His Father's will (Mark 3:35). We deceive ourselves, however, if we only hear but do not do the Word of God (James 1:22). Our faith must be revealed in our works.

REACT

How can we approach people who are haughty and arrogant in a way that will minimize their defensiveness and still encourage humility?

Thursday
October 21

Songs of Madness; Sweet Refrains

OPINION

Psalm 51; Matthew 19; Eccles. 12:14; Dan. 4:25, 37

Nebuchadnezzar's madness, as it is related in Daniel 4, is the final episode in a long series of royal lunatics depicted in the Old Testament. Consider the progression: God establishes king, king's lusts supercede his allegiance to God, king goes mad, king (finally) acknowledges God.

For Pharaoh we see that, in his madness, he hardened his heart against God. King Saul's madness led to clandestine visits to witches. David, along with his sons Ammon, Absalom, and Solomon, lusts after forbidden women from his high place. Should I go on to describe Hezekiah, Ahab, or Jehoiakim—the king mad enough to defy Nebuchadnezzar and bring upon his country the full weight of Babylonian military might?

The madness of kings is a song with many verses, but the same sad refrain, spoken by Nebuchadnezzar in

**The madness of kings is a
song with many verses.**

Daniel 4:37 as well as by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the

whole duty of man" (NIV). The quest for power inevitably ends in learning that there is One more powerful than the king.

This brings to mind an interesting conundrum: Which comes first, power or madness? In the stories of heathen kings like Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, they are self-appointed kings with madness sent from God. In similar stories of Hebrew kings, it is God who sets them up and they themselves who find madness. The lesson common to all stories is that humility is the only antidote for the madness of kings.

Should kings bow only before the presence of God? In the New Testament, Matthew tells the story of a young ruler's encounter with Jesus. Recognizing the madness in this arrogant young man, Christ prescribes the established cure: the abandonment of all of the accoutrements of power, and subservience to God and his fellow man. The ruler's sadness is all the evidence we need of his madness (Matt. 19:22). Personally, I can see more reason in living as a beast for seven years than I can in rejecting Christ's personal invitation to share eternal life.

Humility, along with its twin brother, obedience, is the eye of the needle through which all powerful men must pass. All people, powerful and poor, are subject to God. It is the whole duty of man. Without it, any person's quest for power is inevitably a quest for madness.

James A. Dittes, Portland, Tennessee

Pitiful Pride

EXPLORATION

Daniel 4

CONCLUDE

Sometimes a person has to hit bottom before he or she has a true change of heart. That's what happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. He had to become humbled in a serious way; only then would he acknowledge the authority of God. As Ellen White puts it in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Nebuchadnezzar had to discover "that true greatness consists in true goodness."* King Nebuchadnezzar had seen God's glory numerous times, but he finally had a conversion. He realized that his own greatness meant nothing compared to the greatness of the only true God.

CONSIDER

- Viewing the video *The Pineapple Story*, by Otto Koning. Think about the theme of humility as it is portrayed in this video.
- Interviewing a person or two who have been baptized recently (in the past year or so). Ask them to tell you how they came to God.
- Taking a photograph that depicts to you the concept of humility.
- Looking for some task at work, school, home, or church that you would normally consider "beneath you." Then do it.
- Hunting through Christian songbooks for pieces of music with the theme of humility (e.g., "Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord," "Humble Me," etc.). *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* includes a section titled "Humility" on page 781 in the topical index). Get together with several friends or relatives and sing some of the songs.
- Visiting a planetarium or looking through a large telescope and reflecting on your place in God's universe.
- Surfing the Internet for details about some notoriously "mad" leaders, such as Gaius (Caligula), King Ludwig II, or Adolf Hitler. Consider how power and pride might have contributed to their madness.

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, chap. 42.

W. Heywood Ugolino, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*.

*p. 521.

Surprise party



“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov. 3:5, 6, NKJV).

In the Face of Fear

INTRODUCTION

Dan. 5:3, 4, 8, 9, 21-23

During our class trip to Florida my senior year in high school, we decided to go canoeing. Sounded innocent enough to me. Until—the Cove. The Cove had plenty of sunshine and was practically crawling with alligators. I was paralyzed with fear. Unable to breathe, let alone think rationally, I simply shut down. Then, from behind me, I heard the reassuring instructions of my partner in the canoe, “Gina, it’s OK. We’ll get out of here, I just need you to paddle with me. It’s going to be OK.”

As I began to listen and obey the instructions of my partner, I slowly regained control of my mind and body. We made it out of the danger zone and safely through the planned course.

Fear. It comes in all shapes and sizes, appears in the most peculiar places, and most often is enhanced by an element of surprise. Though no two people experience its causes or effects in the same way, the truth is that fear plagues each of our hearts. Fear can cripple us and paralyze us with anxious thoughts of what might happen. We’re afraid of being unprepared, unsuccessful, unwanted, unneeded, or unloved. So, what should we do when we find ourselves face to face with fear?

Whenever we allow our thoughts to supersede those of God’s, we’ve placed ourselves out of His reach.

Obedience is the only answer. Strict obedience to the Word of God keeps us from being eaten alive by our fears. In this week’s story the same event that struck fear in a disobedient king’s heart was a reassurance of God’s grace to Daniel. Daniel happily saw and understood the message the Lord’s hand wrote on the wall. For him it was another chance to see how trustworthy God’s Word is. Belshazzar, on the other hand, steeped in his disobedience, saw the Hand and his “knees knocked against each other” (Dan. 5:6, NKJV) in fear.

Obedience does not mean a legalistic adherence to the rote, two-dimensional laws of God. Rather, it is surrendering of one’s will to that of the Lord’s. It’s saying, “I know You love me and want what’s best for me always. Therefore I will do what You ask, trusting that You will take care of all my needs.” Whenever we allow our thoughts to supersede those of God’s, we’ve placed ourselves out of His reach. Belshazzar saw himself as greater than God, so he was no longer under God’s wings of refuge, and the natural result of this disobedience was being overthrown by another nation.

Watergate and the End of the World

LOGOS

Daniel 5

A Clash of Civilizations and Values (Dan. 5:1-17)

The setting of this chapter is crucial to a full appreciation of the message it contains. The city of Babylon, a center of learning and political power, was extravagantly wealthy and one of the best fortified cities of the ancient world. Its complex

**Wise kings learn from
the history of their
predecessors.**

system of walls made it impervious to assault from without. The Euphrates River flowing through the midst of the city provided residents with a ready supply of water for drinking and irrigation. "With alluvial soil and wonderful weather, the gardens could produce

three crops each year."* Any siege of the city would prove futile. No wonder that we find an attitude of arrogant defiance and even revelry and reckless abandon despite the ominous presence of Persian armies gathering outside the city walls (Dan. 5:30, 31).

Belshazzar, epitomizing Babylon's power, prestige, and pride, sits calmly in control, sipping wine out of a cup taken from Solomon's temple. Daniel, on the other hand, languishes in obscurity, helpless to prevent the desecration of the temple's holy vessels or even to speak a word in protest. Suddenly, the hand that sways the future appears, inscribing a message that changes everything. All the wisdom of Babylon is insufficient to grasp the communication from heaven. Even the gifts Belshazzar can bestow are not enough. Daniel's refusal of them underscores the truth that the most important things in life can be neither bought nor sold (Acts 8:18-20).

God's Judgment and Personal Responsibility (Dan. 5:18-23)

If ever Babylon needed someone with a clear mind and unclouded judgment, it was on this fateful night. Wise kings learn from the history of their predecessors. But Belshazzar learned nothing from Nebuchadnezzar's experience. In fact he seems blissfully unaware of it and even pretends to know very little about Daniel (Dan. 5:13, 14).

The truth is quite different, however, as Daniel himself makes clear in his speech before the king, the main points of which are: First, Babylon's dominion is not the result of its own might but is given to it by the Most High God; second, it was Nebuchadnezzar's proud refusal to acknowledge this point that led to his being humbled by God and to his royal power being taken from him (4:30); finally,

Daniel affirms Belshazzar's awareness of these events and fearlessly pronounces his guilt. The one God with real power over the king's life has not only *not* been honored—He has been insulted and defied. By raising the golden cup in praise of Babylon's gods, Belshazzar was really raising himself against the Lord of heaven (5:23). On the other hand, despite Belshazzar's position and power, like Nebuchadnezzar before him, he is powerless to thwart God's judgment.

A Glimpse of the World's Demise (Dan. 5:24-31)

Notwithstanding all of Babylon's defenses, the forces of Cyrus, led by Darius the Mede, execute the original "watergate break-in." They divert the waters of the Euphrates River, penetrate the city, and kill Belshazzar. Could this have been avoided? Or was Babylon doomed by divine decree? Was the king merely a pawn in the cosmic scheme of things? According to Jeremiah, Babylon could have been healed; instead, its guilt "reaches up to heaven" (Jer. 51:9, RSV). Belshazzar was unable to read the handwriting on the wall. His judgment is summed up in just four words: *Mene, Mene, Tekel*, and *Parsin* (a plural form of *Peres* mentioned in verse 28). By themselves, these words would make little sense even if they could be read: "Number, number, weigh, divide."

It is also possible that each of the fingers simultaneously scrawled one of these words vertically rather than horizontally. In that case, the letters would appear to be all mixed up. Only Daniel is able to read and explain what it all means: Babylon's days are numbered and in fact are at an end, Belshazzar is found wanting, and his divided kingdom is handed over to the Medes and Persians (*Parsin*, amounting to a pun in Aramaic).

The book of Revelation depicts Babylon's fall as symbolic of events at the end of this world's history. Apparently, the same spirit of excess and feelings of invulnerability will be pervasive (Rev. 18:7, 8, 10-12). And just as Babylon's judgment was triggered by defiant misuse of holy things, so the issue in the end will focus on humanity's despising of that which God has specified as holy. As in Daniel's case, voices will be raised calling people back to the worship of the Creator on His holy day (14:6, 7). And, as it was then, so it will be: "While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3, NIV).

REACT

1. Why wasn't Belshazzar, unlike Nebuchadnezzar, given a chance to repent?
2. While wise financial management is prudent and scriptural, how does today's emphasis on saving accounts, retirement planning, and acquiring wealth relate to dependence on God?

*Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding Daniel's Prophecies* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1975), p. 78.

TESTIMONY

Prov. 3:5, 6

Ellen White shares insights into Belshazzar's wrongdoing: "He was guilty because he had had the privilege of knowing and doing the right, and of leading others in the way, and yet refused to heed the light that God had permitted to shine upon his pathway." To the one who refuses to walk in God's light, His appeals make no impression. But God's appeals do not change, "The light is as bright when he finally refuses it, as when it first dawned upon his soul."²

As we choose to walk in God's light, He enables us by bestowing talents on us.

"Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength."

We can trust in God's work through us because "Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings."³

"Many Christians are waiting for some great work to be brought to them. Because they cannot find a place large enough to satisfy their ambition, they fail to perform faithfully the common duties of life. These seem to them uninteresting. Day by day they let slip opportunities for showing their faithfulness to God. While they are waiting for some great work, life passes away, its purposes unfulfilled, its work unaccomplished."⁴

"However small your talent, God has a place for it. That one talent, wisely used, will accomplish its appointed work. By faithfulness in little duties, we are to work on the plan of addition, and God will work for us on the plan of multiplication. These littles will become the most precious influences in His work."⁵

"Remember that you will never reach a higher standard than you yourself set. Then set your mark high, and step by step, even though it be by painful effort, by self-denial and sacrifice, ascend the whole length of the ladder of progress. Let nothing hinder you. Fate has not woven its meshes about any human being so firmly that he need remain helpless and in uncertainty. Opposing circumstances should create a firm determination to overcome them. The breaking down of one barrier will give greater ability and courage to go forward. Press with determination in the right direction, and circumstances will be your helpers, not your hindrances."⁶

1. *Signs of the Times*, July 20, 1891.
2. *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 183.
3. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 360.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 331, 332.

The Mother of All Parties

EVIDENCE

Daniel 5

Belshazzar knew how to party. In the heart of modern-day Iraq, this son of the king and coregent threw a party that people are still talking about today!

It was a strange time to party. Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father, had just been defeated two days earlier by Cyrus and his Persian army at Opis, a city near the Tigris River. Indeed, the whole surrounding territory had been conquered.

But Belshazzar felt secure. Babylon was unsurpassed in beauty and strength. The city boasted a system of inner and outer walls with a water moat between. According to Herodotus, Babylon was 14 miles square, with the outer walls 87 feet thick and 350 feet high. Chariots could race three abreast along the wall. Modern interpreters believe that the outer wall was 17 miles in circumference and not more than 100 feet tall. In any case, scholars believe that "the magnificence of the city was not seriously exaggerated."¹

So, under the light of a full moon, on October 12, 539 B.C., 1,000 honored guests, along with the king's wives and concubines, made their way to the banquet hall, anticipating the lavish feast, complete with beer and wine. The Babylonians were famous for their beer, and some of the tablets describing their procedure for making beer have been found.²

The king ordered that past
booty be brought in.

As the beer and wine flowed, Belshazzar raised his cup in toast after toast to the many gods of Babylon. Drunk with illogical passion and thirsting for future victories, the king ordered that past booty be brought in.

Servants ran to a nearby treasury, where the Jerusalem temple vessels had been stored since the days of King Nebuchadnezzar. Holding the sacred golden cups high, then passing them around the banquet hall, Belshazzar bade his guests taste victory. According to well-known biblical scholar John F. Walvoord, "This act of sacrilege was an intentioned religious gesture in praise of the gods of Babylon."³

Feeling secure in his seemingly impregnable city, and praising his "gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone" (Dan. 5:4, NASB), Belshazzar didn't know that the party was already over.

1. John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key To Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 119.

2. William H. Shea, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Daniel 1-7* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1996), p. 85.

3. Walvoord, *ibid.*, p. 118.

How to Read the Writing on the Wall

HOW-TO

Daniel 5:3, 4, 8, 9, 21-23

How can you recognize when God is sending you a message?

Belshazzar lived a life of great offense to God and could not understand God's message even when it was visibly written on the wall. As Ellen White says, "Belshazzar had not read aright the experience of his grandfather, nor heeded the warning of events so significant to himself. The opportunity of knowing and obeying God had been given him, but had not been taken to heart."*

Though we seldom hear a thundering voice from the mountaintop or see mysterious hand-written messages on our walls, God still communicates with us by impressing His Word on our minds and hearts.

For those who are seeking a closer connection to God, the story of Belshazzar clearly outlines several mistakes:

- 1. Don't drink from God's holy goblets.** Belshazzar recklessly defied God by disrespecting that which God had set aside as sacred. We can make this same mistake when we trample on the sanctity of marriage (Heb. 13:4), allow our bodies to become unhealthy or impure (1 Cor. 3:16, 17), or ignore

God still communicates
with us.

God's sacred commandments (Exod. 20:1-17).

- 2. Don't praise other gods.** Just as Belshazzar refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, we can also look to false gods for our direction and meaning in life. This happens when we allow possessions, pride, careers, and even relationships to become more valuable than God's will (Matt. 6:33).

- 3. Learn from the mistakes, experiences, and wisdom of your forefathers.** Although Belshazzar watched Nebuchadnezzar's mistakes and eventual acknowledgment of God, he insisted on experiencing the kingly glory for himself. We, too, can refuse to learn lessons from those who have gone before us and think our ways are better (Prov. 8:10, 11).

- 4. Admit that you are wrong or ask God's forgiveness.** God's capacity to forgive and restore is larger than we can comprehend (John 3:16, 17). Though He longs to erase our offenses and call us His holy children, we must be willing to ask. As seen with Belshazzar's rebellious life, God's grace is lavished only on those who accept it.

**Prophets and Kings*, p. 529.

Delivering Bad News

OPINION

Daniel 5

Several years ago, I did medical work at a small orphanage in Bolivia. I was in charge of health care for the boys. The people in the nearby village would come to me with their medical issues too. I gave shots and cleaned up cuts and scrapes. I hadn't seen anything really exciting until right around Christmas.

A little boy from the village came screaming to me, something about his grandmother dying. I grabbed my little first-aid kit and went running into the village. I knew which house it was, as the unmistakable sounds of the death wail were coming from a small hut. Inside, crammed into a tiny room, were about 20 people, and it seemed as if they were all screaming.

The grandmother was lying on a mat and she was not breathing. I started resuscitation and continued it for about ten minutes. Nothing was working, and I knew there was no hope. I tried to tell the crying people this, but they begged me to keep trying. For another five minutes I worked to try to save the grandmother's life. I finally had to stop, close her eyes, and hold her hand as she slipped off.

I grabbed my little first-aid kit and went running into the village.

When they saw that I could do no more, the family really began to wail. It was deafening. It was one of the hardest things I have ever experienced. The people knew the grandmother was gone and the missionary couldn't do anything. I felt worthless and slightly scared that they were going to hate me.

Daniel was in an even scarier position. He had to tell the king of the country, to his face, that he was a goner. The crowd was drunk, and Daniel had some bad news for all of them. What amazes me is that when he told Belshazzar, the king gave him a purple robe and a gold chain. Although this story doesn't have a happy ending for Belshazzar, Daniel was true to God, and was rewarded.

REACT

1. How does the outcome of this story affect me and my willingness to follow God, even when the situation is scary?
2. How can timidity be overcome so that we are able to confront arrogance as Daniel boldly confronted Belshazzar?
3. How do you suppose Belshazzar had missed learning humility from the example of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar? How does this relate to our lives today?

Lessons From a Party

EXPLORATION

Dan. 5:3-6

CONCLUDE

Belshazzar's only appearance in the Bible account reveals a world ruler with flawed spiritual values and a collapsing empire. His life is in contrast with the stellar character of the prophet Daniel, whose faith in God and fearlessness before the king results in rewards. Belshazzar's lack of obedience preceded his being overthrown. His excesses and feelings of invulnerability contributed to the fall of Babylon. He refused to appreciate the privileges and opportunities he had been given, and this refusal led to a wasted life and premature death. Belshazzar was his own worst enemy. He was too far from God to discern God's message to him; yet, with Daniel's aid, the handwriting on the wall was crystal clear.

