

Daniel's Vision Of Chapter Eight, part 2

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Last Tuesday evening as I was reading, I came upon a story I had never heard before, discovering it while reading back issues of "Signs of the Times." I'm sure there are some who already know this history, but I had never heard so much as a whisper of this account. Because it bears on what we're talking about in Daniel, I'm going to take a few minutes to share with you a some of the details. Daniel's visions tell us that God is at work; they also tells us that the devil is at work, trying to hinder the work that God is doing, sometimes using people who profess to be God's people. That's what this story is about. It's an amazing, but sobering story. I was reading the report of Elder S. N. Haskell, but I was so interested that I had to get on the computer and look this story up. Putting in "Tai-ping" ("extreme peace"), a name given to the dynasty I found in the article, I discovered the story to be readily available on the internet, though I found many of the articles slanted opposite what I was reading.

The story takes place in China about 160 years ago or so. It has to do with a man named Hung Sew-tseuen (his name is spelled differently in some accounts) who was born of reputable heritage in 1813 near Canton. He excelled in school and was appointed schoolmaster in his native village by a consensus of the people.

While attending school he met two strangers in the street, one of whom had a nine-volume set of books called Good Words For Exhorting the Age, a set of Christian discourses. He gave the set of books to Sew-tseuen who glanced at them and then set them on a shelf at his home and didn't read them. About six years afterward, Sew-tseuen began to have visions. He said, "A man venerable in years, with golden beard, and dressed in a black robe, was sitting in an imposing attitude upon the highest place. As soon as he observed Sew-tseuen he began to shed tears, and said: 'All human beings in the whole world are produced and sustained by me; they eat my food and wear my clothing, but not a single one among them has heart to remember and venerate me; what is, however, still worse than that, they take my gifts and therewith worship demons; they purposely rebel against me and arouse my anger. Do not thou imitate them.' Thereupon he gave Sew-tseuen a sword,

commanding him to exterminate the demons, but to spare his brothers and sisters.” Later, he reported that in vision he saw a middle-aged man, whom he called his elder brother who gave him instruction on how live, behave and battle the demons. Sew-tseuen had these visions between 1842 and 1844.

Following the counsel given in the visions, his life changed in every respect. He was led to read the set of books which had been given him before and discovered that in the Bible passages it contained, there was remarkable harmony between them and the visions he had received. He came to understand that One on the throne was God the Father and the other Being he called his “elder Brother,” was Jesus Christ. The demons were the idols, so rampant in his culture.

He shared the knowledge he was given with others, and being a man of good reputation and influence, was successful in his outreach. Although their faith and practice wasn't perfect, they practiced baptism, believed in the triune God and observed the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath including regular worship. They honored the Ten Commandments, reciting them as a part of their Sabbath worship service.

They abstained from tobacco, opium and alcohol, spoke out against the Chinese practice of foot-binding, and of course, had no place for idols. They prayed and preached Christ effectively. Adherents numbered from between 20 and 30 million! Think of it: if allowed to continue, China would have been on its way to becoming a Christian nation!

To make a long but interesting story shorter, in 1862 conflict arose between the Tai-ping and the Manchoo, the party in power. Exaggerated reports of their success and false rumors of their intentions and the prospect of the valuable opium trade being threatened led the English, who before had signed a peace treaty with the Tai-ping, to reverse their course. Instead, they attacked and viciously massacred them. At the very time civil war was marching across America, leaving some 620,000 dead, another civil war was stalking China, which resulted in the killing of 20 million or more of the Sabbath keeping Tai-ping Christians. God was at work, but the devil, working through people who professed better, worked to hinder what God was doing. This is the story of the Tai-ping, and it's the same story we've been studying in Daniel.

Last week we began looking at chapter 8 of Daniel's wonderful book and found that it contained a vision of animals and a horn, which was very similar to what we had encountered in chapter 7. However, noticeable differences were also apparent.

Animals again are used to symbolize kingdoms and powers. This time it is a ram which stands for the kingdom of Medo-Persia. The angel told Daniel that explicitly, and related how its two horns, one being higher than the other, depicted the predominance of the latter part, or Persian faction of the combination kingdom. It stretched its influence west, north and south, an accurate portrayal of the extension of the Persian empire. In chapter 2, Medo-Persia was the chest of silver; in chapter 7 it was the bear that was hunched up on one side. In chapter 8 she is the ram.

