

Daniel's Vision Of Chapter Seven IV

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

August 30, 2008

[*This sermon is available in audio format for listening or downloading on our audio sermon's page](#)

Running from the Seward Peninsula in Alaska, along the ridge of the Rocky Mountains to New Mexico, following the crest of the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico is the "Great Divide," or Continental Divide. It's called a "watershed," or "divide" because a theoretical drop of water falling on the divide would split, and half if it would end up in the Atlantic, the other half in the Pacific.

A "watershed" question in theology has to do with what is taken as the ultimate source of authority. Who has the final say in religious matters? If you answer that question by saying the Church is the ultimate authority, then your decisions and what you accept as truth will lead you in one direction. If you say the Scriptures are the ultimate source of truth, then your belief system will lead you in a different direction. What an important question is this!

You will not be surprised if I encourage you to accept the Word of God, and not the word of man as being the light we should follow. God's Word is more authoritative and reliable than man's word. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" Jeremiah 23:28. This is the Book that contains all the information that we need to learn about God, His ways and what He expects of us.

Satan wants to deceive us so that we will dishonor God and forfeit eternal life. But in the Scriptures God has pulled the curtain back and exposed Satan's deceptions so that we can be forewarned and saved. When we study the prophecies that reveal Satan's tactics as they have been deployed through history, our

confidence in God's Word and the certainty of the final outcome are strengthened.

Last week we studied the horn power of Daniel 7 and noted that it is actually one of four pictures of the same entity. Just as God revealed the story of Jesus, the "mystery of Godliness" in four Gospels, so He revealed the story of Satan, the "mystery of iniquity" in four prophetic pictures.

The war is between Christ and Satan, who coveted God's throne and rebelled against His authority. Lucifer began an attack in heaven against God, His rulership and His law. After his eviction, this conflict was transferred to this earth. His strategy in Eden was to deceive the woman, Eve, whom he then used to tempt Adam.

This same strategy he used in Jesus' day, employing the "woman," the Church, to demand the death of God's Son. In both cases we saw that the "woman," Eve in Eden and the Church of Christ's day, was deceived and didn't know what she was doing, but that did not excuse her transgression. Nevertheless, God looked upon her in pity and in love.

This same strategy Satan used with the "woman," the Church of the Middle Ages to accomplish his goals. We noticed five clues that help us identify the horn power as the Church of the Middle Ages. What is it, we may ask, that came up when Rome fell, persecuted and killed millions, makes claims to be in the place of God on earth and has attempted to change the Law of God? Even casual students of history would be able to come up with the right answer.

I want to make it clear at this point that the prophecy is speaking about a system, an organization, and not individual people. Without question there are devout, sincere, God-loving people in every faith, and God is appealing to them through His Spirit to depart from error and follow the truth. It is the system of

Catholicism that is the subject of these prophetic pictures. Our message is not of condemnation, but of earnest appeal, backed by the truths of Scripture and facts of history. Gathering the clues together given in the Bible, there can be no doubt as to what this is talking about.

What I am sharing with you is not new. Bible students from the early centuries had a clear understanding of these things. Later, this conviction was what fueled the Protestant Reformation. In time, we'll review a few quotations that demonstrate the depth of the roots of this way of thinking.

We saw last week that the horn power "came up among" the ten horns, which represented the Germanic tribes in the early centuries that brought about the fall of the Roman Empire. Three of these, who opposed the Church on doctrinal issues were removed, so that she could operate without resistance. In a very real sense, the popes took the place of the Caesars and ruled as kings over Europe.

The Bible says that this entity would speak "pompous words against the Most High," and we saw that the papacy has indeed made daring and outrageous claims throughout her history. "We hold on this earth the place of God Almighty," she asserts. Satan has always

desired to take God's place and be worshiped. Thus he inspired the head of the Church of the Middle Ages, to claim titles that belong rightfully to God. "His holiness" and "holy father" are titles that shouldn't be applied to human beings.

The horn power would "wear out" or persecute the saints. History confirms that countless millions, perhaps 50 or 60 million were martyred under her authority.

The angel told Daniel that this power would "intend to change times and law," which we concluded must refer to God's Law,

since it would be expected that any power taking control from another would change earthly laws. We saw that the papacy boasts of her changing the Ten Commandments; of changing the day of worship from the Bible Sabbath, the seventh day, to the first day; of removing the second commandment which forbids the worship of images, and then splitting the tenth commandment into two parts so as to preserve the original number. These are indisputable facts which any catechism will verify. Keep in mind that Catholicism stands for the principle that the Church is above the Scripture and therefore has authority to do these things. How one approaches the question of authority is the "watershed" of religious beliefs. Is it the Church or the Bible?