CONSIDER

- Drawing the words of God to Belshazzar at the feast. Draw them as if engraved in a wall, either in the Aramaic language or in your language.
- Calculating how much the silver and gold goblets might be worth in today's currency. Conjecture the figure for 500 silver goblets and 500 gold goblets.
- Researching information about the beauty and the invulnerability of Babylon during the time of Belshazzar.
- Role-playing, with a friend, the conversation between Daniel and Belshazzar in Daniel 5:13-24.
- Exploring the Internet for Web sites that pertain to the subject of ancient Babylon. Think about how these sites contribute to your greater understanding of the life and times of Daniel and Belshazzar.
- Thinking about any gods that you may be praising instead of the true God. How may this worship be contributing to the collapse of your personal values?
- Interviewing fellow church members who have faced frightening times but were faithful to God through them.

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, chap. 43.

Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding Daniel's Prophecies*; William H. Shea, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Daniel 1-7*; Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, chap. 5.

An ancient Death Decree



“ ‘My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you’ ” (Dan. 6:22, NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

Dan. 6:22

“Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blest, watching and waiting looking above, filled with His goodness, lost in His love. This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.”

The song still resounds in my head. Its lyrics tug at my frequently wavering heart, and the voice that carried it, being clothed with peace I cannot fathom, rebuked my shaky spirit.

Like a mantra, the song reverberates in my mind. I hadn't expected to hear such a melody from someone on death row. I heard before that he “was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him.”¹ That moment I myself saw why “the king thought to set him over the whole realm.”²

As I was being ushered to him, my heart skipped a beat. Since my childhood, I've been one of his unnumbered adherents. The dailies were replete with articles (which I had the habit of collecting) featuring his blameless conduct. “His business

transactions, when subjected to the closest scrutiny, . . . were found to be without one flaw.”³ He was unlike everyone else in the world of politics. He was a ray of light amidst the shadows. That's

**I dreamed of meeting him
and talking to him.**

why he touched my life in a powerful manner. I admit I pursued journalism all because of him. I dreamed of meeting him and talking to him. And there I was, walking toward him for an interview.

His warm smile, face radiant with peace and joy, welcomed me. He outstretched his hands for a handshake. Overwhelmed with grief, I ran toward him and I embraced him. The words spilled. I told him how much I adored him and how much he influences my life. And I asked him just one question.

“Sir, you knew the decree. Why did you go on and pray to your God with your windows open toward Jerusalem when you could have ceased to pray or you could have prayed with closed windows? I'm certain your God would have understood.”

With enduring joy and peace, he held my shoulders and said, “Child, why should I cease to pray when I most needed to pray?”

The next day the news scattered like fire. His God spared him, and those eaten by the lions in the den were his jealous enemies who had conspired against him.

“Perfect submission, all is at rest. I in my Savior am happy and blest.”

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 539.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 546.

God and the Lions' Den

EVIDENCE

Dan. 6:22

"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. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king'" (Dan. 6:22, NIV).

Collections of wild animals were as enjoyable long ago as nowadays. Lions were abundant in Mesopotamia. They are mentioned more than a hundred times in the Bible (Judges 14; 1 Kings 13). But how do you visualize the lions' den? A pit deep enough to keep the big animals from jumping out would have made sense. As yet no such lions' dens have been excavated in Babylon. The water level in Mesopotamia has risen so much over the centuries that any such deep pit would have been filled in long ago.

Daniel's history is a remarkable one. He carried out his faith and principles against great opposition. He was condemned to death because he would not abate one jot of his allegiance to God even in the face of the king's decree. It might, at this day, be called over-righteousness to go, as was his practice three times a day, and kneel before the open window for prayer while he knew that prying eyes were observing him and that his enemies were ready to accuse him of disloyalty to the king; but Daniel would allow no earthly power to come between him and his God, even with the prospect of death in the den of lions. Although God did not prevent Daniel from being cast into a den of lions, an angel went in with him and closed their mouths, so that no harm befell him. He was a noble, steadfast servant of God.

**He was a noble, steadfast
servant of God.**

When Daniel was cast into the den of lions because of his fidelity to God, the Lord sent His angel to deliver him; and He will deliver us if we put our trust in Him and obey Him. Heaven is very much nearer to us than we think. When we place ourselves in the right relation to God, angels of heaven are beside us. We are to hide in Jesus. And he that touches you, he that harms or distresses you, touches Christ; for Christ identifies His interest with those of His people. Christ suffers in the person of His saints. We must remember that the God of Daniel is our God, and that we can be faithful under all circumstances. We can go to Him in confidence, and through His grace preserve our integrity.

REACT

Why are some Christians delivered from a threat when others are not?

Monday
November 1

Liars, Lions, and a Leader

LOGOS

Daniel 6

“They could find no corruption in him” (Dan. 6:4, NIV).

Just as in chapter 1, Daniel is head and shoulders above the other leaders in the king’s court. It must have been tough for the locals to be outclassed by a foreigner. Daniel’s fellow magistrates were determined to bring him down in any way possible. Today politics is said to be a cutthroat business, and these Satraps prove the saying to have been more literally true in Daniel’s day. How do you think Daniel was able to conduct the affairs of a pagan state and not compromise his faith? What values guided him?

The royal administrators “have all agreed that the king should issue an edict” (verse 7, NIV). The jealous leaders decided that the only way to get Daniel was to trap him in his faith. The plotters appealed to the king’s vanity and concocted a sure-fire plan to get Daniel out of the way permanently.

Compare this scheme with Haman’s scheme in Esther 3. Haman’s motive, methods, and end are strikingly similar to that of the satraps. What is it about religion and race that make them such easy targets? Has your faith or race ever made you a target of slander or suspicion?

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem (verse 10). It doesn’t appear that Daniel spent too much time deciding what he would do in response to the king’s decree. Why did he open his window? Do you think he was flaunting his defiance? Is this a model for civil disobedience? Many

It doesn’t appear that Daniel spent too much time deciding what he would do.

times Adventists speak of standing up for what we believe in the last days, but are there laws today that we should refuse to obey? Compare Daniel’s response to that of his three friends in Daniel 3.

When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel (verse 14). Now the king is trapped by his decree and vanity. How do you explain the king’s great concern for Daniel? Was it that he just hated to lose a good man, or was the king ready to become a believer?

“ ‘My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions’ ” (verse 22, NIV). If this were a movie, this would be the part when the audience would cheer. The good guy survived. Why is this miracle so famous? Does it seem too good

to be true? How do you compare this outcome with the lions and Christians in the Roman Colosseum hundreds of years later?

“At the king’s command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions’ den” (verse 24, NIV). Do you think, as the accusers were rounded up, they were thinking they should have left well enough alone? Does the punishment sound a little harsh, especially since the wives and children were put into the pit too?

“I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel” (verse 26, NIV). What a difference between this decree and the one at the beginning of the chapter! Does this decree mean that Darius was converted, or was he just paying respect? Compare this decree with that of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3.

Some commentators have compared the story of Daniel and the lions’ den to Christ’s death and resurrection. There is the troubled ruler who sentences both to death, the royal seal on both tomb and den to prevent tampering and escaping. Can you see other similarities?

“So Daniel prospered” (verse 28, NIV). Have you noticed that, unlike most other Bible characters, Daniel is presented without fault? What is the significance of this? Was Daniel like Enoch?

REACT

1. How does Daniel’s involvement in government relate to the issue of careers in politics for Christians today?
2. How do the “politics” in your workplace relate to those of Daniel’s workplace?
3. Daniel was a great witness for his faith. What methods do you think he used?
4. God intervenes in the fiery furnace and in the lions’ den. Have you had this type of intervention in your life? Do you know anyone who has?
5. How do you understand God’s intervention? Is there a discernable pattern?
6. Daniel and the lions’ den is a great bedtime story of bravery, but what other lessons are taught by the story? For some ideas, try singing “Dare to Be a Daniel.”
7. What should we do to root out any corruption that we may have in our lives?
8. How would a leader exemplify a blameless life like Daniel’s?
9. What kinds of corruption seem most common among Christians?
10. How should a Christian react toward a boss who is heading for trouble and resents advice?
11. Why is honesty in an employer highly prized by employees?
12. Greater responsibility is an outcome of faithfulness to lesser things. But how do we teach somebody to value small matters when he or she has plenty?
13. How would you differentiate faith and presumption in the prayer experience of Daniel?

Faithfulness in Little Things

TESTIMONY

Dan. 6:3

It is refreshing to know that our big God gives importance to small matters. Oftentimes we accomplish something small that is not noticed by our superiors. It has no weight for promotion or salary increase. But it is significant in the formation of Christlike character. Let's look at Daniel.

"Only by faithfulness in the little things can the soul be trained to act with fidelity under larger responsibilities. God brought Daniel and his fellows into connection with the great men of Babylon, that these heathen men might become acquainted with the principles of true religion. In the midst of a nation of idolaters, Daniel was

**When his two loyalties
clashed, what did Daniel do?**

to represent the character of God. How did he become fitted for a position of so great trust and honor? It was his faithfulness in the little things that gave complexion to his

whole life. He honored God in the smallest duties, and the Lord co-operated with him."¹

Faithfulness to little responsibilities, to government service, and to God made Daniel great. Many times his service to the king and God complemented each other. But when his two loyalties clashed, what did Daniel do?

"Some may ask, Why did not Daniel lift his soul to God in secret prayer? Would not the Lord, knowing the situation, have excused his servant from kneeling openly before him? Or why did he not kneel before God in some secret place, where his enemies could not see him?

"Daniel knew that the God of Israel must be honored before the Babylonian nation. He knew that neither kings nor nobles had any right to come between him and his duty to his God. He must bravely maintain his religious principles before all men; for he was God's witness. Therefore he prayed as was his wont, as if no decree had been made."²

"It was through prayer and adherence to right principles that Daniel was enabled to stand firm in the hour of trial and temptation. The prayer of faith is the great strength of the Christian, and will assuredly prevail against the devices of the hosts of darkness."³

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 356, 357.

2. *The Youth's Instructor*, November 1, 1900.

3. *Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1886.

How to Keep Firm in Faith

HOW-TO

Daniel 6–10; 16; 22

God saves His people in special ways that sometimes no one could imagine. But when He does this, our salvation is at hand. Many times in our life we recognize that He is our God; that He saves and protects only *after* we have been saved by His mighty power!

Daniel didn't know how God could save him and his people. But his faith in God, grounded on such a sure foundation, assured him that God knew the best answer to his pleadings.

Daniel relied on the following to help him keep his faith firmly in God in the midst of distress and crisis:

1. He prayed constantly and specifically. Daniel asked God for help (Dan. 6:10). When a super typhoon comes to our country, we ask that God will stop it, just as Jesus quieted the sea. Sometimes we pray because we are afraid, and we forget to ask His guidance and protection instead. In Isaiah 41:10, God promised His righteous right hand for our protection.

2. He trusted God fully. Daniel demonstrated his total dependence on God. King Darius did his best to save his friend, but the only thing he could do was to give words of courage:

"Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you" (Dan. 6:16, NKJV). We need to place our full trust in the One

God promised His righteous right hand for our protection.

who cares. Facing problems with optimism makes our burdens and fears lighter. "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28, NKJV).

3. He relied on the salvation of the Lord. "God did not prevent Daniel's enemies from casting him into the lions' den; He permitted evil angels and wicked men thus far to accomplish their purpose; but it was that He might make the deliverance of His servant more marked, and the defeat of the enemies of truth and righteousness more complete."*

God made the lions' den a place of refuge for Daniel. That led to the king's coming to know the Savior. Let our victories over problems and temptations become our powerful witness to others.

**Prophets and Kings*, pp. 544, 545.

Something to Die For?

OPINION

Phil. 1:21

As a teenager I often wondered what it would be like to be tried for what I believe, to be found guilty and sentenced to death. How easily would I risk my life for my beliefs? What would make it harder or easier for me? How would my faith in God support me during those times?

Maybe now, because I've done a bit more living, because I've done all those things that I looked forward to as a teenager and have experienced the pain involved in life and death; maybe now I can take a different perspective on what it means to die for what I believe. I think of how much I have to live for: an intimate and rewarding marriage, three growing children, a mind full of books waiting to be written, close relatives and friends whom I treasure, and a beautiful and diverse world waiting to be explored—but I also think of the everyday struggle of life on this earth.

Then I think of heaven and what that means to me. We each have our own different concepts of heaven. Heaven to me is a place of peacefulness. Time

**Then I think of heaven and
what that means to me.**

enough to do everything. Time to experience a universe and to savor each moment, each new thing, with all my perfect senses. It's a place where there is perfect love, perfect acceptance,

and no more hurting people. It is perfect beauty, perfect worship, and perfect unity, with no more uncertainty, no more goodbyes, no more misunderstandings.

It's not easy to give up life, to choose to put myself in a position where I might die. Humanly speaking it doesn't make sense to say goodbye to precious relationships and personal goals. But, heavenly speaking, I often wonder what there is about life that is worth clinging to so desperately? I have so much more to gain by letting go of life at the right time. There may be pain for a while, before I die, but the next moment I will become everything I have ever wanted to become. This life on earth bombards my senses and tells me this is a reality I must hold on to. But there is another infinitely more perfect reality, an eternal and ultimate reality, that is so much more inviting, where my relationships will all be perfect, and my goals will all be achievable.

Something to die for?

Faith Factor

EXPLORATION

Daniel 6

CONCLUDE

Daniel valued his prayer time—not even death threats could make him change that habit. He spent so much time absorbing the values of heaven that his enemies couldn't question his integrity. This closeness gave Daniel an unshakeable peace and confidence in God. He was able to hang on to his faith even when actually thrown into the lions' den. God honored his faithfulness by intervening in a spectacular way that resulted in Darius's conversion.

CONSIDER

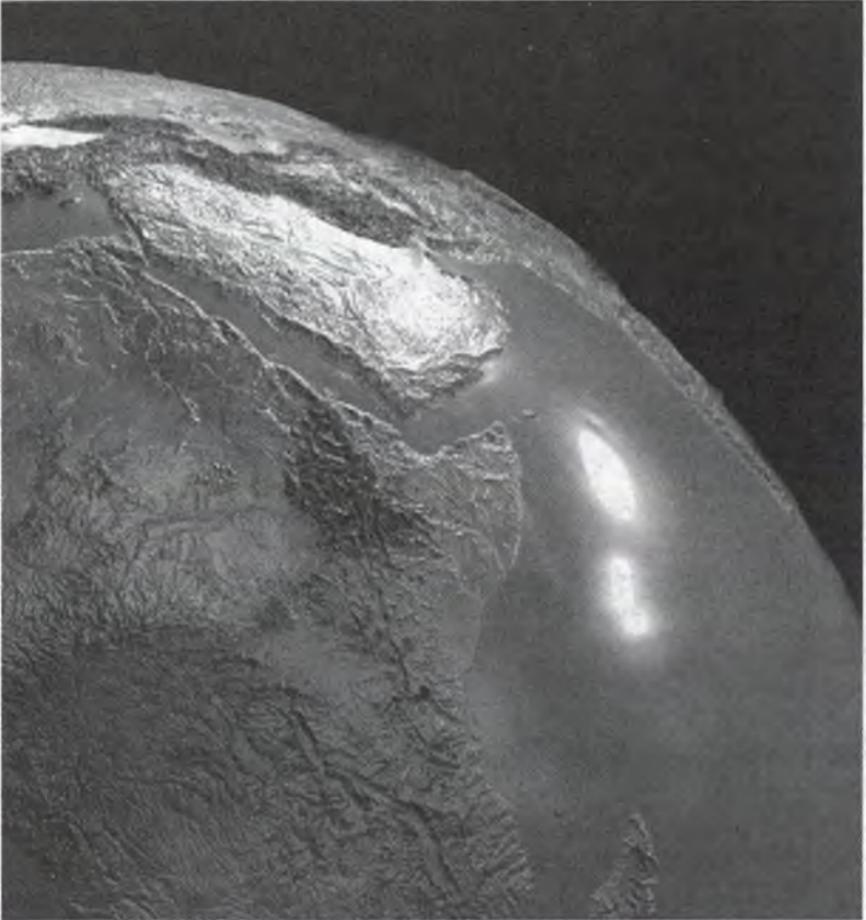
- Compiling as many songs as you can that relate to Daniel's experience. Sing, perform, and/or listen to them. Hint—use the scriptural reference index in the back of *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* to help you.
- Creating a pantomime that depicts the story of Daniel's loyalty to God.
- Surveying people of different ages; ask each person to tell you three things (if any) they think are worth dying for. Analyze the results of your survey and compare them to your expectations.
- Composing entries for Daniel's prayer journal—the day before the king's decree was given, the day before the decree took effect, and the day after the lions' den experience.
- Making a worship banner that will remind you of this week's study.
- Writing a job recommendation for Daniel—either from the viewpoint of one of the jealous satraps or from the viewpoint of the grateful king.
- Setting aside a quiet time for meditation, three times daily as Daniel did, throughout the next week.

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, chaps. 39–44.

David B. Smith, *The Daniel Diaries*; William H. Shea, *Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Daniel 1–7*.

Daniel's History lesson



**“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition”
(2 Thess. 2:3, NKJV).**

Big “Bad” God

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 136:17

The God who “smashed huge kingdoms right and left, His love never quits” (Ps. 136:17, *The Message*).

