

## Daniel's Vision Of Chapter 8: Part 4

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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God is at work! The book of Daniel tells us that, and I know that to be true, not only in the “big picture” view, but also in the “little things.” Two things happened in just the last couple of weeks that made me marvel. First, I had been looking for a large envelope to use in mailing. I was pretty sure that I had a used one that I could recycle, but wasn't sure where it was. I was poking around in the corners of my office and slid open the mirrored closet door. I didn't find the large envelope I was looking for, but my eyes rested on the overhead projector I used to use about 25 years ago. A sense of nostalgia came across my mind, and I wondered, Whenever will this be used again?

The next day I received an email from a pastor friend in San Diego, asking if anyone had such an overhead projector! I was surprised, especially in the timing, and felt good that the dust-gathering relic sitting dormant in my closet might actually be used as a tool for ministry! If felt that God was at work, even in the “small things.”

Then the Sabbath two weeks ago, as I was shaking hands at the door, a brother said to me, “If you know anyone who needs a stove, let me know.” I smiled and said I'd keep it in mind, wondering when and if I'd ever run across someone with a need such as this. I should have learned my lesson! The very next Sabbath, as some members were sharing a list of needs for an outreach ministry they were beginning, what do you suppose my eyes came across on their list? A stove! Again, I was impressed that God was at work and will make it a tool of ministry!

He is at work and wants to do great things today, not just in the material things that can be helpful, but in the great project of bringing things on this earth to a close. That involves getting people ready to meet Him! That is the highest priority for God today. His mission is to prepare homes up there and hearts down here. Which do you think is the bigger challenge?

Last Sabbath we read from Daniel 8 verses 13 and 14, which I will paraphrase as follows: “How long will evil, the trampling and throwing truth to the ground, continue? And He said, ‘Till 2300 days, then the sanctuary will be cleansed.’”

The visions of Daniel bring us down to the “end,” when Jesus will come back in the clouds of heaven and take His children home. Before He does that, Daniel tells us, certain things need to be settled. Charges that were brought against God by the devil need to be answered. That was the message of chapter seven, when the prophet saw in his vision the horn power destroying, but “then the judgment.” That is also the message of the vision of chapter eight, though expressed in sanctuary language.

There was one day in the year which Jews understood, and still understand, to be the “day of judgment,” and that was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On this day, which took place in the fall of the year, at harvest time, both the sanctuary and the people were cleansed from all their sin. This has to do with us today, as we live in the very closing hours of earth’s history. Jesus is now cleansing the sanctuary above, and cleansing the sanctuary of our hearts below. Remember that one of the last acts of His ministry was to cleanse the temple.

Gathering together a people who will surrender their lives completely to His will and allow the Holy Spirit to change their way of thinking, so that their thoughts, acts, habits and characters reflect the image of Jesus is the focus of the message of Daniel 8. God’s name has been put on trial, as we’ve discussed. Satan brought charges, necessitating a “judgment.” God wants to point to His people and say to the devil, “You see, there are those who resist your temptations. There are those who believe Me and trust that I can give them victory over sin.” Something very wonderful and exciting is happening, as Jesus is creating exhibits of His grace in the lives of those who yield to Him. I believe when the question of “How long?” was asked in the vision, Jesus turned to Daniel and with joyful anticipation and electrifying enthusiasm said, “After 2300 days/years, the sanctuary will be cleansed.”

This is a timing trigger. This is something that must be accomplished and completed before the great demonstration can be brought to its end. When Lucifer began his rebellion, God in His great wisdom chose not to put his life to an end immediately, nor the lives of Adam and Eve, but to allow things to continue for the purpose of demonstration. It would be a *two-fold demonstration*. It would first be a demonstration of the effects of sin, because before this death, pain and many of the far-reaching effects of sin were unknown. The universe must be able to see the full

ramifications of disobedience. That was part “one” of the demonstration. It is my conviction that enough evidence has accumulated for that part of the demonstration to be wrapped up.