Finally, we saw that this entity would enjoy uninterrupted control for a period of three and half "years," which we are compelled to understand in a symbolic way, that is, each day of prophecy representing a literal year of time. This gave us a period of 1260 literal years, that stretched across the Middle Ages from 538 A.D. when her opposition was effectively removed, till 1798, when Napoleon gave his general Berthier a directive which resulted in the capture of Pope Pius VI who died in exile.

Now we turn our attention to another of the four pictures of this horn power, found in II Thessalonians. We might call this part of II Thessalonians "Paul's commentary on Daniel 7." The background of the letter is this: the Church in the Greek city of Thessalonica had somehow lost their hope of life after death and a resurrection when Jesus returns. When they buried their dead, they thought they were saying goodbye forever. How sad that would be!

So Paul wrote them a letter (what we call "First Thessalonians"), in which he emphasized the coming of the Savior, how He would bring

back to life the dead in Christ and penned some of the most encouraging words in Scripture on this topic. Unfortunately, some of the believers took this to mean that Jesus was coming back

immediately, and so Paul, having become seasoned in his prophetic understanding, wrote a second letter to them ("II Thessalonians"), advising them that before Jesus returned, certain things had to take place in the prophetic timeline.

Think of it this way. It would be like you were in your car with a youngster, stopped at a traffic light. The child asks, "When do we get to go?" You explain that, "right now the cross traffic has the green light, and then probably the ones turning left will get their chance. After that, the light will be turning green for us." In other words, "certain things have to happen before we get to go."

Or, if you were riding the new Sprinter train and going from Oceanside to Escondido, you would know that until you passed Vista and San Marcos, you couldn't expect to arrive at your final destination. Those stops would have to be met and passed before you'd arrive at Escondido.

In a similar way, Paul had come to realize that before Jesus returned, some things needed to happen first. The prophecies outlined events in sequence, and those events which preceded the return of Jesus must be fulfilled in their time before the end would come.

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 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, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do You not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the

Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." II Thessalonians 2:1-8.

We will show that Paul's description parallels the specifications of the horn power of Daniel 7. Paul was well acquainted with the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7. He was very familiar with the statue dream and the visionary wild animals we've been looking at. He knew that the legs of iron in the statue represented civil Rome. Of that there could be no question. He was certain that the fourth beast of chapter 7 likewise stood for the Roman empire.

Therefore he knew that before the Stone would come and smite the image, a picture of the coming of Christ, the legs of iron would have to meld into the feet of iron and clay and that as long as they were still living in the "legs," the "Stone," the coming of Christ in glory, would not be expected. With respect to the vision of chapter 7, Paul knew that before the Judgment would sit and the saints would possess the kingdom, a horn power, growing out of the fourth beast, would assert its influence of destruction and desolation. He called this a "falling away," a word in Greek from which we get our word "apostasy." He called this system the "man of sin."

Although Rome appeared invincible in Paul's day, he knew, according to the prophecy, that the day would come when she, like the kingdoms before her, would totter and fall. The presence of civil Rome demonstrated to Paul that the end was not yet. While civil Rome still stood, its presence "hindered" the appearance of the apostasy. The legs of iron would have to be replaced by the feet of iron and clay before the "Stone" could come. When the time should come that civil Rome would no longer rule the world, then the "man of sin" would appear, who eventually would meet his destruction at the coming of Jesus.

"Don't look for the Coming yet," Paul is saying. "As long as Rome reigns, the end won't arrive. But when Rome is removed, then look for the Apostasy, the man of sin and this entity will be

destroyed at the Coming." Paul is both biblical and logical in his analysis of the sequence of events.

This line of thinking was adopted and proclaimed by Christians in the early centuries after Christ's departure. Tertullian, who died in 240 A.D., after quoting some of Paul's letter wrote, "What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce Antichrist upon its own ruins." He then quoted more from II Thessalonians 2. Notice, by the way, many of these early Church expositors had a precise understanding regarding the unity of the four prophetic pictures we're looking at: the horn of Daniel, the man of sin in II Thessalonians, the antichrist in I John and the leopard beast of Revelation. Tertullian even counseled believers to pray for the continuance of Rome, for its prolongation would retard the coming Apostasy.