“At dawn we got the order to go over the top. We had to get out of our trenches and meet the enemy, who was only twenty feet from us. We didn’t know this. They came out of the trenches. We met one another, faced one another like a bunch of animals. We lost our senses; we charged them with our bayonets. I saw a German, a six-footer, coming towards me—why he picked me, I don’t know. Anyway, I saw him coming. I don’t know what gave me the idea, what gave me the strength, but as soon as he came near me, I turned my rifle by the butt, broke his thrust and I hit him on the chin. All of a sudden he was bleeding. He let go of his arm, put his hand towards his chin to find out where the blood came from. That gave me a clear spot: I turned the rifle and I hit him in mid-chest with the bayonet. I left the bayonet there till he fell down.”*

**“All of a sudden
he was bleeding.”**

Private Di Lucca of the 42nd US Division gives an account of his involvement in the Battle of St. Mihiel a few months prior to armistice of World War I when the great war ended with the triumphant allied forces succeeding in conquering the central powers.

The central theme of Daniel 7 is the sovereignty of God and His victory over the human rulers and powers who have tried for centuries to rule the earth. The four beasts (the lion with the wings of an eagle, the bear, the four-headed leopard with four wings of a bird, and the terrifying beast) described are the four major powers (Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome) that have dominated the world throughout its early history.

Over the course of the next seven days this lesson will examine the power and majesty of the Sovereign Lord who gave His servant Daniel a peek at the future and offered him the relevant interpretation of a very frightening, but meaningful, dream.

*Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of the Great War* (Random House, 2002), p. 302.

Cosmic Bully or Champion of Freedom?

LOGOS

Daniel 7

The prophecies of Daniel 7 provide another look at a sequence of events that has already been introduced in Daniel 2. Nearly 50 years have passed between the two dreams (603 B.C.–553 B.C.), the first being Nebuchadnezzar's, the second coming to Daniel during the first year of Belshazzar's reign. Daniel 2 presents an outline of history that is marked by the evolution of four kingdoms (verse 40). Daniel 7, using different symbols, presents a parallel outline that is, likewise, marked by four kingdoms (verse 23). Each sequence leads up to the establishment of God's kingdom, but Daniel's vision introduces some new themes and information not available in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The most notable difference is the introduction of a judgment theme in Daniel 7. Justice takes on a central role in Daniel's vision that is not apparent in Daniel 2. What we see in both chapters is a sequence of kingdoms rising and falling on the

The overarching theme of Daniel is that, in the end, justice will triumph.

basis of might. Even the rise of the heavenly kingdom in Daniel 2 can be attributed to might as God establishes a kingdom that crushed "to dust the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold" (verse 45, NLT). Though it

is certainly true that God has the might by which to establish His kingdom, He more importantly has the right to do so.

God is so much more than a cosmic bully whose method of operation is to strong-arm His enemies into thoughtless submission. Though the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome relied on their military might to get their way, God's rule proceeds from His right. In a world in which people are often subjugated based on military might (I recently read about an Iraqi man who lived for more than 20 years in a three-foot by seven-foot space hidden by a false wall because Saddam Hussein's soldiers wanted to kill him.), it is liberating news to know that ultimately a kingdom will be established based not on who has the most guns or the most explosive weapons, but on what is right. In this context it is very clear that the twin themes of justice and judgment are not only good news but also essential news, the basis of hope in a fallen world where, too often, might equals right.

The overarching theme of Daniel generally, and chapter 7 specifically, is that despite the sad fact that throughout history humans have forced their will and

desires on others, in the end, justice will triumph. There is One whose kingdom is established on what is right, on what is just, on what is fair. Eyeing humanity's lot through the telescope of prophecy, we can have hope even when current circumstances would rob us of even a glimmer. God's kingdom is established, not because He is bigger, but because He is better. He is right. He is righteous.

Justice and righteousness are the basis for God's kingdom, and judgment is the means by which God will establish it. Before God reigns as king there is a judgment, a process by which God's justice and righteousness are established. God is not interested in the mindless submission of unwilling subjects who conform to His will motivated merely by fear. He desires that people will willingly follow Him because they are convinced of His justice and righteousness. This is accomplished as the "books were opened" (7:10, NLT). Here there is no secrecy, no hidden agenda, no second set of books. There is no concealment, only the honest, open truth. It is the content of these records that establish God's justice and righteousness. The records provide an accountability that transcends personal bias and political prejudice, rooted in the presumption that there is absolute right and there is wrong, and that all that humans engage in is not merely a matter of personal preference. The records demonstrate that Christ has a right to rule, based more on character than on physical strength.

The second notable difference between the two chapters is elaboration in chapter 7 of a power that practices methods of operation that are directly the opposite of God's principles. This power is described as one who "will defy the Most High and wear down the holy people of the Most High. He will try to change their sacred festivals and laws, and they will be placed under his control for a time, times, and half a time" (verse 25, NLT). Historically, prophetic interpreters have understood this as a reference to the papacy, a position that has come under fire as "denominational finger-pointing." Even a cursory knowledge of history, however, can hardly lead to any other conclusion. The problem lies, not in the almost undeniable identification of the papacy with the ruler of Daniel 7:25, but in our failure to understand that any power—religious, political, or otherwise—which seeks to rule by might rather than by right, is "papal" in nature, whether that be the Roman Catholic Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the nations of the world, or the "Podunk Country Club." We do not wrestle against flesh or denominations but against principles of thought and action that are contrary to the freedom and the power of choice that God confers on every human being.

To the powerless, this is hope. To the oppressed, this is hope. To every man, woman, and child who has been tempted to compromise themselves in order to conform to worldly systems, this is a backbone. God is righteous and stands with those who do right. God will stand at the last as He has both the right and the might. Will we stand with Him?

Being Deceived by the Devil

TESTIMONY

Mark 13:37

Cynthia and Bernice were good friends. They were good Christians and always trusted each other for anything. The devil saw how faithful they were to each other and particularly in their Christian faith. The devil was just looking for a chance to capture them. He began by using Cynthia as his instrument.

One day Cynthia said, "Bernice! Let's go to a party."

Bernice replied, "Well, I don't know."

"It would not do any harm attending a party once," Cynthia said. "Others do as well."

Ultimately, Bernice agreed and they attended for the first time. They listened to the music played by professional musicians. They admired the fashions that people were wearing. They thought, *These people seem to have found joy and happiness.*

What is this little horn all about?

In the first year of the reign of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream. In his dream he saw four

great beasts coming up from the sea, different one from another.

The fourth beast was so different that there was no way of describing it. It looked dreadful and had no name. It had great iron teeth and ten horns (7: 7). Out of these ten horns grew a little horn plucking out three of the previous from the roots (verse 8).

What is this little horn all about and what did it do? In his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul foretold the great apostasy that would result in the establishment of the papal power (2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 7). "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High" (Dan. 7:25, NKJV). This little horn is the papacy, which had become firmly established in the sixth century. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. Paganism had given place to the papacy.

The accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the Dark Ages. This is when we can trace the activity of the little horn from here onwards.

We should learn an important lesson from this. The devil has been working since time immemorial, and he is still trying to fool us today with different methods. We have to be alert and conscious in all we do. He is right there to devour us. We have to be careful with the traps set up by the devil. The devil can try many things to discourage us, but we ought to be strong enough to fight against the demon.

The First Rule of Spirituality: Believe

EVIDENCE

Dan. 7:25, 26

He taught them the first rule of basketball: Believe.

This statement hangs prominently in my office. The words are imprinted over a still picture from the classic movie *Hoosiers*, starring Gene Hackman. The story played out in the movie tells of an underdog, small-town basketball team that journeys through their season with a new coach who is determined to run the team his way.

As the season unfolds, the team improves and qualifies for the state tournament. At a critical point in the movie, the coach takes his players to the large auditorium the tournament games will be played in and measures how tall the basket is. This simple demonstration helps convince the players that no matter how large the odds may seem, they were capable of being victorious.

What an important message. The only thing better than being capable of victory, however, is being promised victory.

As I read through this week's selected passage from Daniel 7, my imagination began to run wild, as it usually does when I think about end-time events. It began at verse 25 when I read this: "He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time" (NIV).

I got sucked into a black hole by one verse.

All it took was one verse for the fear to roll in and start me worrying about what was going to happen to me when I was placed under his control. I got sucked into a black hole by one verse, instead of taking the time to see the big picture.

Then I read the next verse. Now, I'm sure I've read this verse before, but never before has it had such a dramatic effect on me and my view of end-time events. It says, "But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever" (verse 26, NIV).

I felt like one of the players in the movie. Jesus, my spiritual coach, was taking my hand and showing me the complete picture. But my Jesus was doing more than showing me that I was capable of victory. He was *promising* me victory.

It was then that I remembered the first rule of spirituality: Believe. It's a simple rule with life-changing, fear-dissipating effects.

HOW-TO

Dan. 2:47

The movie is being shown for the umpteenth time and there you sit on the edge of your seat waiting for the scene to unfold. You are aware of how the good guy escapes, how the damsel is saved, the secret of the end is known. Yet you sit there with anticipation.

Through the prophets, God gives His people a view of how this "movie" will end. How exciting to be a part of this time in earth's history—even though we know how it will end.

The second chapter in Daniel is the second time in Scripture that God used the captive to reveal the secrets of the

**What a wonderful position
to be in, the revealer
of the secrets.**

future to a world ruler. Pharaoh was ruler when Joseph, the captive, revealed his dream (Genesis 14). Nebuchadnezzar is ruler and has to depend on Daniel. What a wonderful position to be in, the re-

vealer of the secrets. But first one must be prepared to be used by God. Daniel's life shows us how.

● He determined to stay with God in spite of the circumstance. He remembered that God still loved him and was with him always (Dan. 6:10).

● He depended solely on God and no other source. He continued to work on achieving his goals in education and employment, remembering that God provided the strength and intellect to accomplish any goal (2:20-23).

● He detached himself from any foreign practice or persons that would interfere with his connection to God (verses 17, 18).

● He dedicated his life to serving God and not man (1:8).

"As God called Daniel to witness for Him in Babylon, so He calls us to be His witnesses in the world today."¹

Greek philosophers give the impression that humankind has a say in the finale. Others believe there will never be an end, only a passing to another beginning of something different. It is no secret what God will do. He has revealed the future to those who are willing to be His representatives. This is an exciting time, and you can be the one looked to for the answers.

"The spirit that possessed Daniel, the youth of today may have, they may draw from the same strength, possess the same power of self-control, and reveal the same grace in their lives, even under circumstances as unfavorable."²

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 487.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 489.

What Will You Do?

OPINION

Jer. 33:3

All during the Dark Ages it was illegal to have Scriptures. To be caught with the Word of God would be almost certain death. It is interesting how persecution has a way of challenging you to take your walk with God seriously. Today persecution still continues in different parts of the world. Sitting in North America, it's easy to become lukewarm, to become stagnant to the events happening around me: Just don't rock my boat, and I won't rock yours.

We think that religion is a mere vessel that we use to float down the stream of life. As Christians, we have been called for something more. We have been given prophecy for something more. I believe prophecy has been provided to give us peace, hope, and inspiration. Prophecy should give us peace for the future. Nothing is worse than the fear of not knowing what's ahead. It's a control thing. I want to control my life—my way. When we give our lives completely to God, we have a peace that no matter what happens we are resting in His arms. The closer we draw to Him, the more we will learn about Him and His plan for this world.

Jeremiah 33:3 says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (NIV). Claim this promise the next time you start studying prophecy. Prophecy should give us hope. We already know who is going to win this battle. We know God is going to be victorious. This should challenge us to live our lives differently.

We already know who is going to win this battle

Prophecy should inspire us that time is short and we need to get moving. There are many people who still need to hear the truth. It's a scorching summer day. You see your neighbor across the street mowing his lawn, while you sit in your comfortable air-conditioned home. You have a glass of ice water in your hand. What will you do? There are many people without the peace and hope that you have in Christ. What will you do? There are many people who see the events unfolding on this earth and it scares them. You have the soothing, refreshing message of prophecy. What will you do?

Christ is coming soon! What will you do?

REACT

1. What would be an effective way to introduce the reassurance of God's prophecies to someone who is concerned about current events?
2. What could be done to be sure that praying for a person in trouble is not just a copout instead of doing something more tangible?

EXPLORATION

Jer. 29:11-13

CONCLUDE

The incredible reality that Christians enjoy is that God has shown us history before it has taken place. That's the beauty of prophecy. We don't have to live insecure about our future. It is like watching the football game that you recorded earlier. You already know the final score. Now you can watch your team with confidence, even though at times it looks as if they're losing. God has shared the outcome with us. Now let's go out boldly and win!

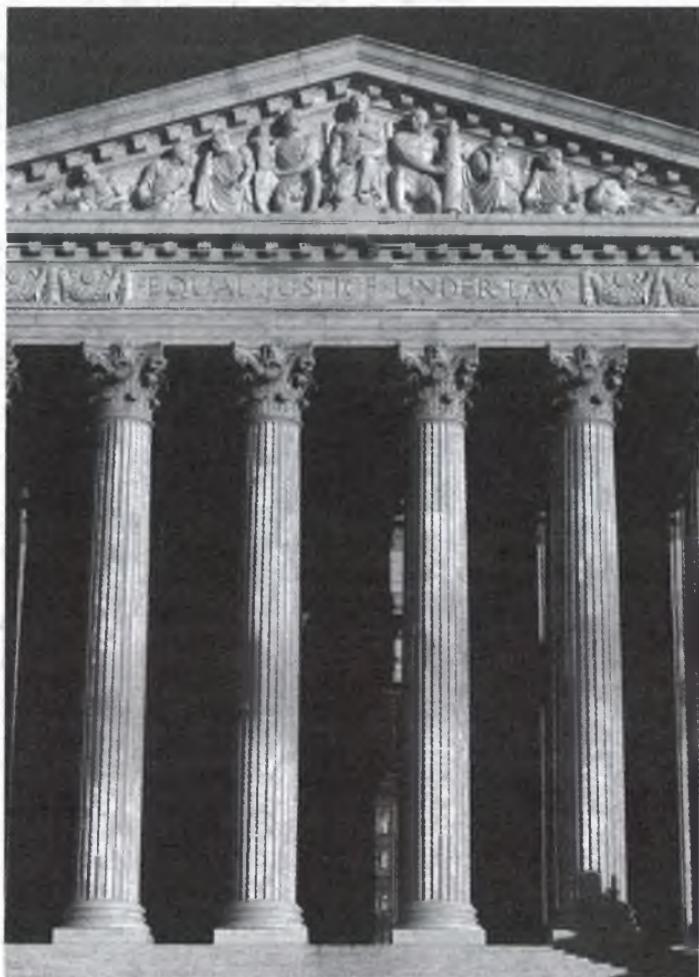
CONSIDER

- Drawing two faces: one who believes in Bible prophecy, and one who does not. How are the expressions different? What is going on inside to make their face take that shape? How does my face look most of the time?
- Finding five articles from newspapers or magazines that you think relate to Bible prophecy. How does God's prophecy conclude each of these articles with a happy ending?
- Listening to and reading the words of the Jars of Clay arrangement of "Be Thou My Vision." What words of confidence can you find from this perspective?
- Videotaping peoples' responses to the question, "What is your favorite Bible prophecy?" What do their responses tell us about the typical person's view of prophecy?
- Using modeling clay to sculpt an item or scene from one of your favorite Bible prophecies. What aspect seems the most revealing to you as you look at the features of the final product?
- Projecting into the year after the Second Coming and writing a short story about how prophecy helped you stand firm through the end.

CONNECT

Daniel and the Revelation, chaps. 7, 8; Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End Time*, chap. 7; *The Great Controversy*, chaps. 22–25.

The Pre-Advent judgment



**“The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”
(1 Pet. 4:17, NKJV).**

God-Begotten? God-Protected!

INTRODUCTION

John 3:16; 1 John 4:17

“Perseverance is a strong will; obstinacy is an equally strong won’t!”

Many are obstinate about not studying the book of Daniel because they don’t understand its prophecies or because they fear the fulfillment of these prophecies. Others persevere in the study with the hope of getting a clearer understanding and a desire for overcoming their fear. This week’s lesson on the pre-Advent judgment might bring about even more fear, except as we recognize that we are God-begotten: “Every person who believes that Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah”—and that “the God-begotten are also the God-protected” (1 John 5:1, *The Message*).

First John 4:17 assures us of this fact: “As we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world” (NLT).

The pre-Advent judgment prophesied in Daniel 7 is an event for which God-begotten people prepare. In preparation we free ourselves of negative fear. “Fear

“Perseverance is a strong will; obstinacy is an equally strong won’t!”

is the emotion that springs from the knowledge that one’s life is not pleasing to God.”² Fear enters our minds so slowly and silently that we hardly realize we are becoming victims of its damaging influence.

Another kind of fear is spoken of: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. 111:10, NKJV). This is the reverential respect and awe that we feel. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-present.

Our very existence is entirely in His hands, and we are before Him as His creation—God-begotten. We are afraid to displease such a God, for we know that His righteousness condemns those who live in sin. “If we deliberately continue sinning after we have received a full knowledge of the truth, there is no other sacrifice that will cover these sins. There will be nothing to look forward to but the terrible expectation of God’s judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies” (Heb. 10:26, 27, NLT). God-begotten? Have no fear about the pre-Advent judgment; you are God-protected!

1. *The Friendship Book of Francis Gay* (D. C. Thompson & Co., Ltd., April 1, 2003).

2. *The Way: The Living Bible Illustrated* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1972).

A Judge Who Cannot Be Bribed

EVIDENCE

Dan. 7:9, 10

We are living in a world in which judges can be bribed. Those who are innocent can be judged unjustly, while those who are guilty, due to their influence and money, are being judged favorably. Thus, those who experience injustice have lost confidence in the justice system of this world.

We may experience unjust treatment in this world, but we can look forward in the future with hope that we will finally get justice in the end. Daniel 7 talks about a heavenly Judge who is not like some earthly judges who can be bribed, but a righteous Judge who cannot be bribed. According to Daniel 7:9, 10, there are a number of indications that our heavenly Judge is truly a just Judge.

The first evidence is the title used for our heavenly Judge. He is called “the Ancient of Days” (verse 9, KJV). This title suggests that He knows everyone from the beginning to the end of our world history. No one can outlive Him.

