

9. The Sanctuary Attacked

Texts: Daniel 8.

Quotes:

- If we really think about it, God exists for any single individual who puts his trust in Him, not for the whole of humanity, with its laws, its organizations, and its violence. Humanity is the demon which God does not succeed in destroying. *Salvatore Satta*
- God has been so lavish in his gifts that you can lose some priceless ones, the equivalent of whole kingdoms, and still be indecently rich. *Wilfrid Heed*

Introductory questions

What is the essential message of the Sanctuary? What are the dangers in making the sin-sacrifice system too objective? What of the concept of ceremonial defilement? How is this relevant today? How is “truth cast down to the ground”? In examining all this material, how can focus be kept on the real issues? What does this all say about God?

Discussion ideas

“This chapter is a different view of the great controversy, one involving a massive religious system that has set itself up in opposition to the work and ministry of Christ and against His people,” states the lesson (Sabbath). How is this clear from the passage? What has this to do with the defilement of the Sanctuary? There is much interpretation going on...

The lesson dwells on the issue of defilement. To the modern mind such concepts are somewhat alien, and do not translate well into our experience. Are there other spiritual ideas that provide better parallels to what is happening here? For the most significant aspect is not to gain an understanding of ancient rituals, but to see how all this impacts on the divine-human relationship. Is God seen to be a pedantic examiner, checking out whether all the prescribed processes have been carried out, or is he trying to show through such symbols—picture language—what sin does and how only he can fix the damage done?

While we have much interest in Daniel 8:14, it’s important not to lose sight of the wider context. The whole chapter is very much dealing with the conflict in the Great Controversy. The vision is identified as for the “distant future,” and relates to the conclusion of the conflict. Verses 23-25 reveal much of the end result of this rebellion against God and his government. The rebel is identified as: completely wicked, stern-faced, a master of intrigue, very strong, causes astounding devastation, destroys mighty men and holy people, causes deceit to prosper etc. This is a very accurate description of Satan the rebel and those who follow his way.

Whatever, the whole revelation made Daniel quite sick! Evidently he understood that while there would be eventual vindication for God and his people, hard times were ahead. Even though the “Son of man” has explained the vision, Daniel does not understand it all. For this reason, Daniel 9 must be seen as a continuation of the vision in Daniel 8, given for Daniel’s “insight and understanding” (9:23).

The most important aspects are: a) what sin does; b) how God fixes it; c) how this reflects on the nature and character of God; d) how this reveals the issues in the controversy; and e) how God eventually restores harmony to the universe.

Ellen White Comments

Honored by men with the responsibilities of state and with the secrets of kingdoms bearing universal sway, Daniel was honored by God as His ambassador, and was given many revelations of the mysteries of ages to come. His wonderful prophecies, as recorded by him in chapters 7 to 12 of the book bearing his name, were not fully understood even by the prophet himself; but before his life labors closed, he was given the blessed assurance that "at the end of the days"--in the closing period of this world's history--he would again be permitted to stand in his lot and place. It was not given him to understand all that God had revealed of the divine purpose....

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. With them should be linked the teachings of the last book of the New Testament Scriptures. Satan has led many to believe that the prophetic portions of the writings of Daniel and of John the revelator cannot be understood. But the promise is plain that special blessing will accompany the study of these prophecies. "The wise shall understand" (verse 10)...

From the rise and fall of nations as made plain in the books of Daniel and the Revelation, we need to learn how worthless is mere outward and worldly glory. Babylon, with all its power and magnificence, the like of which our world has never since beheld,--power and magnificence which to the people of that day seemed so stable and enduring,--how completely has it passed away! As "the flower of the grass," it has perished. James 1:10. So perished the Medo-Persian kingdom, and the kingdoms of Grecia and Rome. **And so perishes all that has not God for its foundation. Only that which is bound up with His purpose, and expresses His character, can endure. His principles are the only steadfast things our world knows.**

A careful study of the working out of God's purpose in the history of nations and in the revelation of things to come, will help us to estimate at their true value things seen and things unseen, and to learn what is the true aim of life. Thus, viewing the things of time in the light of eternity, we may, like Daniel and his fellows, live for that which is true and noble and enduring. {PK 547-8.} My emphasis.