Then from the west, scarcely touching the ground, there came in Daniel's vision a male goat and thoroughly vanquished the ram. It had a "notable horn" between its eyes that was "broken," being replaced by four other horns toward the four winds of heaven. This, the angel explained to Daniel, was the kingdom of Greece, the "notable horn" obviously referring to Alexander the Great. Keep in mind that this vision, given to Daniel about 550 B.C. was more than two hundred years before Alexander would wield his power! And yet the kingdom of Greece was named with specificity at a time when it was a loosely held gathering of city states. This shouldn't really surprise us though, because the future is as open to the eye of our God as is the past.

The four horns which replaced the "notable horn" represented the division of rulership after Alexander's death among his four generals; Ptolemy who governed the south including Egypt; Seleucus who controlled the east including Persia, Babylon and parts of Asia Minor; Lysimachus who ruled over parts of Asia Minor; and Cassander who held Greece. Shortly after this four-fold division the kingdoms were melded into a partition of three, but they did indeed begin as a partition of four.

Then, "out of one of them" came forth another little horn, which became exceeding great. Last week we spent a minute or two discussing the origin of this horn. Remember that we said there was a choice between understanding the phrase "out of one of them" as meaning "out of one of the horns," which would lead you to believe that this horn was an extension of the Greek Empire, or "out of one of them" could mean "out of one of the four winds of heaven," meaning that it came from one of the directions of the compass. A lot has been studied and written on this, but summarizing the discussion, "winds" makes a better antecedent for "them" in this case than does "horns." The grammar does not require us to interpret this horn power as being part of the "goat" or Greek Empire. This "little horn" came out of one of the "four winds" of heaven, one of the four directions of the compass. Remember, "direction" is prominent in this vision.

This has importance because it bears on the identity of the “little horn” of Daniel 8. It is true that one of the Greek rulers, Antiochus IV Epiphanies, who reigned in the second century B.C. seems to fulfill many of the prophetic specifications. He tried to eradicate the Jewish religion and forbade circumcision. He destroyed the Scriptures and sacrificed pigs on the altar. When Antiochus tried to “Hellenize,” or “make Greeks out of” the Jews, they revolted in 167 B.C., led by Mattathias and his five sons. One of his sons, Judah Maccabee led an army to victory over the forces of Syria. The Jews cleansed the temple and rededicated it, celebrating their victory over Antiochus with a feast of lights which has come down today as Hanukkah, which means “dedication.”

Although Antiochus did many evil things, he can not be the main focus of Daniel 8. If anything, he is a partial fulfillment. When comparing the visions of chapters 2, 7 and 8, it is clear that there is a strong parallel between them. They are like the dreams of Pharaoh which Joseph said, “are one.” They have a common theme and a common terminus. Chapter 2 takes us down to “the end,” with the stone “cut out without hands” that smites the statue’s feet, the statue being ground to powder and blown away, a picture of the judgment of the Lord’s coming. In chapter 7 eventually the horn is destroyed by the flame and the saints possess the kingdom. We would be surprised if the theme of chapter 8 varied from this pattern.

Therefore, we are prepared to see the horn of Daniel 8 as being basically the same as the horn of Daniel 7, with one slight variation. The horn of Daniel 7 we saw, along with the vast majority of Protestant reformers, as the church of the middle ages, Roman Catholicism, which stepped into the shoes of empire of civil Rome. In chapter 8, the horn represented Rome in both its pagan and papal phases. It represented the empire of the Caesars which ruled from 168 B.C. through 476 A.D. and the kingdom of the popes which came on the scene after that.

This is in perfect keeping with the backdrop of chapter 8 and its emphasis on “direction.” Remember last week we looked at how many times “direction” and “location” were a part of the script. Because both kingdoms, that of the Caesars and the popes ruled from one geographical location and because their activities were quite similar, the vision merges them into one symbol. In a way, chapter 7 said the same thing, in that the little horn, which represented the papacy, literally grew out of the head of the fourth beast, which certainly was civil Rome. There was a connection between the two in that vision.

But in saying “the horn of Daniel 8 represents Rome in both its civil and papal phases,” we point out that the latter aspect, that of papal Rome, is what is given

greater emphasis. Thus, though civil Rome is part of the makeup of the horn of Daniel 8, it is nevertheless true that the horn of Daniel 8 is the same as the horn of Daniel 7.