The second proof is the description of His clothing: “white as snow” (verse 9, KJV). The color of His garment symbolizes the purity of His character. Thus we can be sure that we will get a fair hearing of our case because of our Judge’s integrity. There is no way He can be bribed.

The open book will not lie.

The third support is the quality of His hair: “white like wool” (verse 9, NIV). This is an indication of His old age. According to the Bible, white hair is a sign of wisdom. He is not only an honest Judge but also a wise one.

The last evidence is the material used in the courtroom: “the books [that] were opened” (verse 10, NIV). I want to emphasize not so much the nature of the book but more on what was done to the book, since it is obvious that it refers to the record books of those who are being judged. The books, accordingly, were opened. A record book that is open for everyone to see will reveal who we truly are. The open book will not lie. Indeed, those who are true to themselves and true to God will ultimately receive justice.

From the evidences mentioned above, we can be sure that we can receive justice from our heavenly Judge. After all, our righteous Judge, “the Ancient of Days” (verse 9, NIV), will pronounce “judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High” (verse 22, NIV).

The Blessings of the Judgment

LOGOS

Dan. 7:9-14, 21, 22, 26-28

The Saints Vindicated

The book of Esther presents a gripping saga of how a beautiful Jewish girl became queen of a powerful heathen empire and later orchestrated the deliverance of her people from annihilation. The events presented there are also a historical type of the prophetic scene presented in Daniel 7. The scenes of accusation, persecution, intercession, judgment, vindication, deliverance, and possession run parallel.

● Haman is the hater and persecutor of the people of God (Esther 3:5, 6), as the little-horn power is the persecutor of the Christians (Dan. 7:21).

● Esther is the intercessor in the inner court of the king's palace (Esther 5:1), as Jesus is the Intercessor in the inner court of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:12).

● The king commanded the book of records to be opened and the recorded deeds of Mordecai be examined (Mordecai is a symbol of the saints. Notice also

**Mention of the judgment
often conjures fear.**

that Mordecai is not present as the investigation of his records take place. He is "judged" from the things that were written about him. So with the saints.) In the heavenly investigative judgment

"the books were opened" (Dan. 7:10, KJV).

● Mordecai is vindicated as are the saints (Dan. 7:22).

● Esther is given the possessions of her enemy, Haman, and she entrusts dominion to Mordecai (Esther 8:1, 2). Similarly, Jesus is given the kingdom of this world and He then entrusts dominion to the saints (Dan. 7:14, 27). Such a demonstration of Christ's grace toward His saints should make us anticipate the judgment with joyful eagerness. However, this is not usually the case.

The Truth About the Judgment

The mention of the judgment often conjures fear, even among Christians. But are the saints supposed to be afraid of the judgment? Maybe the fear has come about because of the misunderstanding of what the judgment is all about. This misunderstanding has led many preachers to emphasize a burning-hell judgment, resulting in a gross misrepresentation of God's character.

The context of Daniel 7 pictures the saints of God suffering persecution and martyrdom at the hands of the little-horn power of Rome. The period of the persecution seemed unending to the prophet and he must have wondered about God's

mercy toward His people. The scene suddenly switched from the morbid events on earth to a joyous spectacle in the sanctuary courts above. The Son of Man is seen standing in judgment before the Father in defense of the saints.

Daniel uses the term "Son of Man" (7:13, KJV) to describe Jesus. As Son of Man, He is one with us. He can sympathize with us in our weaknesses for He was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15, NKJV). John tells us that we can "have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17, NKJV). Once we possess the character of the Son of God, we can be confident that the judgment will be in our favor.

Jesus is our Mediator, our Lawyer in the judgment. He also tells us that "the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22, NKJV). Since Jesus is therefore our Lawyer as well as our Judge, should we lose the case against us? As long as we remain faithful to Christ, we can rest assured that the outcome of the judgment will be in our favor.

Dominion Restored

Daniel tells us that the final decision of the heavenly tribunal is that "to [Christ] was given dominion and glory and a kingdom" (Dan. 7:14, NKJV) and also "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High" (verse 27, NKJV).

One of the issues in the judgment is the rightful ownership of the kingdoms of this world. In the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, Satan arrogantly voiced his claim to the dominion over this earth (Luke 4:6). The dominion over the earth that God entrusted to our first human parents was lost to Satan when he succeeded in getting them to transgress God's law. However, all this is reversed in the judgment.

The apostle Paul tells us that "the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together" (Rom. 8:22, NKJV), but that "the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (verse 21, NKJV). The judgment, therefore, as a part of the plan of salvation, provides for the restoration of all things. Christ's mediation in the courts above is to ensure that those who died in faith under the Old Covenant as well as those who live under the New Covenant should receive the eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).

Since the pre-Advent judgment obviously favors the saints of God, how should we live on this earth while the judgment is in progress so that at the end we will not be found wanting? "Those who would share the benefits of the Savior's mediation should permit nothing to interfere with their duty to perfect holiness in the fear of God. The precious hours, instead of being given to pleasure, to display, or to gain seeking, should be devoted to an earnest, prayerful study of the word of truth. The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest."*

**The Great Controversy*, p. 488.

Tuesday
November 16

All Rise, God Presiding

TESTIMONY

Dan. 7:9, 10; Rev. 3:4

When an earthly judge enters court, he asks for files that relate to the case, selects a jury for the deliberation, and relies on credible witnesses for accurate statements. He presumes that the investigating officer has done thorough work prior to coming to court and that the lawyer is prepared as well. If the investigation is not thorough or the information brought to court inaccurate, then the evidence tendered will be wrong and the resulting judgment incorrect.

God has already completed His investigation of our lives, and He doesn't have to rely on biased witnesses or earthly officers. Because He is all-knowing, He has all the information required to make a judgment. He wants to show the worlds that He is just without the shadow of a

**God will vindicate His name
before the inhabitants
of the worlds.**

doubt. Satan has perverted the truth, and God will vindicate His name before the inhabitants of the worlds.

"The One who has stood as our Intercessor, is soon to cease His work in the heavenly sanctuary. Grace and mercy will then descend from the throne and justice will take their place. He for whom His people have looked will assume His right—the office of Supreme Judge."¹

Daniel 7:9, 10 shows the final judgment in both phases—investigative and executive. "The investigative is . . . for the information of the universe at large."²

We can, however, "have a clean record in heaven today, and know that God accepts us."³ The final outcome of the trial will ensure that God's people will receive their reward (Dan. 7:27). It is important to understand that God has made provision for our salvation. This message "is to be carried to the ends of the earth."⁴

God wants us to do everything we can to communicate His love because "everyone is to have sufficient light to make his own decision intelligently."⁵

1. *Last Day Events*, p. 240.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 828.

3. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 989.

4. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 719.

5. *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

Bad News for Procrastinators

HOW-TO

Rev. 22:11, 12

I am a procrastinator. If there is ever an opportunity for me to do something tomorrow, then I'll do it tomorrow. Or the next day, or the day after. There are a lot of things in my life I can get away with doing tomorrow.

However, I have bad news for me—actually for anyone who is ever tempted to put something off: When it comes to eternity, we cannot procrastinate. As we go about our lives today,

the heavenly court is in progress. For the past 160 years the Judge has been deciding whose lives merit salvation and eternity, and whose do not, starting from the first men to walk the earth, and continuing through to us today. Ellen White says soon (perhaps it has already started) the judgment “will pass to the cases of the living.”¹

**I have bad news for me—
actually for anyone who is ever
tempted to put something off.**

We know that salvation is by faith: we must confess our belief in Jesus first and foremost (John 3:16). However, the pre-Advent judgment is for those who have “ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ.”²

“No value is attached to a mere profession of faith in Christ; only the love which is shown by works is counted genuine. Yet it is love alone which in the sight of Heaven makes any act of value. Whatever is done from love, however small it may appear in the estimation of men, is accepted and rewarded of God.”³

The evidence for or against us is taken from the heavenly records, including the book of life. Every deed, good or bad, is precisely recorded in heaven—not only what we have done, but also what we have not done.

What should we do to be ready for our judgment day?

1. Do good (Matt. 25:40; James 4:17).
2. Refrain from doing wrong (Eph. 5:8).
3. When you sin, ask for forgiveness (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 2:1).

Suppose today God called your name as the next case in the heavenly court. What would the verdict for your eternity be?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 490.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 486.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 487.

Thursday
November 18

Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!

OPINION

Rom. 3:23

Have you ever broken the law?

We all have. Think about it. Have you always observed every speed limit? I can think of many times when I was speeding along 10 to 15 miles above the speed limit when I spot those familiar red and blue lights at the side of the road. My heart always sinks as I slow down for a few minutes, hoping for mercy. After a few seconds of terror I breathe a sigh of relief. Have I broken the law? Of course! I have just avoided the consequences.

The idea of a final judgment, in which the Lord of all creation opens the books and examines every aspect of our lives, can be terrifying. In fact, every time I think about it a knot wells up in my stomach. Why? Because I know I am guilty. Romans 3:23 states that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

There is no question as to whether or not we have broken the law—we all have.

**Have I broken the law?
Of course!**

Yet, just like guilty defendants in a courtroom, sometimes we attempt to hide our guilt. Some may hide behind service and ministry, others behind fancy clothes and righteous living. As Christians we understand

the importance of being like Christ, but these efforts do not make us less guilty or more worthy of salvation.

The Lord is not fooled by our humble efforts. Like a guilty defendant hiding behind a neat haircut and a fancy suit, we try to cover up the person that we really are. We may even try to justify ourselves or our actions. In the end it will not work—we all deserve to die.

Yet our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, descended from heaven and was sacrificed in our place. He died so that we might live.

Through this viewpoint the judgment is a wonderful and exciting story—a time that should not be feared but celebrated. Satan, the haughty prosecuting attorney, has all the evidence. He is smirking with delight as he presents instance upon instance when we have transgressed the law of God.

We are indeed guilty. Then, our defense attorney, Jesus Christ, informs the court that the price has been paid. Are we guilty? Yes! Are we free? Free indeed.

REACT

Why did Christ and Daniel seem to offer little defense of themselves before rulers?

And Justice for All

EXPLORATION

1 John 4:17

CONCLUDE

The pre-Advent judgment, as we learned from the book of Daniel, is an event that all God's people should try to understand, prepare for, and look forward to. Though the judgment of the almighty God may at times seem harsh as represented in some of the Bible's stories, we also have many assurances in the Scriptures of God's power to sustain us and grant us grace during this process. Christ, our Intercessor, is by our side. But we must not go without regular self-examination, meditation, and prayer as we prepare for standing in the heavenly court.

CONSIDER

- Using art supplies or a computer graphics program to design an alternative heavenly courtroom with a different look, so that it would not be the intimidating place our earthly courtrooms often are.
- Rereading several Bible passages about those who were judged worthy in God's sight (e.g., Enoch, Moses, or Elijah). Based on what you read in the Scriptures or Bible commentaries, write a brief court decision explaining why God judged each of them as He did.
- Discussing with a spiritual advisor anxieties you are feeling about the judgment. Together work out some strategies for regular self-examination. Then set aside a weekly time—in a quiet, comforting spot—for meditation and prayer.
- Viewing a video or reading a book authored by John Grisham. As you do so, analyze the way in which he depicts systems of human justice versus your understanding of divine justice.
- Thinking about the styles of music that are typically used in movies and television shows depicting courtroom scenes. Reflect on how this style differs from sacred anthems or songs of praise. Try composing or selecting some music that you think would better accompany a scene in heaven's court.
- Gathering from the *Yellow Pages* (or other print media) samples of advertisements for such services as attorneys, legal aid societies, mediators, and ombudsmen. Then analyze the differences in wording, graphics, layout, etc., and give a short presentation to your class about your findings.

CONNECT

The Great Controversy, chap. 28.

<<http://www.atoday.com/magazine/archive/1998/sep/oct1998/articles/McLarty.shtml>>.

The sanctuary **Attacked**



“He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down” (Dan. 8:11, NKJV).

Science Fiction in the Bible?

INTRODUCTION

Dan. 8:16

I will let you in on a little secret. I can't read, watch, or even listen to anything that resembles a story without breaking it into the literary elements of plot, theme, and characters. Not your surfing or wind sailing, I admit, but a hobby that entertains me on a regular basis, nevertheless. In terms of a complex story, the book of Daniel, chapter 8, is a beauty.

Let me tell you a little bit about the plot.

A ram with two high horns, one higher than the other, rules the animal kingdom for a while. A goat comes from the West possessing one horn between the eyes.

He is so powerful that he strikes the ram down and breaks his horns. Surprisingly, though, the goat's horn is also broken while the goat is still strong. Four other horns replace it. And when you think you are through with horns,

I am looking forward
to the climax.

another one comes up. Although little, this last horn is nasty. It "magnified himself" (Dan. 8:11, KJV) so much that he "took away the daily sacrifice" (verse 11, NIV) and cast down the sanctuary. But the story says the sanctuary is to be cleansed in two thousand and three hundred days.

This is it. Confused? So was I, until Gabriel—God sends him—comes along (introducing another character at the end-hour of a story works every time!) to explain what it all means.

I can't tell you though—it would ruin it for you.

What I can say is that history and prophecy are the two most important elements of the theme of the book of Daniel. Something else about the theme: The element of prediction helps the reader to interpret the historic time in view of eternity, to prepare for what is to happen in the future, and to provide a firm basis for personal faith. History has already fulfilled most of this story's prediction. I am looking forward to the climax, when the little horn's opposition to the "Prince of princes [will be] . . . broken without hand" (verse 25, KJV).

How was the earthly sanctuary defiled? What do the symbols in Daniel 8 represent? Who is the little-horn power? What is the nature of his attack against God's people and sanctuary? This is the focus of our study this week.

One last word of advice: plot, theme, and characters are not the only things that make a story powerful. The author's point of view is even more important. I have a feeling the Author wants us to pay special attention to this particular prophecy. Much is at stake here.

Sunday
November 21

Thinking Inside and Outside the Box

LOGOS

Daniel 8

I have found that one of the greatest challenges in my continued study of the book of Daniel is the ability to hang on to the traditional, historical, and valid interpretation as presented by the church I love, and at the same time, not limit myself to it as the only, ultimate, absolute, and complete understanding of this inspired apocalyptic literature so crucial in the teachings of my church and so essential to my understanding of the future as it is found in Jesus. Daniel 8, our scriptural excerpt for this week, is no exception. Consider three applications, all with a similar conclusion.

Historical

Most of the chapter is given its own explanation. Though it ends with our dear prophet being exhausted and lying ill for several days (Dan. 8:27), it was not because he was wrestling with the basic meaning of the message in the vision.

**This view provides a new
level of trust in God's
Word for me.**

Consistent with the details of previous visions of Daniel, this vision picks up in the middle of the original and famous multi-metaled image of chapter 2, so as we look back at its historical accuracy we can have renewed

confidence in the other meanings of the dream. Babylon was already a reality according to verse 1, so for us as we look back historically we see Gabriel explaining the presence of the next world empires, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome (verses 16-25). Pretty straight forward, pretty accurate, pretty consistent with the other visions, just with a few more details that history confirms. This view provides a new level of trust in God's Word for me. Because this vision is historically accurate, I have more confidence as I look back at the rest of His Word.

Prophetic

But what is a history lesson for us was in fact a prophetic statement dependent on the faith of its hearers in its original context. They had to look forward to empires, rulers, and issues that were currently not present. It was clear to them at that time that Babylon was ruling a significant part of their world. But who are these fledgling foreigners who think they will be able to defeat the mighty Babylonians? Would the evidence of the accuracy of the first part of the previous visions be adequate to place their trust in the rest of the story? I don't know how challenging it was for

them, but it becomes quite challenging for us as we exist in a culture of proof and in a climate of distrust.

Our faith statement is in fact much less of a challenge than it was for Daniel and his contemporaries because we have so much historical validation. Which, of course, is the opportune time to remind you that Gabriel explained the whole vision to Daniel—except the 2,300 days of verse 14! “The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future” (verse 26, NIV). Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome are not the prophetic faith statements we need to make as did our forefathers. Ours is what is yet to come. Because this vision is historically accurate to this point, I have more confidence as I trust the future, the yet-to-be-explained, the unknown parts of Scripture, to a God who I believe is still leading today as much as He was in Daniel’s day.

As he searched with a committed heart, and as our forefathers in this church have done the same, I must commit myself to searching, and trusting in the accuracy of God’s Word and the validity of its message, looking back with confidence and forward with renewed anticipation of what will be shown us through His Spirit and His Word.

Spiritual

No study of the Word is valuable for me unless I can uncover a gem of spiritual truth that will sustain me in my historical review and prophetic preview. What’s in it for me today? I enjoy studying the historical to confirm my confidence. I enjoy dabbling in the prophetic to imagine what I cannot see by fact but can be fortified in through faith. I value the wisdom God has given to the founders and theologians of my church, even when I don’t fully understand it all.

Whatever the end may be, and however the details will be played out, I am reminded of the stone that came down and struck the image in Daniel 2 with God’s kingdom being set up forever, and I am encouraged with the assured positive outcome for God’s family. In this chapter I found the same confidence at the end of verse 25. With all the Roman powers rising and exercising authority, I saw a promise and a process.

The promise: “Yet he will be destroyed.”

The process: “But not by human power.”

However the future plays out, God wins, and therefore we win, but not by our power! I don’t come away from my study of this vision “exhausted and [lying] ill for several days” (verse 27, NIV), as did its recipient. I come away convinced from the historical evidence, challenged to increase my faith in the future, and confident through it all that God wins, and not by my power!