Extra material

"If we look at all these prophecies, and work out Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the ten horns, the little horn, the three that were plucked up; and then the 70 weeks, and the 2,300 days, and the 1,260 days, and we get it all worked out in detail, supposing we get it all right. Every symbol is correctly identified, every date is now confirmed, and you could paint a chart of it all, have it all right down, and have a voice from heaven, 'Now your charts are correct.' Would that produce a revival among us?..."

"I think prophecies have these dual purposes, suggesting it does pay to work them out, indeed. There is warning. Unless, of course, we misinterpret them and are looking for the wrong thing. So it pays to study carefully. But an additional reason is given in John 13:19: "I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am He." And of course belief is trust. In other words, when you see this happening, it will strengthen your faith and your trust. Now that makes one look about to see what it was that He told them. "I tell you this now before it takes place." And you look up above..."

"Notice the purpose of the prophecies is to produce trust. That should be no surprise. That's what it is all about. That would suggest that since trust is based on what we know to be true about God, it's what the prophecies say about God, primarily..." Graham Maxwell, Daniel tape.

10. The Sanctuary Cleansed

Texts: Daniel 8: 9-14.

Quotes:

- If a man, holding a belief which he was taught in childhood or persuaded of afterwards, keeps down and pushes away any doubts which arise about it in his mind, purposely avoids the reading of books and the company of men that call in question or discuss it, and regards as impious those questions which cannot easily be asked without disturbing it—the life of that man is one long sin against mankind. *William Clifford*
- A man is accepted into church for what he believes—and turned out for what he knows. *Mark Twain*

Introductory questions

Is this still an important subject? Where is the best place to begin? How can we avoid getting stuck in the theological complexities and still see God working on our behalf? What does the onlooking universe understand from these prophecies and events? What wrong pictures of God are possible? How do we reason all this through?

Discussion ideas

While debate continues over Daniel 8:14, what is the essence of the cleansing of the sanctuary and its part in the revelation of God to the universe? The challenge is to make sure this is still relevant and insightful, rather than to nail down every aspect. As the lesson concludes (13, Summary), “Though some parts of the book of Daniel remain a mystery, we have been given enough to trust in the Lord.” The recognition that we do not know it all is a significant admission, and a good balance for dogmatism.

Nor is this any reason to abandon beliefs. The true issue is to understand their meaning, rather than battle over minor points of interpretation. For in all this picture language, God is seeking to show that he can deal with the issues of the Great Controversy, that he still works for the good of all, and that he will save and heal all those who trust in him.

The heart of the message here is over true and false beliefs, true and false worship, true and false concepts of God. The “little horn” seeks to set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host—in other words, paralleling the descriptions of Satan in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. The essence of the Great Controversy is this—the self-seeking pride that desires personal power and prestige at any cost to others. This is in complete contrast to the way of God who though immensely powerful works to win not by force or compulsion, and whose might is not used in self-seeking—rather seeking the good for all others.

As Ellen White makes clear, the message here is part of the atonement—the way in which God restores harmony to the universe through demonstrating the truth, the answers to the Great Controversy, the responses to the lies the Devil has made against God.

The historical perspective cannot be ignored, either. This has been very much part of our reason for existence, and rightly has a high place in our minds. But it is more than “movable thrones” or “explanations for the disappointment” or “an image for our self-understanding.” As part of who we are, we need to better explain what these concepts mean, how they are relevant in today’s society, and how they demonstrate the truth of God. Otherwise they become redundant theological arguments in an increasingly self-absorbed movement. We need to move!

Ellen White Comments

All who have received the light upon these subjects are to bear testimony of the great truths which God has committed to them. The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time, and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects, and be able to give an answer to every one that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them.

The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great advent movement...