The other demonstration that needed to be seen had to do with the charges Lucifer brought against God’s government and His law. He said that God’s law was impossible to keep, and that creatures would be better off without the restraint of His requirements. He pointed to Adam’s failure as evidence of his claim. In part two of the demonstration, God wants to make it clear that His law is possible to keep. It is true that once man sinned, obedience could no longer be rendered by humans in their own strength, but God’s plan of salvation includes the components of mercy and grace; mercy to forgive the mistakes and sins of the past, and grace to give power to live a new life in Christ. His plan is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27.

God’s plan anticipates that fallen man, surrendered to the Holy Spirit, can live as did Christ. He says, “*I will make* a man (or woman) more precious than fine gold.” Isaiah 13:12. His creative power is sufficient to overcome every defect in our lives. The only limitation is our resistance or doubt.

God is looking for a group of people through whom He can display His power and love. This is not to say that this has not been His goal or that it hasn’t happened in the past. All throughout history there have been those who have said “Yes” to God and walked with Him. There was godly Enoch, who walked with Him before the flood. There was Elijah, who though a man with our own mistake-prone nature, nevertheless matured in his faith and was taken to heaven by a whirlwind. Joseph and Daniel, stalwart and true, exhibited what it means to walk according to the Spirit.

In the New Testament, the once explosive fisherman John who became the beloved saint, and Paul, once a murderer of Christians, now an apostle of the Lord tell the same story of genuine change through the power of the Gospel. Doubtless the two Mary’s should be included, the mother of Jesus who, when faced with something seemingly impossible, responded, “Be it to me according to Your word,” and experienced Christ within through the power of the Holy Spirit in a very literal way. And the other Mary, who before had given her body to please the flesh, yet repented and became the closest disciple of the Lord, bathing his feet with her tears and ointment, being the first to see and hold Him on resurrection morning.

Yes, there have been some, but now God is looking for a group, a representative number who will say “Yes” to Him and allow Him to work in their lives. This is the second part of the demonstration. The first part, the revelation of the effects of sin, has more than reached its necessary level. The world has seen enough violence, pride, selfishness and rebellion. It’s waiting now for the revelation of the sons and daughters of God. The angels are holding back the last day winds of apocalyptic destruction until God’s servants are sealed, which is another way to say that they have yielded to His Spirit and grace.

The angels who led Lot and his family out of Sodom said to them, “Hurry, escape. We cannot destroy the city until you are completely removed from it.” Genesis 19:22. There had already been ample evidence of the wickedness; what was now needed was a separation of God’s people from the corrupting influence of the city.

Jesus tells us of the timing mechanism in His plan, and what He’s waiting for, by numerous means. Through parable, calendar, story, and relationship, He encourages us to yield to Him and allow His grace to change us. If you have your spiritual eyeglasses on, see what the Spirit is teaching us today.

Listen to this **parable**. “And He said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately He puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.’” Mark 4:26-30.

Without question the parable Jesus told relates to spiritual growth. It is spoken of as being a mystery, something we can’t completely explain. To this day, I wouldn’t be able to tell you how a seed becomes a plant or a tree, with the ability to produce fruit which has itself seeds to reproduce. This is a miracle, and so is spiritual growth. But to deny it because it is unexplainable is foolish! To refuse to benefit by eating the product because it can’t be explained is imprudent!

Notice the timing aspect in the parable. “When the grain ripens, immediately He puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” God is the one Who put energy in the seed to sprout, He made the stalk to grow and the head to ripen. It’s all God’s work. He does it; we see the results every day, and what He does in the physical realm He promises also to do in the spiritual. To say, “I’ll never overcome my temper” is a form of atheism! It is a denial of His creative power to bring

change. To say, “I’ll never be able to get rid of impure thoughts” robs God of His capability and glory of bringing our “every thought into captivity” through Christ.

This is the good news of salvation! Christ came as a Savior from sin. That is precisely what Mary and Joseph were told, “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. Sin is not good, and though it has a powerful hold on human hearts, Jesus is stronger. He is a mighty Savior! He can conquer every sin in our lives, if we will let Him.