Monday
November 22

A Path to the Future Found in the Past

TESTIMONY

Dan. 8:11

"Earnestly [Daniel] sought for the meaning of the vision. He could not understand the relation sustained by the seventy years' captivity, as foretold through Jeremiah, to the twenty-three hundred years that in vision he heard the heavenly visitant declare should elapse before the cleansing of God's sanctuary."¹

What is meant by God's sanctuary? "The sanctuary of the first covenant

"The fourth commandment has been so changed as to authorize the observance of the first instead of the seventh day as the Sabbath."

was pitched by man, built by Moses; [God's sanctuary] is pitched by the Lord, not by man. In that sanctuary the earthly priests performed their service; in this, Christ, our great high

priest, ministers at God's right hand. One sanctuary was on earth, the other is in Heaven."²

"What was done in type in the ministration of the earthly sanctuary, is done in reality in the ministration of the heavenly sanctuary. After His ascension, our Saviour began His work as our high priest. Says Paul, 'Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.'³

What is the little horn? What are the activities of the little horn? "Says Daniel, of the little horn, the papacy, 'He shall think to change the times and the law.'⁴

"The papacy has attempted to change the law of God. The second commandment, forbidding image worship, has been dropped from the law, and the fourth commandment has been so changed as to authorize the observance of the first instead of the seventh day as the Sabbath."⁵

"As we near the close of this world's history, the prophecies recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are living."⁶

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 554.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 413.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 420.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 446.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 547.

Believe First; Understand Second

EVIDENCE

Dan. 8:27

An invading army forcibly takes Daniel and thousands of other wise men and beautiful women from Judah to Babylon. The year is 605 B.C. Idol worshipers in Babylon surround the exiles. The exiles must also serve what the *Life Application Study Bible* (1996) calls an “egocentric despot,” Nebuchadnezzar. But Daniel is the man. He does not give up or give in. He knows that, despite the circumstances, God is in control.

Daniel has the gift of prophecy. He holds prominent positions in the governments of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius because of his ability to interpret dreams. He lives almost his whole life in Babylon, but his prophecies are worldwide in scope.

The book of Daniel is one of the earliest examples (the only one in the Old Testament) of the genre known as “apocalyptic writing.” This genre is characterized by the use of visions to reveal secrets about the future, the use of powerful symbolism, a stark contrast between good and evil, and a concern with end times.

But several linguistic features set the eighth chapter of Daniel apart. Daniel 2:4–7:28 is in Aramaic, while Daniel 8 is in Hebrew, the language of the Judeans. The beasts of the vision are a ram and a goat, the animals the Judeans sacrificed. The style of writing is first person. Daniel’s confrontation with Gabriel (8:15-19)—the first time the Bible names God’s messenger—is dramatic not just informative.

Several linguistic features
set the eighth chapter of
Daniel apart.

Daniel, who is writing to offer hope to the other captives in Babylon, seems less concerned with prediction than with revelation. He does not understand the meaning of the vision from the king despite his ability to interpret the dreams of the kings. He is preparing for the move from Babylon to Jerusalem, from captivity to freedom.

Perhaps this is the focus of Daniel 8. God is the Ruler of the world, at all times and in all places. For those who believe in God, this means one thing: believe in Him. No matter how powerful the opposing forces, God will defeat them in His own time.

REACT

Why does Daniel include the vision in his writings when Gabriel tells him not to tell anyone about it?

Principles Not Puzzles

HOW-TO

Dan. 8:17

"As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. 'Son of man,' he said to me, 'understand that the vision concerns the time of the end'" (Dan. 8:17, NIV).

I find Daniel 8 comforting but perplexing—comforting in that I can locate my own point in history, but perplexing in that the next steps in time are not fully disclosed.

I don't see God as a god of trickery or of deceit.

So I am going to read Daniel 8 differently this time. I am going to focus on the principles rather

than the puzzles, on being ready for the end of time rather than counting down to the end of time.

Daniel 8 is not a chapter of nice, neat passages. It is multi-layered, multi-faceted. I'm sure God would have said, "This is vital," if it were extremely important to know all the nuances. I don't see God as a god of trickery or of deceit.

Daniel 8 is telling me:

- To strengthen my relationship with God, I need to read my Bible more. I need to pray more. It's not going to be easy being a Christian in the time of the end (Dan. 8:24, 25; Matt. 24:4-29), but God promises to help us through the hardships (1 Cor. 10:13). God tells us to " 'be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able . . . to stand before the Son of Man' " (Luke 21:36, NIV).

- To take an interest in the world around me, I need to watch, read, and listen more widely but selectively. By taking an interest in the arts, history, politics, science, and sociology, I will gain a greater perspective on world events.

- I have more to learn. I will let God continue speaking to me.

REACT

1. Why do you think Gabriel did not identify the little horn?
2. Now that you know what the ram and goat represent, what difference does this make to your life?
3. How can we find a balance between overanxiety and complacency about last-day events considering that there is more trouble ahead yet there is nothing we can do to stop it?
4. Is there an historic, a prophetic, *and* a spiritual application and understanding of the cleansing of the sanctuary in verse 14? Explain your answer.

A World of Make-Believe

OPINION

Deut. 11:16

Have you ever been on a movie set? Set design and props are very convincing. A combination of lighting, movement, actors, and attention to detail create the world of make-believe. It appears so real—it *is* real—until you take a walk to the back of the set. Behind the glossy shell is an empty space that contains nothing but boards to hold facades in place. The environment is artificial, the weather is whipped up, and the actors simply regurgitate lines of copy that are created by someone else. Illusion is a powerful tool in today's world.

For centuries human beings have been enticed by belief in false systems of worship. Often placing their trust in temporary things, many people have been tricked and misled. Sadly, *church* has replaced God in some congregations and people have started worshipping systems and leaders that have set themselves up as gods. But behind the glossy shell is an empty space that contains nothing.

There is only one God. The God of the universe is authentic, powerful, and able to forgive our sins. His love is genuine, His plan for salvation perfect, and His power real—yet Satan continues to create substitutes for God that are a mockery. Satan is a master-mind at sets, props, and counterfeit to confuse humans into worshipping him. So how do we know who is real and who is fake?

**Illusion is a powerful tool
in today's world.**

We are in the final act of the great controversy on the world stage. There is only one way to know Jesus, and that is by spending time with Him. Take a walk around the set, dig deeper—go behind the scene to investigate the detail. Study God's original script—the Bible—to identify His unique attributes. Through study and prayer you will discover the quality and durability of God's plan for you and at the same time discover the tricks and props of Satan. There is nothing artificial about God—He gave the world Jesus and only He has the capacity to save, to judge, and to forgive. As the final scenes of earth's history are played out, make sure you are taking cues from the right director.

REACT

1. How can you improve your relationship with Jesus in order to identify an imposter?
2. How can the Seventh-day Adventist Church ensure that Christ is the focus rather than the church system? Be specific.

Who's in Charge Here?

EXPLORATION

Daniel 8

CONCLUDE

You hear a knock. Opening the door you find a smiling, middle-aged woman standing before you, arms outstretched. "Hi, Sweetie," she says, eyes glistening with joy. "Aren't you going to hug your dear ol' mom?"

You don't move. She's not your mother. How can you tell? Because you know your mother's face, voice, and smile. This is an imposter. In the last days, we must know Jesus so well that we won't be fooled by a counterfeit. We must trust Him enough to believe His Word. We must rely on His power, not our own.

CONSIDER

- Visiting <www.moneyfactory.com> (Web site of the U. S. Bureau of Engraving) to see how much effort is going into making money hard to counterfeit. Make a list of six ways Christ has made Himself hard to copy.
- Purchasing a magazine on the subject of flying. Study the pictures and read the articles carefully. Then ask yourself, "Do airplanes fly because of the actions of the pilot?" Discuss this topic as it relates to prophecy.
- Digging through your CD collection and picking out songs that herald this message: "Relying on God is smart. Relying on self is dumb." Making a compilation CD of just those cuts to play the next time you face a tough decision.
- Spending an afternoon wandering through a park or woodland, paying particular attention to the small plants trying to establish themselves in areas of shade. Ask yourself what elements are necessary for life to survive and blossom. Draw parallels to your spiritual life.
- Using a graphics program to create small Thank-you cards to send to anyone who does something important for you—like giving you a fresh perspective on God, helping you over a personal hurdle, or giving you the information you need to succeed at a project.
- Visiting a nursing home and spending time talking (or, more importantly, listening) to some elderly residents. Ask them about their past, their childhood, their career, and their accomplishments.

CONNECT

Adventist Review special edition, "Millennium," December 30, 1999.
Ernest Marter, *Plainman's Guide to Prophecy*.
"False Christs" topic at <www.Bibleinfo.com>.

The sanctuary Cleansed



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

Cleaning the Ever-Existing Building

INTRODUCTION

Dan. 8:13, 14

"How long will the vision be? . . ." And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed' " (Dan. 8:13, 14, NKJV).

My father is a painter and he paints houses. Many times the houses that he has to paint are in such shabby condition that there must be a long, long process before the actual painting can take place. This process may start with a bleach and pressure cleaning to help with bleaching down the wall and eliminating old paint, dirt, and sometimes even mildew. After cleaning, the puttying, caulking, and sanding of the surface is done, then the first coat of

**This is a long
and grueling process.**

primer is applied and allowed to dry. Sometimes the surface would have to be sanded again after the primer because the primer seals the wood and sometimes brings out the rough spots as a result. After the priming, a first then a second coat is added and sometimes a clear satin finish as a protective coat for the paint.

This is a long and grueling process, often requiring a great deal of time to do the job right. Such is the process of cleansing our human temples. No one knows how long it's going to take, but like my father's painting, the outcome is going to be beautiful to behold.

How long are we willing for our heavenly Father to clean us up so that the heavenly temple can be clean? Ellen White maintained in 1906 that "the sanctuary question stands in righteousness and truth just as we have held it for so many years,"¹ and that this truth "was revealed to us by the Holy Spirit."²

1. Letter 50, 1906; *Manuscript Release* number 760, p. 23.

2. *Ibid.*

After the Devastation Comes Reconstruction

EVIDENCE

Dan. 8:9-14

In Daniel 8:9-14 the great controversy between Christ and Satan is broadly outlined. The conflict, which started in heaven (Rev. 12:7), has moved to another forum (earth), but Satan's purpose in overthrowing God's government has not changed. Interestingly enough the conflict, which began over the issue of worship, is ending on the same note.

The little-horn power of Daniel 8 represents Satan's weapon of mass destruction for an all-out assault on the army of God. This little horn appears to have gained a victory. Daniel must have been very troubled by what he was seeing. Not only did the little horn trample the army of the faithful, but it also seems to have supplanted the sanctuary service with its own. Daniel, like King David, realized that God's way "is in the sanctuary" (Ps. 77:13, KJV). The apparent victory of the little horn, therefore, left Daniel almost lifeless and sent shock waves into the heavenly courts, for he became the topic of discussion among the holy ones (Dan. 8:13).

At the brink of losing hope, Daniel is told in Daniel 8:14, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated" (NIV). So after the devastation comes reconstruction.

The sanctuary service is central to God's plan of salvation to rescue fallen humanity.

Daniel must have felt that without the sanctuary service there was no hope. We too must realize that without Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary there is no hope. Daniel's hope was revitalized by God's promise to reconsecrate the sanctuary. We too can take comfort in the realization that our sympathetic High Priest, who understands our terrible dilemma, is offering Himself for us and when this antitypical day of atonement is ended, all things that have been placed in His hands will have been made right.

**The sanctuary service
is central to God's plan
of salvation.**

REACT

1. How can we apply the principles of the sanctuary service to our lives today? Be specific.
2. What should be our attitude when it appears that the powers of this world are getting away with too much?
3. Why is the study of Daniel so important to us today?

The Cleansing Solution

LOGOS

Dan. 8:9-14

The Cosmic Conflict Coming Home (Dan. 8:9-14)

The cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan, though begun in heaven, has been raging on earth with increasing intensity for six thousand years. This conflict is not just theoretical, spiritualized strategizing between highly intelligent spiritual beings, but it affects every aspect of human existence. Daniel 8:9-14 depicts a stage in which Satan with a deliberate, systematic strategy has engaged an earthly entity called the little horn to destroy Christ, His sanctuary, His people, and His truth.

The Little Horn Identified (Dan. 8:9-14; 7:8-28)

The little horn depicted in Daniel can be identified through a thorough study of Daniel 7 and 8. The little horn came out of one of the divisions of the Greek Empire. The direction in which the horn moves (toward the south and the east and toward the pleasant land, Palestine [Dan.8:9]) suggests the direction from which it came (north and west). The only major persecuting power coming from the north and west and out of a division of the Greek Empire

It became acceptable to buy and sell forgiveness, even for future sins.

was Rome. Rome crucified Christ, persecuted the people of God, and destroyed the earthly temple. "It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low" (Dan. 8:11, NIV).

The little horn of Daniel 8 is very similar to the fourth beast and little horn of Daniel 7. They are both noted as being great persecuting powers against God's people. "This horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them" (7:21, NIV). "It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them" (8:10, NIV). They both work against the truth and the law of God. "He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws." (7:25, NIV), and "truth was thrown to the ground" (8:12, NIV). They both come at the same place in the succession of world empires as depicted in Daniel 8 and 9 in conjunction with Daniel 2. This place is that occupied in history by the Roman Empire. The little horn in Daniel 8 depicts Rome in both its pagan and papal careers, whereas the nondescript beast of Daniel 7 depicts pagan Rome while the little horn on that beast depicts papal Rome.

Pagan Rome destroyed the earthly temple. Papal Rome sought to destroy the true knowledge of Christ's mediatorial work in the heavenly sanctuary. It substituted for it an earthly priesthood, earthly sacrifice, and man-made temples. In this work it indeed prospered (Dan. 8:12). As the sanctuary shows God's method of salvation, the little horn, in warring against the sanctuary, set up a counterfeit system of salvation. It persecuted those who accepted God's method of salvation and demanded that all accept its method. Without the knowledge of Christ, darkness descended upon society. It became acceptable to buy and sell forgiveness, even for future sins. Satan had indeed developed through the little horn the means to captivate, control, and degrade the souls of men. In short, the little-horn system is the ultimate in deception.

The Cleansing of the Sanctuary (Leviticus 16; 23:26-32)

The cleansing of the sanctuary is a momentous move on God's part to bring the career of the little horn to an end, to free His people from oppression, and to give them the kingdom. The cleansing of the sanctuary was a day in which all the sins of the congregation were removed from the camp through the atonement made by the high priest. The people were required by God to afflict their souls to make sure that all of their sins had been confessed, forgiven, and deposited in the sanctuary. This was also a day of judgment, as anyone who did not afflict his soul was cut off from God's people (Lev. 23:29). The purpose of the cleansing of the sanctuary is stated in Leviticus 16:30: "On this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins" (NIV). In cleansing the sanctuary, God removes all sin from His people. In doing this, He is able to judge the little horn and destroy it (2 Cor. 10:4-6).

Unto 2,300 Days (Dan. 8:14)

The cleansing of the sanctuary was to take place after 2,300 days. These days must be prophetic days (i.e., one day equals one year) because the angel told Daniel, "Understand that the vision concerns the time of the end" (Dan. 8:17, NIV). If Antiochus Epiphanes was the little horn of Daniel 8, and the cleansing of the sanctuary was the restoration of the temple ritual by the Macabees, then no part of the vision is in the time of the end. Only 2,300 years could bring any part of the vision to the time of the end (after 1798). So in the end of time, Jesus as our High Priest would begin the final phase of His work of atonement for humanity in the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus, in this phase, gives His people the spiritual enlightenment to see their sins in the light from the law of God. He also provides them with grace to conquer every inherited and cultivated sin. He brings their character to perfection and fills them with His love so that they can display to the world and to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. He blots out their sins so that no record of them remains.

TESTIMONY

Dan. 8:9-14

As Adventists, we look to the Bible as the source of truth and knowledge. Oftentimes, and especially in regards to prophecy, the Bible calls upon us to reason as a method of understanding its message. This, coupled with help from inspired sources such as the Spirit of Prophecy, sheds light on what are often confusing concepts.

“Thus those who followed in the advancing light of the prophetic word saw that instead of coming to the earth at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844, Christ then entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, into the presence of God, to perform the closing work of atonement, preparatory to his coming.”¹

“At the termination of the 2,300 days, in 1844, there had been no sanctuary on earth for many centuries. Thus the prophecy, ‘Unto two thousand and three hundred

For this there could be no better place than the temple of heaven itself.

days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed,’ unquestionably points to the sanctuary in heaven.”²

These comments on the significance of the 2,300 days clarify our belief that the cleansing of the temple is of that which is in

heaven and not an earthly establishment. This work of atonement that is carried out in the temple would be best carried out by Christ Himself, for who better to advocate for our sins than He who died to cleanse us? This work of grace and forgiveness would best be carried out in heaven itself, for what better place than the dwelling place of a pure, holy, and righteously just God could there be for a judgment? No earthly sanctuary, temple, or court of law could objectively and precisely carry out a court of eternal salvation.

The mysterious work of grace and judgment is a holy work, a gift and chance given by a loving and holy God. For a future of peace and love, it is essential that all sin and hints of it be cleansed from the temple—not an earthly building that will age and fall into disrepair, but a holy temple whose glory and beauty will endure forever. For this there could be no better place than the temple of heaven itself.

REACT

Why would a heavenly temple need cleansing?

1. *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 266.
2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 417.

So What?

HOW-TO

Dan. 8:9-14

While taking a homiletics class in the seminary, I had a professor who would always ask—after we would present a proposed sermon outline—“So what? What are the practical daily implications for the members hearing this?”

That question must now be on your minds as we come to the lesson today. What is the big deal? On a day-to-day basis, how does this stuff about 2,300 days become practical in my experience?

As I write, we just celebrated 30 years of independence in the Bahamas. By itself each year means nothing. But taken together, the 30 years mean freedom of rule, development, and a sense of identity. If we look at the 2,300 days by itself as just another set of days of some other prophetic calculations, then maybe there are not many practical implications for daily living.