Paul gives us some clues, which with the others we have seen in Daniel and will see in the other two pictures, helps us make the identification of this entity. There can be no doubt that he is speaking of the Church of the Middle Ages.

Notice the clue as to when this entity would make its appearance. The chronology of Paul's letter makes a clear connection between the demise of the Roman Empire, the kingdom that existed in his day, and its being removed, making way for the Apostasy to emerge. He is building his argument on the prophecies of Daniel and in full agreement with them.

Paul's exhortation also agrees with Daniel's prophecy with respect to the attitude of this power. Daniel cited the "pompous words against the Most High" that he would speak. Paul describes this entity as one which "opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

Satan wants to be God. That's where the problem began. He covets the worship which belongs only to God. As one of the

three temptations that came to Christ as He began His ministry, the devil tried to induce Jesus to worship him. The fact is, the devil is not worthy of worship. He is a created being, not a Creator. The Scripture clearly tells us why God only should be worshiped. "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created." Revelation 4:11. Satan is not entitled to worship. Nevertheless, by deceiving humans, he gets them to follow him, and effectively bow before him rather than God.

What does it mean when it says, "he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God"? By the phrase "he sits as God in the temple" we are told to look for this entity within the Church. This is a religious entity. It is one which claims the mantle of Christianity. It's destructive opposition operates under the cover of professed godliness, just as the Church of Jesus' day did. This is the great, mysterious deception that is so effectively used by Satan. Many wonder how it could be possible that the religious leaders were the ones who fulfill Satan's desires, but that's exactly what happened when the priests pushed for Christ's crucifixion.

Paul anticipated this very thing happening when he counseled the elders of Ephesus, "From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." Acts 20:30. What greater way could Satan achieve his goals than by deceiving leaders of the Church and inducing them to accomplish his work, just as he did with Eve in the garden? So in the Middle Ages as the Church left her position of safety on the foundation of Scripture, she "fell away," or apostatized and became the tool of the devil.

When that happened, nearly every truth that had been given by God became confused, warped, replaced or suppressed. The Scriptures were undermined and withheld from the membership. Into the Church came doctrines that had no basis in the Bible. The focus on the ministry of Christ was replaced by an emphasis on Mary and the veneration of saints. The wonderful Gospel plan

of salvation by grace through faith was replaced by a system of works. The Ten Commandments were altered. The teaching of a second chance through purgatory after this life removed the vital importance of making sure of ones salvation today. The teaching that you don't really die when you die crept into the Church, giving opportunity for deception. The baptism of babies, who at that age are unable to make an intelligent decision for Christ, entered the Church. The doctrine of penance and indulgences was introduced. The "falling away" was dramatic and shocking.

Go back to the words of Paul who described this entity as "sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." What was the purpose of the temple in ancient times? What was the focus of its ministry? It was the place where sins were forgiven. That was it's main thrust. It's where a repentant sinner came, bringing the animal of sacrifice and receiving absolution. Who has authority to forgive sin? God alone. Never in the Bible do we find that an earthly priest had capacity to say, "I forgive you." The role of the priest was to officiate at the temple service, but it was clearly understood that forgiveness was a gift of God, made possible by the death of His Son, illustrated by the sacrifice.

If I, or any other human being claim the authority to remit sin, I am putting myself in the place of God. I am "sitting in the temple of God showing myself to be God." I am usurping authority that belongs only to Him. The claims of the papacy make clear that she fulfills this specification. Here is what one catechism says. "Does the Priest truly forgive the sins, or does he only declare that they are remitted? The Priest does really and truly forgive the sins in virtue of the power given him by Christ." Joseph Deharbe, S.J., A Complete Catechism of the Catholic Religion, p. 279.

One of the titles Paul applied to this power was "lawless one." From the beginning, Lucifer challenged God's throne by undermining His Law. What do we observe throughout God's created universe? We see order and harmony governed by law. The planets and stars are governed by strict laws, preventing

chaos from occurring. Everything in nature, everything on this earth is guided by law; laws of physics, chemistry, gravity, physiology, and so on. God's kingdom is a kingdom of law and order. The great law of love, of selfless service was written in the hearts of angels and heavenly beings, insuring harmonious co-existence.

But then one, a beautiful, talented and respected angel, proposed a new order of society; one without law. Everyone could do as he pleased. Lucifer charged God with being a despot; of restricting the free exercise of His beings. Lucifer denounced the loyal angels as being deluded slaves. A new system was needed, one without law. This new way of thinking might have sounded appealing and it was successful in persuading about one third of the angels to side with Lucifer, but it was a way of thinking that was disastrous.