As a people, we should be earnest students of prophecy; we should not rest until we become intelligent in regard to the subject of the sanctuary, which is brought out in the visions of Daniel and John. This subject sheds great light on our present position and work, and gives us unmistakable proof that God has led us in our past experience. It explains our disappointment in 1844, showing us that the sanctuary to be cleansed was not the earth, as we had supposed, but that Christ then entered into the most holy apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, and is there performing the closing work of His priestly office, in fulfillment of the words of the angel to the prophet Daniel, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."... In every school established the most simple theory of theology should be taught. In this theory, the atonement of Christ should be the great substance, the central truth. The wonderful theme of redemption should be presented to the students. {Ev 222-3}

Extra Material

“Man’s atonement consists in making himself as miserable as possible by praying, fasting, masochism, flagellations and other forms of torture. This sadistic delusion causes him to insist that others—under pain of punishment—be as miserable as himself, for fear that if others fail to do as he does, it will provoke the wrath of his tyrant God to a more severe chastisement. The inevitable result is that Man devotes his life, not to the essentials of living and the making of a happy home, but to the building of temples and churches where he can "lift his voice to God" in a frenzy of fanaticism, and eventually he becomes a victim of hysteria. His time and energy are wasted to cleanse his "soul," which he does not possess, and to save himself from a future punishment in hell which exists only in his imagination.” *Joseph Lewis*

Using highly-developed legal models of what Christ's death accomplished, some theories of the at-one-ment place great emphasis on the need to provide God with compensation, guilt-payment etc. so that his judicial wrath will then be appeased. The Cross can become the legal formula by which God satisfies his need for human punishment, and the blood of Christ the "currency" through which man's guilt is voided. This "transactional" concept of the reconciliation accomplished by Christ even appears to make God the problem: as if he is the one who needs to be reconciled to us, rather than us to God. (“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” 2 Cor. 5:19). So the problem is not with the word atonement which still retains in its component parts the original words and original meaning. The change has arisen as a result of the way in which the word has been used as a description of systems which see salvation as having been effected by a kind of legal adjustment of the sinner's standing before God; some transaction that is carried out between Christ and God in which compensation is effected, punishment cancelled, and anger propitiated.

11. God's Timetable

Texts: Daniel 9.

Quotes:

- There comes a time in each life like a point of fulcrum. At that time you must accept yourself. It is not any more what you will become. It is what you are and always will be. *John Fowles*
- We dance round in a ring and suppose,
But the Secret sits in the middle and knows. *Robert Frost*
- If you stop searching, you stop living, because then you're dwelling in the past. If you're not reaching forward to any growth or future, you might as well be dead. *Wynn Bullock*

Introductory questions

Why is "God's timetable" significant? Why should we study such matters? Is it a question of knowing that God has everything operating according to plan? If so, what *is* the plan?! What does it really mean, "in the fullness of time, Christ came"? What of unfulfilled prophecy? What are the dangers of overstressing these issues?

Discussion ideas

With all the wealth of data in the lesson regarding times and dates, the often-asked question is relevant: does it matter for my salvation if I don't understand all this? Surely it does not. Nor is this information to satisfy our curiosity, or to get into numerological sidetracks. Only as it demonstrates God's continuing working out of the issues of the Great Controversy; the prophesied coming of Jesus as saviour and God-revealer; and confirmation of God's foreknowledge and sovereignty does this passage deserve our attention. Sadly too many have lost their way and their focus in the quicksands and mirages of prophetic interpretation, with all the maps, charts, and calculations.

It reminds me of a lady who, when I asked her how she had joined the church, told me "I came in with the beasts." As I observed at the time, I hope she didn't stay there... For while it is surely important to establish prophecy and divine control, the use of images of various prophetic beasts can be overdone!

Daniel had been doing bible study in the book of Jeremiah, and like us, had questions. His vision is a response to his prayer, especially regarding the 70 weeks. He also prays in confession and appeal, and seeks to influence this particular conflict in the Great Controversy. Perhaps, as has been suggested, this helps in dealing with God's self-imposed limitations, and positively addresses the "rules of engagement" between Christ and Satan.