When I worked as an engineer, one of my tedious tasks was crunching numbers in order to finalize designs. Sometimes you would spend days on just a seemingly insignificant portion of the design. By itself it seemed a meaningless task. Combined with the entire design, however, the significance of that small part appeared.

By itself our text for study this week, Daniel 8:9-14, may not seem practical.

Cleansing a sanctuary and 2,300 days? However, when you step back and look at the whole picture, you understand that Daniel 8:9-14 relates to the investigative judgment, which is now under-

way in the heavenly courts, in regards to the destiny of every human being.

Daniel is screaming at us that the end of all things is closer than we believe. God is executing judgment, and judgment implies responsibility and consequences as to how we live our lives daily. It leads us to ponder how we relate to and treat others daily, even the “unlovable.” Daniel 8:9-14 reminds us that in light of the judgment we should seek to be at peace with everyone (Matt. 5:23-26) as it is within our power (Rom. 12:16).

Not only do we find practical experience in light of how we live, but in what Jesus provides. This week’s text is a reminder that when we do make mistakes, or fall, or sin, that Jesus is willing to “cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, KJV) if we only come to Him and confess our sins.

Our key text gives good news not only about living right in light of the judgment, but also about One who is willing to help us in the judgment, so we can stand without blemish, victorious in His name before the throne of God.

**How does this stuff about
2,300 days become practical
in my experience?**

Are You Among the Unknowing?

OPINION

Dan. 8:9-14

Many Protestant denominations don't even know that there is a sanctuary in heaven and that its cleansing has begun. It is a great mystery to many others who the little horn is. The little horn and his followers have been confusing people about their identity. Some Christians believe that Daniel 8 was fulfilled in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, identifying him as the little horn.

"It is impossible to conceive of the little horn of Daniel 7 as Antiochus Epiphanes or any other Antiochus. Practically all Protestant commentators of the old school agree in referring it to the papacy, in which it is seen to meet complete fulfillment.

**"Antiochus is long since dead.
He ruled but a short time."**

How could it ever be true of any Antiochus that he 'made war with the saints, and prevailed against them: until the Ancient of days came, and the judgment

was given the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom'? (verses 21 and 22). Antiochus is long since dead. He ruled but a short time. Of what other power than the papacy is it true that it wore out the saints of the Most High, or attempted to change times and laws? Are not the saga city, the wisdom, and the far-reaching policies of the papacy, expressively suggested by the horn that had 'eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things'? (verse 8). We believe we stand on solid exegetical ground when we hold that the little horn of Daniel 8 is Rome, first pagan, later papal, and the little horn of Daniel 7, the papacy."^{*}

Many Christians have no knowledge of the judgment that is taking place by Christ in the sanctuary in heaven. They continue to follow in the ways of the antichrist. After Christ's death the veil in the temple covering the Most Holy Place was torn, symbolizing the end of having an earthly priest as mediator. Now Christ is our only Mediator.

The antichrist/papacy works according to Daniel's vision or as his name states, continuing to follow the old rituals of the Jewish people before Christ's death—the burning of candles and incense, the high altar, and the table of shewbread, etc. Because of human nature, we like the easy way out of any situation, so when we sin, instead of going to Christ, we go to the priest who, of course, has easier terms to meet than Christ. This is choosing not to accept the truth of God's Word. Are you among the unknowing?

^{*}M. L. Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1947).

The Sanctuary in the Spotlight

EXPLORATION

Daniel 8; Zech. 6:12, 13; Rev. 4:2-11

CONCLUDE

The 2,300-day prophecy ending in 1844 ushered in the Day of Atonement, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. In the days of Israel this was the most solemn day of the year.

How much more important the time is now! The sins of the millennia have been accumulating in the heavenly sanctuary. The investigative judgment involves an examination of the records of all who have professed to love God, and a final application of Christ's blood to erase eternally the record of their sins or not, depending on their application for Christ's covering. This results in the cleansing of the sanctuary for all time, returning to Satan and his cohort the final judgment for their responsibility for sin's problem.

CONSIDER

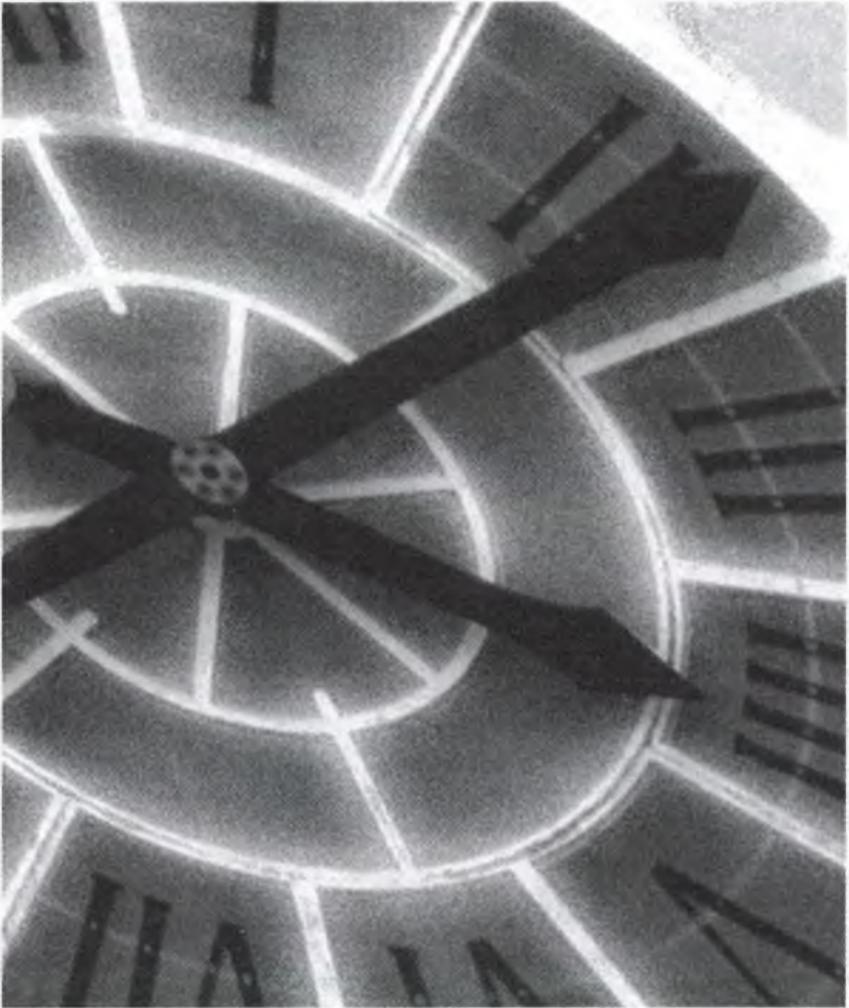
- Creating a model of the heavenly sanctuary based on Revelation 4:2-11. Use your model to tell a children's story in Sabbath School or church about the prayer of a child as he or she comes before the throne.
- Studying the physical nature of blood and its role in the body. Why is blood such an apt metaphor for what Christ has done and is doing to cleanse, purify, and save us as well as the sanctuary?
- Creating a video, slide show, or script for a play based on your life, highlighting major life choices for and against God, as might be shown to the universe as part of the investigative judgment. What accusations do you know the accuser of the brethren can make against you, and how does Christ answer him?
- Imagining what might be going on today in heaven, as part of the ongoing investigative judgment. Put yourself in the role of an observer from one of the other worlds, listening to the court proceedings.
- Looking up <http://www.audiblefaith.com/pages/sg000469> for the lyrics and a sample of music for Alfanzo Crosby's "We've Come to the Sanctuary." Write another verse to the song about Christ's role in the sanctuary to cleanse and restore it and your response to His work.

CONNECT

Christ in His Sanctuary, pp. 101-127.

M. L. Andreason, *The Sanctuary Service*, pp. 296-334; W. D. Frazee, *Ransom and Reunion*, pp. 94-113.

God's Timetable



“This whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years” (Jer. 25:11, NKJV).

The Importance of Daniel

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 9

Why is Daniel such an important book? Is it because it reveals the beginning of the end or is Daniel important because of his position?

The answer to these questions is both.

“Why?” you might ask, and here’s your answer. According to Ellen White, “As we near the close of this world’s history, the prophecies recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are living.”*

To others Daniel talks about things that are, but to Seventh-day Adventists he was much more. The entire book of Daniel reveals a little of what will happen at the beginning of the end.

Daniel 12:1-3 reveals what will happen at the very end of the world. It reads, “At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall

be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (Dan. 12:1-3, NKJV).

As you read this week’s lesson, looking specifically at the 70-week prophecy revealed to Daniel, I hope you keep these verses in mind.

**Why is Daniel such an
important book?**

**Prophets and Kings*, p. 547.

Sunday
December 5

Knowing the End From the Beginning

LOGOS

Daniel 9

Knowing the Man Who Saw the Visions—Daniel (Dan. 1:5-21; 9:23)

In the book of Daniel we learn of a man who found favor with God and who, through faith, was willing to obey the Lord's command, no matter what the consequences may be. Daniel was the man who found favor in the Almighty and carried himself in such an awesome manner that he also found favor with many of the officials and kings of Babylon and Media-Persia, as we have seen all throughout the book of Daniel. With Daniel being fully committed to following the Lord, he has been said to be beloved. This is seen in Daniel 9:23 when the angel Gabriel appears before him: "At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I

**Despite his position
he was humble.**

have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved" (NKJV). Thus, it is perfectly clear as to why Daniel was the only person who, with the help of God, could understand the meanings of the visions.

Gabriel's First Visit With Daniel (Dan. 8:15-27)

Daniel, being in favor with the Lord God "had understanding in all visions and dreams" (1:17, NKJV). All throughout the book of Daniel, we read of how he interpreted the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar, read the writings on the wall for Belshazzar, saw the visions of the four beasts and the Ancient of Days and the vision of the ram and the goat. When it came to the visions of the ram and the goat, however, Daniel needed help. The Lord sent Gabriel to Daniel with orders to "make this man understand the vision" (8:16, NKJV). Gabriel then proceeded to tell Daniel what the vision meant, since the vision would later assist in understanding what is to come in the future. However, Daniel became sick and fainted; he was "astounded by the vision" (verse 27, NKJV).

Daniel's Prayer for the People of Israel (Dan. 9:1-19)

Despite the fact that Daniel was very different from his fellow captives, he also states that he, with the people of Israel, had sinned against the Lord. For Daniel, a man who was favorable among chief officials and kings, realized that all that had befallen on Israel was a consequence of not serving the Lord as it was stated in the law of Moses. Daniel recognizes this. He then says, "As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer

before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth" (9:13, NKJV). Despite his position he was humble and prayed for forgiveness for his and all of Israel's sins. He also recognizes the uncanny might of the Lord and His awesome power: "We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies" (verse 18, NKJV). This act alone is enough to show us why Daniel was deemed beloved.

Gabriel Visits Daniel a Second Time (Dan. 9:20-27)

When Daniel was in prayer, he saw the angel Gabriel return to him a second time. Gabriel told him that since his prayer began, the command for Gabriel to tell Daniel what is to come had been sent. Gabriel continued to tell Daniel that there will be a 70-week period for Israel to finish their transgressions, that they are to put an end to their wicked ways and follow the Lord once again. The angel explains that once 69 of the 70 weeks has passed, the Messiah shall be cut off. He continues to state that in the middle of the final week, the Messiah will bring to an end the use of sacrifices and offerings. And finally, he states that in the latter half of the final week, "Abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate" (verse 27, NKJV). It is with this that Daniel understood the visions that he had seen.

What This Means for Us Today

This prophecy is truly uncanny. Hundreds of years in advance, Daniel made note of what was to come in the future. With unbelievable accuracy, the prophecy follows exactly as it was delivered by Gabriel to Daniel. From the time the command went out for Jerusalem to be rebuilt until the Messiah was baptized, we see history follow the prophecy like a blueprint. The Messiah, our Savior, Jesus Christ, came and died for us, thus eliminating the need to sacrifice for the atonement of our sins. And since then, the message of hope and salvation has spread from the Israelites to the rest of the world. The Messiah's cut-off was His death. Later, His servants were persecuted, thus, the message was spread to the Gentiles. Daniel made note of what was to come, and this 70-week prophecy is just a small part of a big picture; one that many of us need to get a view of so that we may enter the kingdom.

REACT

1. How does the 70-week prophecy apply to me today?
2. How do you think Daniel might have felt when he found out that his own people would reject and kill the Messiah?
3. Why does God give us a glimpse into the future if we are powerless to stop the evil things from happening? What then is the true purpose of prophecy?

Monday
December 6

“And Then the End [God] Will Come”

TESTIMONY

Dan. 9:24

Clearly the Scriptures reveal that God—who is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End—is not bound by time (Rev. 21:6). Yet from Genesis to Revelation, we can see through prophecy the significance of time in relation to the gospel.

The burden of Christ’s preaching was, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15, NKJV). Thus the gospel message, as given by the Savior Himself, was based on the prophecies. The time which He declared to be fulfilled was the period made known by the angel Gabriel to Daniel. “Seventy weeks,” said the angel, “are determined for

**Clearly the Scriptures reveal
that God is not bound by time.**

your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting

righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy” (Dan. 9:24, NKJV).

A day in prophecy stands for a year. (See Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6.) The 70 weeks, or 490 days, represent 490 years. A starting point for this period is given: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times” (Dan. 9:25, NKJV), 69 weeks, or 483 years. The commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, as completed by the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus (see Ezra 6:14; 7:1, 9, margin), went into effect in the autumn of 457 B.C. From this time 483 years extend to the autumn of A.D. 27. According to the prophecy, this period was to reach to the Messiah, the Anointed One. In A.D. 27 Jesus, at His baptism, received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and soon afterward began His ministry. Then the message was proclaimed. “The time is fulfilled” (Mark 1:15, NKJV).

There is yet another time or prophecy to be fulfilled: Christ’s second coming and the end of the age. The starting and ending point for this period is given in Matthew 24:8, 14, 15: “All these are the beginning of sorrows. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand)” (NKJV).

Days of Our Lives

EVIDENCE

Daniel 9

There is a saying that life is like a soap opera. Even though soap operas are fictional, the prophetic dreams of Daniel are definitely not. In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Daniel is a part of the *Khethubim*, or holy writings, which are full of poetry and proverbial wisdom. Within the book itself, Daniel consists of two important parts: historical and prophetic. The historical part (chapters 1–6) depicts the captivity of Daniel and his companions under Nebuchadnezzar’s rule (605–561 B.C.) over Israel with notable events like the fiery furnace and the lions’ den. The prophetic portion (chapters 7–12) involves the visions of Daniel that include a significant amount of symbolism.

To understand prophecy, you must understand how the day/year concept came to be. Genesis 1:31–2:3 describes how the earth was created in six days, ending it with the seventh day which was called the Sabbath (derived from the Hebrew *Shabbat* meaning “rested”)—the first literal week. When God conducted the mass Exodus, the day/year concept began. (Read Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:5, 6.)

This concept applies to the linked time-prophecies mentioned in Daniel 8 and 9. According to Daniel 8:14, it will take 2,300 days/years for the sanctuary to be cleansed totally. Of those 2,300 days, 490 days, or 70 weeks mentioned in Daniel 9:24-26 by Gabriel, was a time for Israel to get their act together or to be determined (derived from the Hebrew *chathak*, meaning “cut off”). The 70-week time period extended from the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. (Ezra 6:14) to the stoning of Stephen in A.D. 34 (Acts 6:9-15; 7:54-60).

Even after His death Christ continued to plead with the Father on Israel’s behalf.

As part of this prophecy, Jesus Christ, the Messiah or “Anointed,” preached for three and a half years until He was crucified (A.D. 27–31). Even after His death Christ continued to plead with the Father on Israel’s behalf for three and a half years, and their rejection was confirmed. Since Israel rejected and discredited Christ, the Israelites were to lose favor of God, and the understanding and spreading of the gospel would become available to the Gentiles. This was concluded at Stephen’s stoning in A.D. 34 that marked Israel’s cut-off.

It is important for us, as believers of Christ, to understand what God has in store for us. Even though prophecy contains a lot of imagery, it serves a higher purpose in the events involved in them. We were given an opportunity in the prophecy to spread the gospel by way of our spiritual gifts and comprehension of the Word of God.

Internal Temple of God

HOW-TO

2 Cor. 6:16

I believe that God can work through you only if you treat your body as His temple. The Bible clearly states that your body is the temple of God. One reason I believe God says this is because if our bodies are what God created from the dirt with His own breath, He wants us to show appreciation for the gift that He has given to us—life.

People do not treat their bodies as the temple of God when they eat unhealthy foods and get minimal exercise. God wants us to treat our bodies as His temple to show our obedience as a demonstration of our love for Him.

Treating your body as a temple is the only way God can work through you: "What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (2 Cor. 6:16, NKJV).

**God can work through you
only if you treat your
body as His temple.**

God would not like for you to disobey and eat something unclean for your own selfishness. It is better to try to obey God's Word at all times. " 'To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams' " (1 Sam. 15:22, NKJV). Although at times it may be difficult, it is better always to have faith and to think of your body as God's temple.

One Bible text that may give encouragement is Ephesians 2:8: "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (NKJV).

REACT

1. What, if any, is the relationship between prayer and revelation/understanding? Why is Daniel's prayer recorded between the visions of Daniel 8 and 9? Explain the significance.

2. How do you listen in prayer? Using some of the things you have learned about prayer from the study of Daniel 9, what are some tangible ways you can improve your prayer life over the next week?

3. "I believe that God can work through you only if you treat your body as His temple" is a direct quote from this article. Considering the many people in society who are considered "good people" yet are not mindful of their health, do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Preparatory Prayer

OPINION

Dan. 9:4-19; Ezek. 22:30; James 5:16

The ninth chapter of Daniel begins by recording Daniel's prayer, spurred by his understanding of the times from his study of Scripture (Dan. 9:2). There are many things we can learn from Daniel's prayer:

- Prayer is not designed to bring God down to our level, but to elevate us to God's level. Too often we go to God as we do to an ATM machine. Even when asking for good things, we often undercut the blessings God wants to bestow on us by demanding they be given in the way that makes sense to us. We would benefit far more from listening and making sure our lives are in tune with God's will.