We note first of all the common nomenclature, a *similarity of name*. When you read in chapter 8 about a “little horn,” and you have just read about a “little horn” one chapter before that in chapter 7, it is natural to assume, unless there is strong evidence to the contrary, that they are talking about the same thing. There is a presumption that they are identical. We believe them to be so.

Also, we see that there is a *similarity of growth*. In chapter 7, while it is introduced as “another horn, a *little* one,” there is no question that its power grew mightily. When Daniel asked the angel about it, he referred to it as the horn “whose appearance was *greater* than his fellows.” Daniel 7:21. In chapter 8 again we encounter a “little horn.” We see it as the culmination of a sequence. The ram was “great.” Daniel 8:4. The goat grew “*very* great.” Daniel 8:8. But the horn power “grew *exceeding* great.” Daniel 8:9. Do you see the progression there? So both the horn of Daniel 7 and the horn of Daniel 8 share a similar experience in starting “small” but becoming mighty.

By the way, in that context, with the ram being Medo-Persia and being called “great”; with the goat being Greece and being called “very great”; it’s difficult to see Antiochus IV himself being called “exceeding great.” He doesn’t quite measure up to that description. Rome on other hand, just in terms of sheer longevity, certainly does.

We see a *similarity of activity* between the horn of Daniel 7 and the horn of Daniel 8. Both the horn of chapter 7 and 8 are shown to be persecuting powers. The phrases “he was making war against the saints” and “(he) shall persecute the saints of the Most High” in chapter 7 find agreement in the language of chapter 8, “it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them,” and “he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty and also the holy people.” Verses 10 and 24.

We see a *similarity of attitude* between the horn of Daniel 7 and the horn of Daniel 8. In chapter 7 we read about the horn speaking “pompous words against the Most High.” Those pompous words are mentioned no less than 4 times in the chapter; verses 8, 11, 20 and 25. In chapter 8 the horn “exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host.” He shall “magnify himself in his heart” and “rise against the Prince of princes.” Verses 11 and 25.

We see a *similarity of intention*. In chapter 7 we are told he would “think to change times and laws,” which we understood to be a reference to the attempt of the papacy to change God’s holy law, the Ten Commandments. In chapter 8 we read that the horn “cast truth down to the ground.”

There is a *similarity of initial success*. In chapter seven the horn prevailed against the saints. Verse 21. They would “be given into his hand.” Verse 25. In chapter 8 he “prospered.” Verse 12. He would “destroy fearfully,” and would “prosper and thrive.” Verse 24.

There is a *similarity of its destruction*, which takes place when Christ returns. In chapter 7, Daniel says, “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.” Verse 11. Several weeks ago, we noted that Paul, in II Thessalonians tied this to the coming of Jesus. “But the court shall be seated, and they take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then 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 26, 27. When does that happen? When Christ comes back to earth in glory. In chapter 8 we read, “But he (the horn) shall be broken without human hand.” Verse 25. Where have we read something like that before? This is a most interesting expression, because it echoes the language of chapter 2. “You watched while a stone was *cut out without hands*, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Verse 34. The obvious intent in both descriptions is to make it clear that the agent of demolition is of divine origin (in contrast to the other kingdoms which were succeeded by earthly empires), *and* brings total and complete destruction (in contrast to the other kingdoms which lingered on a while after they were succeeded).

We see also, that the explanations given by the angel in chapter 8 anticipate that this horn power is something that extends down to the time of the end. When Gabriel, one of God’s most highest ranking angels is commissioned to “make this man understand the vision,” his first words to Daniel are, “Understand, son of man, that the *vision refers to the time of the end*.” Verse 17. He later states, “Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the *latter time* of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be.” Verse 19. His closing words are, “Therefore seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future.” Verse 26. That Antiochus IV doesn’t fulfill this specification goes without saying.

Given this amount of evidence, we have no choice but to link the horn power of chapter 8 with the horn power of chapter 7, both referring to the church of the middle ages, or the historical papacy. Reformers such as Luther, Melanchthon and Heinrich Bullinger agreed with this identification. We have already reviewed the evidence from studying chapter 7, along with the other pictures given in Scripture. The persecutions in which some 50 million or more were martyred, the changing of the Ten Commandments, the high-handed claims to equality with God all bear solemn testimony as to the accuracy of the prophetic insight. Did she know what she was doing? Probably not. How does God look upon this entity? With pity and love. His will for all of us is that we repent and turn to Him and find grace to forgive and restore.