God wishes to reassure Daniel that he is still working, even though it may be behind the scenes. Here is revealed God's plan for the coming of Jesus, and also what he knows will happen—his rejection by his own people (us!). While there is the immediate comfort that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, the "cutting off" of the anointed one (=Messiah, Christ) is the poignant tragedy that God reveals to Daniel. For in this world, the good news is always tinged with sadness, and whatever we might hope for here and now will always been transient and disappointing. Daniel too was learning that lesson, even as he tried to work for his nation and people. The ultimate reassurance is that God is there, he continues to work, he has not forgotten—and that one day the Great Controversy will be over.

Ellen White Comments

Satan is constantly at work, with intense energy and under a thousand disguises, to misrepresent the character and government of God. With extensive, well-organized plans and marvelous power, he is working to hold the inhabitants of the world under his deceptions. God, the One infinite and all-wise, sees the end from the beginning, and in dealing with evil His plans were far-reaching and comprehensive. It was His purpose, not merely to put down the rebellion, but to demonstrate to all the universe the nature of the rebellion. God's plan was unfolding, showing both His justice and His mercy, and fully vindicating His wisdom and righteousness in His dealings with evil. {PP 78}

We are living in the last days, when error of a most deceptive character is accepted and believed, while truth is discarded. The Lord will hold both ministers and people responsible for the light shining upon them. He calls upon us to work diligently in gathering up the jewels of truth, and placing them in the framework of the gospel. {RC 216}

Extra material

I have a recurring dream. Well, more of a nightmare, really.

In a beautiful scene (I dream in Technicolor), I'm there with a bunch of fellow Adventists as Christ returns. The fulfillment of the blessed hope, the consummation of the divine promise, the completion of God's salvation. As the world ends in chaos, we look up to welcome our returning King.

Except my fellow Adventists are far from happy.

"Can't be," says one.

"Another counterfeit?" wonders another.

"Doesn't fit my chart," mutters a third, looking down at an elaborate sheet of time-lines and dates and symbols. They confer. For the longest time. As the world ends, they debate the relative merits of symbolic interpretations, calculate complex mathematical formulae, and extrapolate times and dates to the n^{th} degree.

Ultimately they reach a conclusion. From their research, they are able to categorically and conclusively prove that this is NOT the second advent, because the King of the North has not attempted the defilement resulting in the abomination of desolation under the rule of Persia in which the armies of Armageddon overcome the hordes of the East under the sixth seal at the time of the multiplied myriads of trumpets that the 24 elders are to blow.

Or something like that that. As I said, this is just a dream. Not to be taken too literally...

The scene fades on my comrades, still debating the End as the End arrives all around them. Maybe it's as well that the scene fades then, since I cannot tell you the Lord's response to their desire to send Him back to heaven.

But the image troubles me still. What is it about us that makes the calculating of the End more important than the return of Jesus? Why are we so preoccupied with the events of the time of trouble? Where is God in all of this Last-day mania?

Adventists have always been known for their stress on the future and the importance of recognizing God's role as He breaks back in to human history. The final events are dramatic, the return of Christ all-embracing, the Earth-shattering conclusion to this world one that demands a decision now.

But could it be that another of the devil's delusions is to have us so focused on the end-time and its troubling events that we forget about the God who is going to see us through and is the one we are expecting at the end?

And is it not also possible that as Adventists we concentrate so much on the external Christ who is to return that we fail to recognize the internal Christ now, active in our daily lives? The words of Christ to his disciples were not "I am leaving now, and I'll see you when I return," but "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

In our desire to proclaim the return of Christ, we surely need to also emphasize the presence of Christ in the believer's life, day by day walking with Him on the way.

As well as preaching the coming, we need to practice the presence of Christ. I don't need any more nightmares...

12. When Kings Go To War

Texts: Daniel 10 and 11.