- We are always deserving of God's judgment. Daniel includes himself among the Israelites as subject to His judgment. Intercession is too often hampered by either a judgmental or sympathetic attitude. "People describe intercession by saying, 'It is putting yourself in someone else's place.' That is not true! Intercession is putting yourself in God's place; it is having His mind and His perspective."^{*}

**What good is that head
knowledge if it is not
accompanied by a
heart response?**

- Prayer is preparatory. Daniel's prayer prepared him to receive the 70-week prophecy from Gabriel, just as the believers

coming together in prayer after Jesus' ascension prepared them for the Day of Pentecost.

As Adventists, we like to say we understand the times—and well we should, for we have the benefit of the revelations given to Daniel and other Bible authors. But what good is that head knowledge if it is not accompanied by the kind of heart response—the repentance and intercession—of Daniel?

Do we truly know what state we are in? To be sure, many will answer that we are "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17, NKJV), but how long will we remain in a Laodicean state? How long will we even pride ourselves in being the church of Laodicea? It is long past time we buy of the Lord His gold and garments and allow Him to anoint our eyes that we may see. Only then will we be prepared to receive the type of vision entrusted Daniel—a true understanding of the little time we have left on this earth.

^{*}Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, December 13.

EXPLORATION

Daniel 9

CONCLUDE

Daniel 8 records a vision that left Daniel confused (verse 27). But gradually, as Daniel read the Scriptures, he began to grasp the idea that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years (9:2). He fell before God in prayer and humbly begged for forgiveness on his own behalf and on behalf of Israel. Then the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel and told him he was "highly esteemed" (verse 23). Gabriel gave Daniel an explanation of the future, including a timeline. Referred to as the 70-week prophecy, this amazing timeline included not only the first coming of the Messiah but His second coming as well.

CONSIDER

- Using a video camera to record on-the-spot interviews with people answering the question: "If you could pick the date for Jesus to return to earth, what date would you choose? Why?"
- Making a list of characters in the Bible who seemed to be "highly esteemed" by God or Jesus. Identify qualities that might be especially valued by heaven.
- Creating your own chart of Daniel's vision (see Daniel 9 and *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 698, 699), including graphics or pictures.
- Analyzing why Daniel received an immediate response to his confusion in Daniel 9 (see verses 20-23) but had to wait for 21 days after his next vision (see Daniel 10:12-14). Think about prayers for which you're waiting for an answer. What might be some reasons you're still waiting?
- Exploring the Internet for Web sites that relate to the subject of the prophet Daniel. Analyze the relative scriptural merits of these Web sites.
- Getting together with some friends and choosing several people to role-play scholars at the time of Christ trying to convince the rest of the group (who play the Pharisees) that Jesus is the Messiah of prophecy. Use Daniel 9 as one of the arguments.
- Listening to the CD *Daniel Dreamaster* by Eradio Alonso (available at <www.adventistbookcenter.com>).

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, pp. 553-557, 698, 699.

John Eldridge, *Waking the Dead*, chap. 2; Jacques B. Doukham, *Secrets of Daniel; Commentary on Daniel and Revelation*.

When Kings go to War



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

Michael—Mystery and Mess

INTRODUCTION

Num. 12:6

“People are uncomfortable with mystery and mess.”¹ In times of relative calm we can hold God and ourselves at arm’s length. In times of strife and conflict the mess within and without and the aching hole of abandonment scream at us.

Enter Michael! God in comfortingly large, powerful, untamed brush strokes; Michael who speaks to His terrified prophets; Michael who wades into the conflict on behalf of His people; Michael who stands up at the end of time and brings this incomprehensible conflict to an end and reverses the apparent defeats into resurrection glory.

Why deal with faith in conflict and turmoil with strange symbols and fluid images of apocalyptic? Why not just repeat the promises of God’s presence and assurance of His love? In such times we need a longer look at the big picture; in fact, we need to be assured that there is a big picture in the apparent meaninglessness of suffering. This vision lifts us from the preoccupation with the mess to a time span stretching into the future, right through to resurrection. We see Michael at its begin-

**The picture of Michael
is like a watermark.**

ning and its end, the end of conflict. And in the middle, hints, allusions to a plan, and the presence of Michael through it all, showing “the power of the word to create faith, the force of imagination to resist the rationalism

of evil, the necessity of shaping a people who speak and listen personally in worship and witness.”²

Though the images of apocalyptic might not address this conflict, there are the echoes and images of the plan and hand of God in past turmoil and that insistent message that He is there, that there is a plan that stretches through to the end, that oppression and violence will come to an end at His command. We don’t have all the details, but we have the beginning and the end and points where mystery and history intersect along the way.

In the meantime the picture of Michael is like a watermark. Becoming skillful in detecting the watermark will shape our worship and witness as we live in the process of resolution of the dilemmas of mess and mystery.

1. E. H. Petersen, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 48.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

He's Still in Control

EVIDENCE

Dan. 11:35

When Antiochus Epiphanes of Greece took over Judea, two Greek cultures were initiated. One was the Hellenistic culture that consisted mainly of the middle and upper classes; the other was the Hasidim culture, consisting of those who remained faithful to the Jewish religion in spite of efforts made to abolish all Jewish practices.

Antiochus Epiphanes, a fervent advocate of the Hellenistic culture, wanted to destroy the Jewish practices and began to abolish many of their ceremonies and practices. In 170 B.C. a law was issued that required all citizens to present themselves and pay homage to him four times a year, and he chose the Sabbath as the day for these homages. To top all

Antiochus Epiphanes erected a pagan altar right in the temple of Jerusalem.

sacrilegious acts, in 167 B.C., he erected a pagan altar right in the temple of Jerusalem and sacrificed swine to the heathen god, Jupiter Olympius. He further polluted the whole building by sprinkling it with water in which flesh had been boiled.

This represents what has been called the "abomination of desolation" spoken of in Daniel 11:31 (NKJV).

The acts of Antiochus Epiphanes provoked a rebellion in the village of Modi'in, led by the old Hasmonean priest Matityahu. He was supported by his five sons, and one of them, Judah Maccabee, headed the army of villagers who merged to fight together toward this cause. It was a one-sided battle—the untrained peasants with their crude ammunition against the carefully trained Greek soldiers. Many fell in this battle, including Matityahu and Judah.

It was also a one-sided battle in the fact that it was a battle of faith. It was this Maccabean revolt that gained independence for the Jews. And it was probably this particular firm faith in God, rather than in their own strength and weaponry, that won the battle for them.

God had a plan then; God has a plan now. Armed with faith in the Omnipotent One and the truth that He is, one can conquer the kings of the world. That includes emerging victorious in the battle against the prince of darkness. Through the trials that may befall me, I have the reassurance that the God who revealed the future of kingdoms to Daniel also knows my future; when all around light grows dimmer and hope seems more distant, what a comfort to know that He still holds "the whole world in His hands."

LOGOS

Daniel 10; 11

God's Passion for People

Daniel 10 not only sets the stage for revealing his final vision described in chapter 11 but also divulges Daniel's feelings that bring the entire experience to life. Fortunately, Daniel's own personal weakened condition (verses 7-18) allows him the opportunity to showcase Jesus' character.

He describes himself as weak, fainting, and frightened, but he recounts the memory of a hand lifting him onto his knees. The messenger spoke some of the best words in the Bible to him: "O Daniel, greatly loved of God . . . stand up" (Dan. 10:11, NLT). Daniel also lost his speech, but the messenger took care of that as well with a simple touch. Taking the time not only to encourage Daniel not to fear, he backed up his words with explanation and history that would help Daniel understand the response and timing of heaven in his life.

This chapter authenticates the vision as a revelation from God, with an origin of heaven, meant for "a time yet to come" (verse 14, NLT). The information to follow in chapters 11 and 12 provides counsel from a loving God to warn His children of coming dangers as they will encounter the greatest deceptions ever allowed to come upon the world, but more importantly to reveal the fullness of His character.

The Accuracy of God's Revelations

Similar to a kaleidoscope, this last prophecy of Daniel's (in his late eighties by now) can overlay the previous visions of the image in chapter 2, the four beasts in chapter 7, and the ram and goat in chapter 8. Each in its own way gives additional insight into similar world events. It's fascinating to read history books and see the prophecies that have been fulfilled! Babylon was defeated by Media-Persia, which was in turn defeated by Greece. After the death of Alexander the Great, the Greek Empire was divided into four parts. In Daniel 11:5 a king from the south, who has not been previously introduced to Daniel, emerges.

This king of the south is identified in verse 8 as from Egypt. In this same verse Greece is identified as the king of the north. Most of the chapter will show the conflict between these two kingdoms as the Ptolemies and Seleucids battle over control of Israel in 300–200 B.C. The "king of the north" and "king of the south" are titles like the term "president." It applies to anyone occupying the geographical area designated north or south.

Daniel 1:2 indicates that God gave Israel into the hands of Babylon, not to destroy them but to get them back on track with Him because He loved them so much. Babylon was under the direction of Satan himself. He would use Babylon as

his instrument to persecute the people of God to the extent God would permit. Satan wanted this seat, Babylon in the north, as his way to show his power to put his throne where God was in the north (Isa. 14:12-16). Even though he would never achieve this in heaven, he was permitted to assume this position on earth. Anyone holding the geographical position of ancient Babylon would receive the title "king of the north." And each power who received ownership of this same geographical area would be Satan's instrument of persecution until Jesus' return.

We can follow the powers in the past that have controlled the ancient site of Babylon, seeing how they became Satan's tool for persecuting God's people. Daniel provides these five: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, pagan Rome, papal Rome. And we can anticipate the ones that are to come (Revelation suggests the sixth and seventh: Protestant U.S.A. and papal Rome). Daniel continues using only the titles, king of the north and south, and refrains from naming the powers that would literally occupy the areas until Jesus returns.

This prepares us to recognize, literally, how the last two kingdoms are still to be used in the hands of Satan. But

**It's fascinating to read
history books and see the
prophecies that have been
fulfilled!**

even symbolically, we might be able to glean some understanding that can enhance our study. Geographically, during Daniel's times when those in Babylon wanted to wage war against those in Egypt, they had to go over the Fertile Crescent and come down from the north. In between these two kingdoms was Jerusalem, the holy city of Israel. Interestingly, the term "Babylon" means confusion and is defined as churches that have wandered from following God's will,¹ and "Egypt" is defined as atheism.² Spiritually today it is the same. As believers of God, we are often caught in the warfare and targeted by both religious confusion and atheism.

It's one thing for us to know what is to come, to brace ourselves for the latter days and to trust in Jesus, but verses 33-35 call "the wise" (Deut. 4:1, 2, 6 describes those who are wise) to teach others in the turmoil! Many people read these verses and focus on the death by fire and sword, the jailing and robbing, and the unlimited persecution, but perhaps the spotlight might better shine in the knowledge that we are both saving lives and as verse 35 promises—the refining, cleansing and pureness that will develop in our lives "for the end is still to come at the appointed time" (Dan. 11:27, NASB).

1. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 381–383.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

The King Who Exalted Himself

TESTIMONY

Prov. 16:18; Ezek. 28:6-10; Luke 18:14

There was a king who was very rich and powerful. Pride was his greatest weakness. Often he boasted of himself as the only capable ruler and denounced the kings of the neighboring kingdoms as incapable, irresponsible, and totally unworthy of ruling their nations.

The neighboring kings one day got together and said, "Let us go and make war with the proud king and teach him a lesson for what he has spoken against us."

Lucifer thought he was strong enough to challenge the Son of God.

The proud king was left alone in the battle and was badly defeated. No one supported him because they did not like his proud nature. After the war he was taken captive and brutally punished. He exalted

himself; therefore he had to fall. We shall dwell today on this principle.

Tyre was 60 miles from Nazareth.¹ It also had a king who was very proud. He had amassed a great amount of wealth through trade and commerce. Because of his wealth he became proud. He proclaimed himself as god. The Lord spoke to Ezekiel and he prophesied against the king of Tyre saying, "Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god, behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you" (Ezek. 28:6, 7, NKJV). What Ezekiel said came to pass. In 585 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city and conquered it, though he took about 13 years to completely capture and destroy it.²

Lucifer, a prince, an archangel, the most trusted of God's holy angels, was created perfect in all respects. But pride came to him. "Pride in his own glory nourished the desire for supremacy."³ Lucifer thought he was strong enough to challenge the Son of God. Thus he waged a war against Michael the King. Instead he suffered the greatest defeat ever when Jesus died on the cross at Calvary. Chances were given for him to repent, but he exalted himself and was not willing to stoop down. Hence, he was badly defeated. "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14, NKJV). This applies to anyone who exalts himself.

1. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 330.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 495.

Navigating Blind

HOW-TO

John 1:10; 1 Cor. 13:11, 12

Once I bought a cheap ticket for an ice skating show. Then I discovered I had a seat where I couldn't see or hear anything. On the great stage of the universe, humankind watches from a bad seat. We hear something unusual on the news and wonder: What's really going on? Is this event part of Bible prophecy? In this week's lesson, God lifted the veil for Daniel so he could glimpse the unseen battle between Christ and Satan. In our human state, however, we are often blind to prophetic reality.

Driving through dense fog is unnerving. Cut off from familiar landmarks, we become disoriented and drive off the road altogether. My friend Doug was driving home from Union College when he was surrounded by fog so dense he couldn't see the edge of the road. As he moved slowly down the road, a car materialized behind him and passed with amazing confidence. In an instant, Doug decided to follow the taillights of the local car ahead. Mile after mile he followed the turns of the unknown road to safety.

In your spiritual life, how do you navigate when you can't see where you're going?

Sometimes we miss a road even when it isn't foggy. In your spiritual life, how do you navigate when you can't see where you're going?

1. Rely on God's instruction manual, the Bible. Pay attention to everything, not just the coded prophecies. Notice the parts that teach about faith. In Daniel 10 and 11, the prophet struggles with fear and grief and openly expresses these emotions to God. We see God's compassionate response. This prophecy is more than a puzzle to solve—it is a tale of inspiration.

2. Follow someone you trust. Often we place our confidence in a church member, a teacher, or a friend. These people can help, of course, but our real confidence is reserved for Christ.

3. Don't let preconceived ideas block your understanding of prophecy. The Bible is full of people who thought they knew how God was going to do something. When He used some other method, they missed the event altogether. Christ's birth and ministry are two examples. "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him" (John 1:10, NIV).

OPINION

Daniel 10; 11; Matt. 24:15

In the book of Daniel, we see one of God's men accomplish what we would think impossible. Daniel sees "things." In Daniel 10, he has a vision, which is similar to King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2. Then in Daniel 11 we are given details as to what he saw. Amazingly, we can see in our history books all these things come to pass.

We know that these visions were symbolic meanings for four kingdoms. The first major kingdom was Babylon. That was King Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Then the next kingdom that ruled was Media-Persia. They were no match to King Nebuchadnezzar's reign. As a matter of fact, the Bible is clear on pointing out that the following kingdoms won't match the grandeur of Babylon. Then the third

Jesus was a historian as well.

kingdom was Greece led by Alexander the Great. Greece was partitioned into four smaller territories led by four generals.

Then the fourth kingdom was Rome. It separated into ten tribes. This alone is enough proof that God is real. Everything that has been prophesied has been fulfilled. Jesus' conception, birth, and childhood were spoken of in Isaiah and then it happened. His "reign" on earth for the three years—fulfilled! His resurrection—fulfilled!

Here's something else to chew on. Jesus was a historian as well. In Matthew 24:15 He points back to Daniel. He tells His disciples that they had to realize all they saw was going to be destroyed. He then points to Daniel talking of the "abomination of desolation" (Dan. 11:31; 12:11, NKJV). According to *God Cares*, "the abomination that makes desolate" "is seen to be that vast system of belief and practice which for a thousand years or more led people away from the priestly ministry of Jesus." Jesus told His disciples that it hadn't happened yet, and He warned them to watch for it. That warning is also for us. We too need to watch out for it for it still hasn't come yet.

I think it is absolutely awesome how perfect God is. We can't find fault with the impeccable history the Bible talks of. Everything came to pass. Everything that has yet to come we can rest assured will happen. We have a perfect history to depend on. He loves us so much! This is just another way to show us His wondrous love.

REACT

How would you respond if a well-known person in your church came to you in confidence and told you he had had a "vision"?

**Education*, p. 173.

Knowing for Sure Beforehand

EXPLORATION

Daniel 10; 11

CONCLUDE

No matter how future events play out, we have the assurance that God is in control of them. He is at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of all that our world deals with. He knows the present, the past, and the future. Only His explanation of events already past (though future to the prophets) and events to come is reliable. For those who put their faith in Him, He is the Conqueror of all foes who would threaten. The humble who trust God are the ones who are exalted and ultimately overcome.

CONSIDER

- Obtaining a map of the geographical region (in Daniel's time) that included Babylon, Jerusalem, and Egypt. On the map draw large arrows indicating the contention between Babylon and Egypt crossing over Jerusalem. Label Babylon, the king of the north, and Egypt, the king of the south. Show deliverance coming to Jerusalem from the east.
- Contrasting the experience of the King of Tyre (Ezek. 28:6-10) and Nebuchadnezzar's experience (Daniel 4). Why were their outcomes different?
- Singing or reading the words of F. E. Belden's hymn, "We Know Not the Hour" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 604). Note the certainty of the refrain.
- Researching the identity of Michael (e.g., Dan. 10:13) in the Bible. Who is He? Where does He appear in Scripture? In what context?
- Creating a sculpture that depicts prophecy as you interpret it.
- Reflecting on the practical role of biblical prophecy in your daily life. In the face of world unrest, how is your life different from those who do not reference Bible prophecy?
- Assuming the physical position of Daniel in prayer (Dan. 8:17; 10:9). For a number of days, use this position when you pray. Does this position affect your prayer life? In what way?