In chapter 8 there are a couple of descriptive phrases which bear examination. It says that by this power “the place of His sanctuary would be cast down.” Verse 11. This part of the prophecy was fulfilled by both phases of the horn, that is, Rome in its civil state and Rome in its papal state. When Jerusalem failed to surrender to God and instead put His Son on the cross, she forfeited the protection that He was willing to provide. “How I would have protected you,” said Jesus, “but you were not willing.”

Forty years after He said that, the city would feel the terrible onslaught of the Roman armies. Titus in A.D. 70 besieged her and the inhuman effects of his boa constrictor-like squeeze are unspeakable. The soldiers ran out of trees to cut down in the making of crosses. Olivet was denuded in their passionate undertaking. The city and its temple were ravaged. Jesus’ words, “one stone won’t be left on top of another” were fulfilled literally as the temple gold, melted by the horrific fires, ran between the cracks of the monolithic stones and Roman soldiers pried them apart to retrieve the treasure. Truly, “the place of His sanctuary was cast down” by civil Rome.

But it is also true that papal Rome did this. What civil Rome did literally, papal Rome did spiritually. By replacing the priestly ministry of Jesus by the mediation of a human priesthood, papal Rome has cast down the place of His sanctuary. What was the sanctuary about? It was where sinners were put right. It was about forgiveness of sin. It was about expiation and reconciliation. By claiming the authority to do these things through human agencies, Jesus’ work for humans is effectively destroyed. The road to salvation is detoured. The light of the Gospel is turned into darkness.

The text says also, “he cast truth down to the ground.” When Jesus was on earth, He brought to light the truths of the Gospel and directed that His followers go everywhere and teach men and women to observe what He had commanded. These were things that, for the most part, had been revealed before, but had been hidden by tradition and neglect. In some cases they had been buried by mounds of human devising, misinterpretation and useless requirements. Jesus brought them forth shining with new meaning and application.

Truth matters. The apostles were willing to die for what they believed. The exhortations of New Testament authors challenge us to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints and not be misled by error. Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” John describes Jesus as being “full of grace and truth.” John 1:14. Jesus told us that we must worship God “in Spirit and in truth.” John 4:24. It matters what you believe because every distortion of truth projects a false image of God and His character. It was a false teaching about God that led Eve into sin.

Through the centuries after Christ’s departure, Satan was able to take just about everything Jesus taught and put a twist on it. The devil is the original spin artist. The prophecy says that by Satan’s influence, working through the Church, truth was cast down. Salvation became works oriented rather than received as a gift by grace. The teaching of what happens when you die was changed, from resting unconsciously in the grave as in “sleep,” to going immediately to heaven, hell or purgatory. Truth was cast down in the teaching of the fate of lost sinners being tortured forever in never ending fire, rather than being destroyed. You can easily see how that one teaching could change a person’s view of God.

Truth was cast down when the seventh day Sabbath, the day God blessed and hallowed, was replaced by a day of man’s making, Sunday. Truth was cast down when it was deemed necessary for infants, who are unable to make an intelligent choice, to be baptized, not understanding the justice of God. Truth was cast down when it was considered acceptable to be sprinkled rather than baptized the way the Bible teaches, by immersion. Truth was cast down when the Scriptures, the sacred writings God gave to us to reveal Himself and the way of salvation, were suppressed or withheld.

It is God’s plan that truth be elevated. We are sanctified through the truth. John 17:17. The most important truth there is, is the truth about God! If only we knew Him as He is, Jesus said, that would be eternal life. John 17:3. How Satan has clouded the minds of men and women, so they feature Him as either an unloving, uncaring tyrant Who delights in the unhappiness of man, or a weak, incompetent

“jellyfish” who is incapable of ruling the universe. In the life, the sacrifice, the ministry of Jesus we see the glory, the character of God. We see Someone in Whom we can feel safe. We see Someone Who truly cares. We see Someone Who not only promises mercy to forgive the mistakes of the past, but strength for the tests of today and hope for the future.

My appeal to you today is to let truth reign in your heart. Let Jesus, Who is the Truth, have control in your life. All things must shortly come to pass. Satan is busier than ever to distract and dishearten. But Jesus will win! Jesus paid an infinite price for our salvation and wants to end this dark night of sin and take us to our everlasting home. Let each examine his or her heart carefully to see if a full surrender has been made.