Quotes:

- Nothing is easier than self-deceit. For what each man wishes, that he also believes to be true. *Demosthenes*
- He who knows others is learned. He who knows himself is wise. *Lao Tzu*
- All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts. *William Shakespeare*
- No matter where or what, there are makers, takers, and fakers. *Robert Heinlein*

Introductory questions

What's most important here—knowing the identities of the King of the North/South? If not, why is it in the Bible? How do we treat matters we don't clearly understand? What is the larger picture here? Was God condescending in showing to Daniel what would happen? In the light of Daniel's prayer, what does prayer do? What kind of God is at work here?

Discussion ideas

There's much in these two chapters to indulge the fanciful speculation of a fertile mind. But is that what this is really for? What is the real point in providing all this information?

God provides Daniel with this wonderful picture of Gabriel, and then even Michael, battling to persuade the king of Persia. In this “behind the scenes” look at the intense conflicts in the Great Controversy, God shows that even the issue of just one mind and its allegiance is highly significant. For the true battle in the cosmic conflict is not physical, but spiritual; it is over truth and right and trustworthiness—all those things that Satan has charged God with.

It is commendable that the lesson makes the point that “Daniel 11 has brought out a variety of interpretations, even within our own church. Most modern interpreters see the wars between the successors of Alexander the Great in this chapter. Though there is certainly some of this fighting referred to in the verses immediately following Daniel 11:1-4, it cannot be (as we will discover) the subject of the whole chapter. (Wednesday's lesson). In fact, though that section is headed “Kings from the North and the South,” they are not specifically identified. This surely is wisdom, for a dogmatic approach cannot help.

The significance is not so much in all the detail, but in the revelation that God does know, that he is highly active in the affairs of humanity. If he is willing to battle for the mind of an ancient (even “pagan”) kind, it is reasonable to conclude that he has not given up on any of us. The battle for the our minds—who we believe, who we trust, who we love and admire—continues, and what we see in this ancient account is some of the evidence. For that is what we have to go on—not our feelings and impressions, but the actual facts as they work out, causes and effects, actions and consequences. Only as we see and agree with God that his way is the only one that makes sense can God truly be vindicated. This is not a struggle for power on God's part, but simply for what is absolutely and fundamentally true. He will not force the mind to believe, though the Devil will often try to employ such tactics.

The conclusion—even from what may seem a rather obscure Biblical passage—is that God is winning the conflict over who is right and who is wrong, and who is the Being in the universe most worthy of our unreserved trust, love, and admiration.

Ellen White Comments

[Dan. 10:12, 13 quoted.] By this we see that heavenly agencies have to contend with hindrances before the purpose of God is fulfilled in its time. The king of Persia was controlled by the highest of all evil angels. He refused, as did Pharaoh, to obey the word of the Lord. Gabriel declared, He withstood me twenty-one days by his representations against the Jews. But Michael came to his help, and then he remained with the kings of Persia, holding the powers in check, giving right counsel against evil counsel. Good and evil angels are taking a part in the planning of God in His earthly kingdom. It is God's purpose to carry forward His work in correct lines, in ways that will advance His glory. But Satan is ever trying to counterwork God's purpose. Only by humbling themselves before God can God's servants advance His work. Never are they to depend on their own efforts or on outward display for success.

We have before us in the Word of God instances of heavenly agencies working on the minds of kings and rulers, while at the same time satanic agencies were also at work on their minds. No human eloquence, in strongly set forth human opinions, can change the working of satanic agencies. Satan seeks continually to block the way, so that the truth shall be bound about by human devising; and those who have light and knowledge are in the greatest danger unless they constantly consecrate themselves to God, humiliating self, and realizing the peril of the times.

Heavenly beings are appointed to answer the prayers of those who are working unselfishly for the interests of the cause of God. The very highest angels in the heavenly courts are appointed to work out the prayers which ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God. Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage. . . .

Day by day the conflict between good and evil is going on. Why is it that those who have had many opportunities and advantages do not realize the intensity of this work? They should be intelligent in regard to this. God is the Ruler. By His supreme power He holds in check and controls earthly potentates. Through His agencies He does the work which was ordained before the foundation of the world. {4BC 1173}

Extra material

Faith is *not* believing what isn't so, as one person defined it. Faith in God is reasonable, and based on evidence. That's what God wants—not some blind unthinking faith that can lead us to some completely mistaken ideas about himself.