What does the parable say? When the grain is mature, the harvest comes. The harvest is the end of the world, the angels are the reapers. But there’s no sense in sending out the reapers for one or two ripened grains here or there. Except for the very last remaining ones, all the main prophecies have been fulfilled. The demonstration of sin’s wicked results has long been sufficient. Now, Jesus is longing to see a reflection of His character in His people, a *demonstration that His power is greater than sin*. When He does, He will come.

If you have your spiritual eyeglasses on, you will see that this Gospel is told not only in parable, but by the **calendar**. The Hebrew calendar is what we call a lunar calendar, in that it depends on the cycles of the moon for change. Israelites were taught that the New Moon was beginning of each month. But, because a lunar month is only about 29 ½ days in length, one year of 12 lunar months is only 354 days, or about 11 days short of a solar year. If you continued on this path without any correction, before too long your “January” would be in “July.”

A simple method of correction was employed, and that was to add another month on certain occasions, which turned out to be about 7 times every 19 years, to make the adjustment. The twelfth month was called “Adar,” and the addition of the thirteenth month was called “second Adar,” “Veadar,” or “Adar Bet.” But how was this accomplished?

A very simple test was conducted toward the end of the year, within the twelfth month. Because one of the first things that took place in the New Year was the “wave sheaf offering,” it would be necessary to have enough ripe barley so as to be able to celebrate the festival. So in the twelfth month, the priest would go and examine the fields to see if the crop was ripe, in which case the next month would be Abib, the first month of the New Year. If it was apparent to him that the grain wasn’t sufficiently mature, the New Year would be postponed, and they would insert another month to allow more time for ripening. Seven years, on the average, out of 19, that’s what happened. Eventually, a formula was devised after the

Babylonian captivity so that the occurrences of the 13<sup>th</sup> month were published and distributed ahead of time.

But that was not the way it was done originally, nor is it the way certain conservative groups like the Karaite Jews still do today. Notice this quotation: “The Biblical year begins with the first New Moon after the barley in Israel reaches the stage in its ripeness called Abib. The period between one year and the next is either 12 or 13 lunar months. Because of this, it is important to check the state of the Barley crops at the end of the 12th month. If the barley is Abib at this time, then the following New Moon is Hodesh Ha-Aviv (“New Moon of the Abib”). If the barley is still immature, we must wait another month and then check the barley again at the end of the 13th month.

“By convention, a 12-month year is referred to as a Regular Year while a 13th month year is referred to as a Leap Year. This should not be confused with Leap Years in the Gregorian (Christian) Calendar, which involve the “intercalation” (addition) of a single day (Feb. 29). In contrast, the Biblical Leap Year involves the intercalation of an entire lunar month (“Thirteenth Month”, also called “Adar Bet”). In general, it can only be determined whether a year is a Leap Year a few days before the end of the 12th Month.” <http://www.karaite-korner.org/abib.shtml>

Do you have your spiritual eyeglasses on to see the deep significance of this procedure? The “first fruits” were to be a token offering, a representation of all the crop, and presented to the Lord as a gift. When Jesus rose from the grave, there were those who rose with Him and went to heaven as “first fruits.” That was one fulfillment of that prophecy. But Revelation points us to a last day “fruit fruits” exhibit.

“Then I looked, and behold a Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb.” Revelation 14:1, 4. The ones who have their “Father’s name in their forehead,” which is symbolic language for saying they have God’s character, God’s way of thinking in their minds are called “first fruits.”

Jesus is looking today across the fields of the world. He’s measuring those growing in grace. He waits longingly to see the maturity that He’s willing to give. So far, He’s had to insert additional time, “thirteenth months” because as a representative

group, the maturity hasn't come. How He longs for the harvest, the New Year of eternal bliss!

This message is told in parable, in the calendar and in story. Keep your spiritual eyeglasses on as we review how Joseph was sold by his brothers and found himself in Egypt, where by God's providence he was elevated to the position of prime minister, in charge of a huge grain gathering enterprise during the seven years of prophesied plenty, which would be dispensed during the years of famine. So it was that his own brothers came to buy grain in Egypt, not suspecting for a moment that the one they had sold into slavery was the noble and honored one who stood next to Pharaoh.