God in His infinite wisdom ordained the laws that guided His creatures and His creations. Life could not exist without the governance of these edicts. To set these laws aside was to invite ruin. Try to imagine life without the consistent application of the law of gravity, for example.

In the Garden of Eden Lucifer's appeal was to disregard the plain command of the Lord. Through the workings of the Church of the Middle Ages, he has attempted to achieve his goal of nullifying God's Law. Last week we looked at a quotation from a Catholic author who challenged, "Who has authority to change an express command of Almighty God?" With that question we wholeheartedly agreed! Who indeed? By claiming the authority to change God's Law, the papacy has put herself above the Author of the Commandments and cooperated with Satan's attempts to do away with His Law.

At the foot of Mt. Sinai Aaron fashioned a golden calf, invited God's people to worship, and declared "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." Exodus 32:5. Because Aaron, even though he was high priest, said so, did it make it so? Did Aaron have authority to set aside God's commandments which had just been spoken from the

mountain top? God has declared which day is His sacred day of worship and told us clearly it is the seventh day of the week, but the papacy has said, "tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." Do the words of man, in direct violation of the word of God, make it so?

To be "lawless" in the sense of Paul's argument doesn't mean the absence of any law, but the replacement of God's Law by human institutions. Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition." Mark 7:9. He demonstrated what he meant by referring to the fifth commandment, "honor your father and mother," which had been marginalized by their interpretation that one could get around the requirement of taking care of his parents by declaring the money "dedicated to the temple." Then He said, you have made "the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down."

By attempting to change the plain inscriptions of God's Law, the papacy has nullified them. "Sin is lawlessness," wrote the Apostle John. I John 3:4. Therefore this "lawless one" is also called by Paul the "man of sin." It is following the lead of Satan, who has desired the overthrow of God's government, which is based on the operation of His wise regulations. Does she know what she is doing? Probably not, just as Satan deceived Eve in Eden and the Church of Jesus' day. Does her ignorance provide an excuse? No. How does God look on the "woman," the Church, who is thus misguided? In pity and in love. He offers forgiveness and restoration, as He did Eve, if we are willing to acknowledge Him and repent. He is not willing that any be destroyed, but that all come to repentance.

Paul's exposition of the "lawless one" describes a timeline, a lifespan which *begins at the fall of pagan Rome and continues to Christ's advent.* That is the kernel of his thesis. "Then (after the demise of ancient Rome) the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." This lifespan, beginning at the fall of ancient Rome and continuing to the end, necessitates that

the interpretation of this entity not be limited to one single person. It must represent a "kingdom," not merely a "king."

This also is in agreement with the particulars of Daniel 7. Daniel said, "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking: I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and *given to the burning flame*. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time." Daniel 7:11, 12. It may be that the phrase, "given to the burning flame," was in Paul's mind when he wrote "consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."

This power will continue till the coming of Christ. The rest of the empires lost their dominion, yet they existed in some form after they were conquered. There was still a Babylon for many centuries after Cyrus defeated her. Persia (Iran) is still with us today; Greece still exists. But when the horn power finally comes to her end, at the Coming, it will be with completeness, decisiveness and finality. Because of fulfilled prophecy and the condition of the fragile world today, we are led to believe that Jesus will return very soon.

Today we've seen a parallel between the "horn power" of Daniel 7 and the "man of sin" of II Thessalonians 2. These are two of the four pictures of prophecy that outline the attack of Satan, working through well-intentioned but misguided people, that stretches over many centuries. Should we be surprised that such an attack should be the subject of not one, but four passages in the Bible?

By claiming to occupy the place of God Almighty on this earth the papacy has overreached her authority and fulfilled the aspirations of Satan. By suppressing the Scriptures throughout her history she has lifted herself above God and denied to man the Word of life. By alleging that she has the power to change the Ten Commandments the papacy has laid claim to that for which she has no right. By teaching that the priest has the ability to forgive

sins she enters a sphere in which she has no standing. Sadly, all of these specifications are met with precision. There is no other organization on earth which fulfills all the specifications of prophecy.

Our message is not of condemnation but of appeal. It is the message of Peter to the misguided Jewish leaders who put Jesus on the cross. He said, "I know you did it in ignorance, but now it is time to repent." It's time to return to the pure teachings of the Bible. It's time to put away the tradition of man and obey God's commandments. It's time to put away our sins and let God's Spirit prepare us for heaven. It's time to get ready for Jesus to come!