No. We must trust like children do. Do children know their parents? Of course! The image of childlike trust is often given as a little girl throwing herself from a high step into her father's arms. But I can tell you, that its *trust based on evidence*. The little girl *knows* her father will catch her, because he has shown himself to be trustworthy. He cares about her. He loves her. And he will not let her fall.

So too with us. Our childlike trust in God is based on the *evidence* of God as a completely trustworthy person. That's what the Bible is for—to show us what God is like in his dealings with humanity. That's what Jesus came to demonstrate personally—that God can be trusted: completely and fully. There is no doubt! And that's what we have to discover in our own experience: that we can place ourselves in God's hands without any doubts at all.

And if we don't? Then we will not enter the Kingdom, as Jesus says. Because if we come to God without trusting him, he cannot help us, heal us, save us. We cannot come bargaining with God. We can only allow him into our lives like a skilled doctor to fix all the mess sin has caused in our lives.

It's all a **QUESTION OF TRUST**

Children see so clearly. They understand the true nature of a loving, caring, saving God. It's only as we "mature" that we lose this attitude--maybe because we get let down so often by others. "Put not your trust in princes"--or in anyone else in this deceitful world! As David so clearly said, "My own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." (Ps.41:9)--being let down. In the experience of Jesus, spoken through the prophecy of Zechariah: "If someone asks him, 'What are these wounds on your body?' he will answer, 'The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.'" (Zec. 13:6).

All we can do is to trust in him. For if we don't, we are totally lost.

13. The Time of the End (or the End of Time)

Texts: Daniel 11:40-12:13.

Quotes: *Concepts of God:*

- The Vision of Christ that thou dost see, Is my vision's greatest enemy. Thine is the Friend of all Mankind, Mine speaks in Parables to the blind. Thine loves the same world that mine hates, Thy heaven-doors are my hell gates. *William Blake*
- As Christians, we must understand that there is no word so meaningless as the word "god" until it is defined. No word has been used to reach absolutely opposite concepts as much as the word "god". Consequently, let us not be confused. There is much "spirituality" about us today that would relate itself to the word god or to the idea god; but this is not what we are talking about. Biblical truth and spirituality is not a relationship to the word god, or to the idea god. It is a relationship to the one who is there, which is an entirely different concept. *Francis A. Schaeffer*
- The idol-maker may know, more or less clearly, that he is only giving shape to the half-formed concept of God in his head; that his images are solid metaphors—what we call symbols. The skeptical Greek philosopher may remind us that, after all, the image of Athena is only a symbol, only a means of fixing one's rambling thoughts upon the spirit that is Athena. Yet the idolater will persist in losing sight of the forest for the trees, and the god for the image... The crucifix, the plaster image, the saint's relic or miraculous medal or cheaply and illegibly printed Bible may become themselves things considered holy and magical, able to stop a bullet. Worse yet, the god confined in an image is a shrunken and powerless god. Because you have limited your concept of God to a man shape on a carved crucifix, you may be in danger of inferring that you are free to outrage the man shapes walking and breathing around you. Because you worship the god in a specially baked wafer and a specially designed chalice, you may forget to worship the God of all bread and all wine. *Joy Davidman*

Introductory questions

How do you relate to the time of trouble? How do we get our names written in the book? What is the basis for God's decision on 'who makes it'? Who or what is being vindicated here? What about these "day" prophecies? What is the knowledge that is increased, and why? What is the fundamental message of the book of Daniel?

Discussion ideas

The endtime is often a subject of much controversy. For some it is a time to be dreaded, for this is the time of trouble such as never was. For others it is merely the gateway to eternity. For others still it is the time to prove their characters. And for even still others, it is the time of God's vindication and the beginning of reunion with God their friend. It all depends on how you see it—most importantly, who you think God really is and what the endtime achieves.