Before he let them know who he was, Joseph wanted to find out if his brothers were the same. Were they the same ones who had sold him for 20 pieces of silver? Were they the same brothers who cared not for his feelings, nor those of his father? Some simple tests were devised by the wise Joseph. These would be opportunities for the characters of his brothers to be revealed.

First, the purchase money was replaced in the grain sacks. It would be interesting to know when they came back if they would acknowledge their windfall. And they did! Evidently money was no longer the driving force of their lives.

Then, a special dinner was served, at which the plate of Benjamin, Joseph's only full brother, was heaped with five times as much food. It would be interesting to see if jealousy were still a ruling factor in their hearts. Evidently not! The dinner passed without so much as a comment on the disproportionate servings.

One more test must be administered. Joseph arranged that his own silver drinking cup be placed in the sack of Benjamin. When his steward caught up with the brothers outside of town and accused them rudely, they of course denied any wrongdoing. Sacks were opened, from the eldest on down, till the fateful moment when the strings on Benjamin's sack were loosened.

The brothers were devastated! It had been their proposal that if the cup were found, the culprit would die and the others be taken as slaves, but Joseph had given explicit instruction. That would not be the result. If the cup were found, the culprit would be taken as a slave and the others would return home. Why did Joseph do it this way? To reconstruct the scene of Dothan 20 years before. Joseph wanted to know, Would the brothers be willing to go back to dad and tell him that Benjamin was taken a slave in Egypt? Two decades before it required both betrayal and falsehood, which their callous hearts did without hesitation. Now it required

nothing. They didn't have to lie. They just had to tell the truth. Would it be different this time?

Upon returning to Egypt, Judah, one who had led out in the sale of Joseph years before, delivered one of the most impassioned speeches of all time. "Take me instead," he pleaded. "I cannot let you take Benjamin. It will break his father's heart."

Joseph saw what he had been looking for. He was convinced that these were not the same brothers. He saw evidence that greed had been replaced by compassion; jealousy by brotherly love. Notice the timing of all this: "Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him." Genesis 45:1. When he was presented with clear evidence of changed lives, Joseph revealed himself to them. Do you have your spiritual eyeglasses on today? Can you see Jesus in this story? When Jesus sees that the characters of His brothers, those who had before denied and sold Him have changed, He will reveal Himself.

With our spiritual eyeglasses on, we've seen Christ's purpose through parable, the calendar and story. Lastly, we look at one of the most beautiful and often referred to illustrations of the relationship between Christ and His church, that of Groom and Bride. I refer you to a most magnificent psalm, Psalm 45, subtitled "The Glories of the Messiah and His Bride." It is from the poetic language of this psalm that the hymn was written "Ivory Palaces." (Verse 8.)

Look at verse 13 particularly. "The royal daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is woven with gold." Here the beauty of the bride is extolled and said to be "all glorious within." What's worse than a car sporting a fine polish with a blown engine? What's worse than slicing open a promising avocado only to see darkness inside? What's worse than to see someone gifted with physical beauty but cursed by selfishness and ugliness on the inside?

The Messiah's Bride is described as being "all glorious within." That's a promise! That's God's Covenant of grace being fulfilled! When God created man, it was in His own image, in His own likeness. Sin marred that image, but God claims the ability to re-make it. He claims to be able to restore the likeness of Jesus in our hearts if we will let Him.

The psalm goes on to say, "She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors. The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought; they shall enter the King's palace." Psalm 45:14, 15. Revelation picks up the refrain, "And I heard, as it were, the

voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thundering, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made her self ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteousness acts of the saints.’ Revelation 19:6-8.

Oh what a day of rejoicing that will be when the Bride has “made herself ready.” Will you be a part of that group, my friend? Will you say, “Yes” to God and allow Him to have complete control over your heart, mind and activities? He is able, His blood sufficient, His grace ample for all our needs