CONNECT

Prophets and Kings, chap. 43.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, Daniel; Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding Daniel's Prophecies*; William H. Shea, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Daniel 1-7*; Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, chap. 5.

The Time of the End



“ ‘Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever’ ” (Dan. 12:3, NKJV).

Life as We Know It

INTRODUCTION

Dan. 12:1

Back in 1987, the British popular band REM had a hit with a song called “It’s the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine).” Do you ever feel that everyone’s asleep to the fact that the world seems to be crumbling around us? Or maybe everyone sees it, but maybe the world is in a state of collective denial?

Back in 2001, when the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York fell, there was a resurgence of the premillennium discussion about the end of the world. A new term was coined—Cosmocide—world suicide, the destruction of all life on earth. We were told that life, as we know it, would never be the same again. Nostradamus’s books were pulled off the shelves, dusted and read with great interest—according to some, he had predicted the tragedy. End-time events and prophecies were studied in more detail—people wanted to know what was going to happen.

Even last year, when the Allied forces rolled into Baghdad, many Iraqis were afraid that their long-term quality of life would be impaired—there were uncertainties. On April 11, 2003, BBC reporter Rageh Omaar, wrote, “Iraq’s post-Saddam era has begun, but it looks like a world turned upside down. State institutions are set ablaze, there is wholesale looting. This is a picture of a city descending into chaos. It has left ordinary Iraqis angry and disillusioned.”*

**“It’s the End of the World as
We Know It (And I Feel Fine).”**

Today things seem to be changing at breakneck speed. The future has never been so uncertain. Yet, as Christians, we have an amazing privilege to have a peek into the future through the prophecies in the Bible. We don’t need to be hounded by all the same fears that the rest of society has. The book of Daniel contains many glimpses through the curtain of time to show us what life will be like at the end. This week’s lesson looks at Daniel 12, a chapter of dates and times that has informed Adventist thinking for the past 150 years. Though some of the Bible was written to an antiquated culture many thousands of years ago, this chapter was specifically written for us here today in 2004.

Daniel’s message reminds us that God does not want us to be fearful of what will happen tomorrow or the next day, but wants to fill us with hope and confidence. We should be secure in the knowledge that God is in control of the future and has revealed enough of it to us that we know that there is no need to be afraid.

<*http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2940307.stm>

LOGOS

Dan. 11:40–12:13

The Sovereign of the universe has a timetable. This world, contaminated by sin and its concomitant evils, is not left to drift on purposelessly and indefinitely.

The message of chapter 12 is a continuation of the prophecy that was introduced in chapter 10 and continued in chapter 11. In fact, chapter 12 really begins with the announcement of the events that are to take place at "the time of the end" (Dan. 11:40, NKJV).

The term "time of the end" should be distinguished from the term "end of time." The former refers to a divinely appointed epoch. The latter refers to the end of human probation and the second coming of Christ. The activities of the king of the north (little-horn power/papal Rome), outlined in verses 40-45, concluded with the beginning of the time of the end. This phrase occurs in Daniel 8:17; 11:40; 12:4, 9.

Those whose names are written in the book of life are assured of deliverance.

In 11:35 it is used in connection with the 1,260 years (7:25) and marks the end of that period. In 1798, the little-horn power, which began its reign in A.D. 538, received a deadly wound (Rev. 13:3) when the pope was taken

prisoner by the French. Thus, the end of the 1260 years, 1798, is believed by Seventh-day Adventist expositors to mark the beginning of the time of the end. This epoch, therefore, begins in 1798 and terminates at the end of time.

Daniel 12:1 begins with "at that time" (NKJV), which most probably refers to the time of the end (11:40). At that time Michael (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7), Christ, shall stand up for His downtrodden kingdom of grace (the church) and His people. The 1,260 years of dark medieval ignorance, superstition, and paganized Christianity would come to an end. In love and mercy Christ stands up and prepares the way for the kingdom of glory (Dan. 2:44).

The kingly rule of Michael, however, will be opposed. Michael stands up for His people, who stand up for the gospel of Jesus Christ and the principles of God's kingdom, but the fury of the prince of this world will be unleashed in a last desperate attempt to regain dominion. This fury reaches its peak at the end of time "and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time" (12:1, NKJV). Despite the horrors of that time, those whose names are written in the book of life are assured of deliverance and victory.

God's people have nothing to fear. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25). His people, especially those who die under the third angel's message, will go to their graves with the assurance that they shall awake to everlasting life. A

special or partial resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked is mentioned as being distinct from the general resurrections of Revelation 20:4-9.¹

The righteous, who demonstrated by their lives that the principles of God's kingdom provide optimum peace and happiness for humankind, will not only lead others to righteousness, but their godly lives will shine forever in the kingdom of glory.

The standing up of Michael, the Son of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2), causes His people to shine like the brightness of the firmament, dispelling darkness as they go here and there in search of increasing knowledge. The end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth gave rise to an environment conducive to renewed interest in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. It accommodates the great Advent awakening, the rising of the remnant church, the industrial revolution, and the age of reason. The features that distinguish the twentieth century and the time of the end from all others is the rapid increase in knowledge and the speed with which people travel the globe and space.

Though the end of time is characterized by increasing knowledge, Daniel is told that the wicked will continue to be wicked and that they will not understand the things of God. The wicked do not understand the dynamics of true peace and happiness. The righteous, however, understand the principles of the kingdom of God and live their lives in harmony with them. The result is that they are sanctified by the truth and are ready to enter the kingdom of glory.

Daniel was told in chapter 12:9 that in the time of the end the prophecies will be made clear. Daniel was also given three time periods in answer to his question posed in verse 6: a time, times, and half a time—or 1,260 days (verse 7); 1,290 days (verse 11); and 1,335 days (verse 12). As mentioned above, the 1,260-day time period began in A.D. 538 and ended in 1798.

The 1,290 days is mentioned in connection with the 1,260 days and most probably refer to the same event that occurred at the end of that period. In which case the 1,290 days would begin in A.D. 508.² This date marks the conversion of Clovis, king of the Franks, to the papal church and the supremacy of the papacy.

If the 1,335 days of verse 12 begins at the same time as the 1,290, it brings us to 1843. This date also corresponds to the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14. At this time, the abomination that obscured the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary would be removed and the truth of God's love and character would be a source of comfort and blessing for His people.

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 637.

2. William Shea, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier, Daniel 7-12*, pp. 207-223.

Be Watchful, Be Ready

TESTIMONY

Dan. 11:41; Luke 21:35

No one can dispute the fact that more technological advancements have taken place in the last century than in the preceding 5,000 years. The phenomenal increase in knowledge is just one of the signs spoken of in the Bible. Five thousand years ago, horseback was the fastest mode of travel. Forty-nine hundred years later, nothing changed. However, within the last century, humankind has travelled at twice the speed of sound.

In spite of technological advancements, poverty is on the increase; viral and bacterial diseases are posing new challenges for medicine; crime and economic instability all serve to show a world tending to chaos.

The question for the believing Christian must then be: **Where do I fit into the scheme of things as time seems to be drawing to its inevitable close?**

The prophet Daniel gained invaluable insight into events that would take place on earth. Daniel 11:40 tells about the entrance of the king from the north, entering countries, bringing them under dominion. Ellen White reminds us that the word "country" is used because of the people associated therewith. Daniel

In spite of technological advancements, poverty is on the increase.

11:41 lends further credence to the narrative by outlining the warring actions of the king of the north. Concerning this Ellen White stated, "This landslide away from the truth, this wholesale desertion of folk from the

church is prophesied in Daniel 11:41, to take place when the king of the north enters this glorious land—the territory of the church."¹

The "time of the end" (Dan. 11:40, NKJV) denotes a period when the remnant of God's people will come into conflict with the apostate church, who, at that time will seek to enforce the national Sunday law.

"In consideration of the shortness of time we as a people should watch and pray, and in no case allow ourselves to be diverted from the solemn work of preparation for the great event before us. Because the time is apparently extended, many have become careless and indifferent in regard to their wards and actions. They do not realize their danger and do not see and understand the mercy of our God in lengthening probation, that they may have time to form characters for the future, immortal life."³

1. *An Exhaustive Ellen G. White Commentary on Daniel*, vol. 1, p. 372.

2. *Testimony Treasures*, pp. 503, 504.

Only a Matter of Time

EVIDENCE

Dan. 12:4; 2 John 2:18

There is no one event that begins the period defined as the end of time nor is there one that, once it occurs, we know to be the absolute end of time and the next moment Jesus will come. Consequently, Matthew 24:36 should be enough to avoid confusion and unnecessary speculations about the anatomy of the end of time.

There are unmistakable signs that will tell us that we are in the end of time: the rapid speed of travel and the exponential increase in knowledge and its Internet accessibility (Dan. 12:4);

increase in national and civil wars, famines, and diseases, despite great technological and medical advances; and earthquakes in many places

(Matt. 24:7). Up to the year 1900, only 4,000 earthquakes were recorded. Since then and up to 1995, over 126,400 other earthquakes have been recorded. Even adjusting for a better detection rate, this represents a phenomenal increase.

**Even adjusting for a better
detection rate, this represents
a phenomenal increase.**

There is, therefore, no need to seek out phenomena we do not understand to prove that we are living in the end of time. Such actions could lead to disappointments, and we could lose our spiritual credibility.

Hale-Bopp, the brightest comet to enter our solar system for over 400 years, was a 25-mile-wide cosmic snowball of ice and dust. The two astronomers who first spotted it, in 1995, tracked its path and calculated that it last passed by here around the time of the ancient Egyptians, almost 2,600 years before Jesus was born.

No one knew about Hale-Bopp prior to its detection in 1995. But its announcement fascinated 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cyber cult so much that they killed themselves in preparation for a cosmic trip in the tail of the comet, in what they thought was going to be a better life.

One could argue that the end of time period is further identified, closer to Christ's coming: "Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18, NKJV). The plethora of antichrists that is present today has never been surpassed. Is this indicative that we are in the last hour of the end of time?

The end of time will lead to a better life. But other than doing the will of God and sharing it with others, we do not have to take any drastic measures. Jesus will come, and it is only a matter of time.

Take Your Place Among the Stars

HOW TO

Dan. 1:3; Luke 18:8

The final chapter of the book of Daniel is centered on an era referred to as “the time of the end” (Dan. 12:4, 9, NKJV). This same period also appears to be the focus of almost the entire book of Revelation and, therefore, must be important. Indeed Jesus devoted some time to talk about the time of the end, and the books of Matthew (24:1-51), Luke (21:5-36), and Mark (13:1-37) attest to this. The time of the end is characterized by turmoil and distress. “There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then” (Dan. 12:1, NIV). This time, which is now at hand, is characterized by intense spiritual dark-

This time is characterized by intense spiritual darkness.

ness, and the followers of Christ are called upon to take their place among the stars, for they are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). In fact, in this time of the end, Christ-

ians are challenged to witness, “and those who lead many to righteousness, [shall shine] like the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3, NIV).

However, perhaps the greatest challenge facing the Christian, especially the intellectual, in this time of the end is maintaining the primitive-saving faith of our fathers in the Word of God. We are living at a time when many, claiming enlightenment, are subtly creating doubts in the minds of their hearers about the trustworthiness of the Bible. It is no wonder that Christ asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8, NIV).

Therefore, how does one witness, let alone remain faithful, in an era in which infidelity and unbelief have run riot? The following suggestions will be useful:

1. Be focused. We must fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). We are doomed to fail if we remove our gaze from Him; on the other hand, by beholding we shall become His righteousness.

2. Be prepared. The apostle Peter urges believers: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV).

3. Be watchful. The Spirit clearly says that in the time of the end some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons (1 Tim. 4:1). Today, more than any other time in history, the Bible must shine brightly as a lamp unto our feet and as a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105). Our challenge is to claim our place among the stars by internalizing the Word of God and witnessing through our faith.

Soon Out of Trouble

OPINION

Dan. 12:1, 2

The last days will be “a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then” (verse 1, NIV). Ever since I was little and I read these verses, I could not help experiencing a kind of fear of the end times. This verse “seems to refer to trouble for the people of God. The church will be fearfully persecuted far more severely than Israel was under Pharaoh in Egypt, or even the Jewish nation under Antiochus.”*

Jesus also talked about the signs of the end time in Mark 13:19, 20. What we need to remember when we read of this terrible picture of the end time, however, is that this time of suffering is to separate the genuine people of God from those who are not faithful to Him. Daniel 12:10 says that “many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked” (NIV).

What a comfort it is to know that, according to Daniel, none of those who choose to follow Jesus will be lost. In fact their names are written in the book of life. Also in this book are the names of all those who have lost their lives through persecution. What a wonderful God we have, a God who cares so much for justice and love that He will not leave out the multitude, His faithful people, who have given their lives so that God’s cause could triumph.

A special resurrection precedes Christ’s second coming. Verse 2 says that “multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (NIV).

This time of trouble is challenging us to make a stand for God now; no matter what situation we may find ourselves in. God will not allow us to go through more trials than we can manage. The historical review found in Daniel tells us to give more respect to God and to try to return to the principles taught by our forefathers. A final chapter of history is just about to happen, and there is not much time for us left.

Let us therefore choose to live a life with God in hope of His soon return, to end this sinful life.

**What a comfort it is to know
that none of those who
choose to follow Jesus
will be lost.**

*Wallace S. Ronald, *The Message of Daniel* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press), p. 192.

CONCLUDE

The time prophecies of Daniel 12 are intended to fill God's people with hope and confidence. When Michael stands up, marking the last struggle with the powers of evil, God's people are more secure than ever. Biblical descriptions of the end of time fit our present age to an amazing degree, demonstrating God's foreknowledge and control. As we look forward to Christ's coming, we must remain focused on Jesus, the One who has promised to sustain us no matter what.

CONSIDER

- Walking out to the end of a dock or pier to meditate on endings, endpoints, end time.
- Preparing a PowerPoint presentation that charts the time prophecies of the end of time and Second Coming.
- Memorizing three promises that provide end-time encouragement.
- Creating a poster or mural contrasting what a believer and nonbeliever might see in the same set of events.
- Writing a new verse to "We Have This Hope" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 214) or another Second Advent hymn.
- Starting a conversation about the end of the world in a secular chat room. Find out what others think or fear about it and why.
- Creating an instrumental composition that describes some or all of the events described in Daniel 12.

CONNECT

The Great Controversy, chaps. 38–40.

Shawn Boonstra and Henry Feyerabend, *The Return*; Karl Haffner, *The Cure for the Last Daze*; Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-time*; Angel Rodriguez, *Future Glory*.

Next Quarter's Lessons

The Meaning of It All

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for first quarter 2005, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: The Provocation and Provision

Logos: Genesis 1–3

The Week at a Glance: Why, in order to love God, must we be free? Why must freedom entail the possibility to do wrong? How did God respond to the fall of Adam and Eve?

Lesson 2: His Glorious Purpose Foreshadowed in Types

Logos: Gen. 4:1-8; 22:1-19; Num. 21:4-9

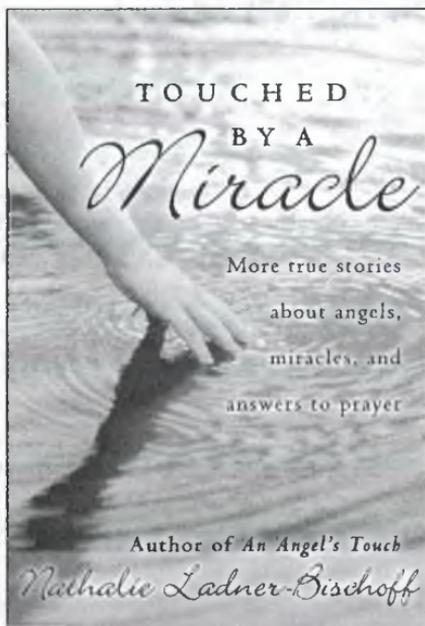
The Week at a Glance: What words does the Bible use to define sin? How was the Cross revealed in the story of Cain and Abel, in Abraham at Moriah, and in the fiery serpents in the wilderness? What do these accounts teach us about the gospel?

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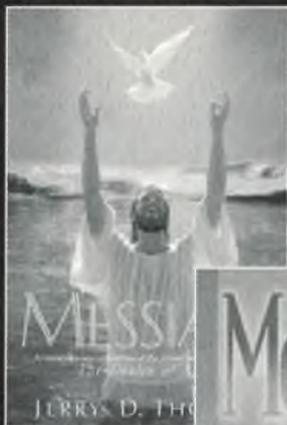
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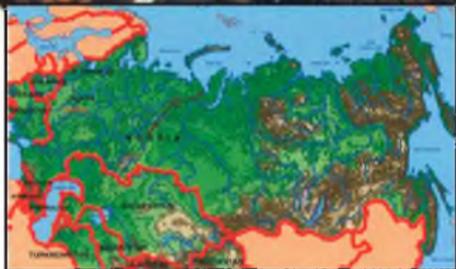
A BOOK FOR TODAY ABOUT A MAN FOR ALL TIME.

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Ira Krivoshey, Sumy,
Ukraine



Euro-Asia Division

Ira grew up in her grandmother's home, a virtual stranger to her parents. She met a boy and fell in love. He drank a lot and she started drinking too. They moved in together, but before they could marry, he died in a fall. Ira was devastated. The only person she had ever loved was gone. Her life spiraled downward until she found herself a prisoner of two men who stole her money and planned to sell her into slavery.

After a harrowing escape, Ira returned to Ukraine. But she continued to drink heavily. She did not want to live, but she was afraid to die. Could no one help her? Desperate, she cried out to God to save her.

Read how God drew Ira out of her life of desperation and introduced her to Jesus. Her story appears in this quarter's *Mission*.

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build a church in Ira's hometown.



ECQ041001