Is the emphasis to be on the time of trouble, or on becoming like the "stars forever and ever"? Or perhaps the real objective is to understand more of this "day" prophecies? Or is the best advice that given right at the very end of the book of Daniel?: "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance." Daniel 12:13 NIV.

As we've mentioned before, it is all too easy to become so absorbed by all the fascinating details that we miss the overall message of Daniel's book. From the very beginning as a youth, Daniel had wanted to speak well of his loving Lord, to represent him rightly. And all the way through his life experience, Daniel has continued to do just that, even in very trying circumstances and with kings who were only impressed by displays of power and majesty. Daniel's concern for God's reputation is admirable, especially as it was reflected in the circumstances of his chosen people. Yet there is more to it even than such a concern. For in all the counsel and insight Daniel receives, the primary message is that

God is working through the issues in the great controversy, answering the questions and challenges, and eventually ensuring that those who trust and love him will be part of the vindication of truth and right.

That's why the endtime is so important. It is the conclusion of all that God has been working towards. As Emil Brunner wrote about the second advent, without such a conclusion faith would be like a ladder which ended nowhere, steps into the void. There has to be the final consummation of the whole plan of God, which includes our salvation, but goes far beyond.

Daniel asks (12:8 NIV), "what will the outcome of all this be?" That's the right question—what is all this for, why is it happening, and what is the conclusion of the matter? The final conclusion is the verdict on God and his trustworthiness from the created intelligences throughout the universe. Whose side are we on?

Ellen White Comments

The converted soul lives in Christ. His darkness passes away, and a new and heavenly light shines into his soul. "He that winneth souls is wise." "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." What is done through the co-operation of men with God is a work that shall never perish, but endure through the eternal ages. He that makes God his wisdom, that grows up into the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus, will stand before kings, before the so-called great men of the world, and show forth the praises of Him who hath called him out of darkness into His marvelous light. Science and literature cannot bring into the darkened mind of men the light which the glorious gospel of the Son of God can bring. The Son of God alone can do the great work of illuminating the soul. No wonder Paul exclaims, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The gospel of Christ becomes personality in those who believe, and makes them living epistles, known and read of all men. In this way the leaven of godliness passes into the multitude. The heavenly intelligences are able to discern the true elements of greatness in character; for only goodness is esteemed as efficiency with God. {FE 199-200}

As the time of the end draws near, Satan's temptations will be brought to bear with greater power upon God's workers. He will employ human agents to mock and revile those who "build the wall." But should the builders come down to meet the attacks of their foes, this would but retard the work. They should endeavor to defeat the purposes of their adversaries, but they should not allow anything to call them from their work. Truth is stronger than error, and right will prevail over wrong.... {CC 268}

Extra material

The day is soft, warm, bright. The date is early October—now. The time is early evening. Autumn goldness everywhere, deeper than summer and the better for being unlooked for. Searching the brambles round the lakeshore, hunting blackberries among the thorns. Man, woman, and child; a family full of life's goodness, the goodness of God.

Over the shimmering lake the sun spreads a sparkling net. Swallows and martins splash down, fluttering on a thousand wings in their summer endtime—before the journey begins: migration.

The boy laughs. Eyes full of beauty: everywhere he looks life is crammed full of wonder. He stops to watch a water rat paddling towards the shore. "Look, mummy, look." A pheasant crows out in excitement, the boy points and shouts. A crab-apple to pick and taste, sharpsouring the tongue, but good for all that. Rabbits skipscampering, prancing in the goldlight, fur ashine. Air so still, expectant, awaiting.

Ready for a better place, an earth made new. A family together forever. A time when God shall be with them and be their God. A time when even this autumn beauty will seem like faded leaves, shrivelled and brown. A time when blackberry picking will not be marred by thorns that rip and cut, wounds bleeding. A time when thorns will no longer be the crown.

The path leads on. The sun falls low among the oaks, blazing the leaves. The swallows stop their playing to gather on the wires, still chittering. Ready to leave. The berry basket is full. The sun has gone. The path leads home. The day has ended. The father calls: "Are you ready? It's time to go."

Are you ready?

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