

## **APPENDIX TWENTY-TWO**

Daniel 8 – Its Relationship To The Kingdom Of God



## **Daniel 8 — Its Relationship to the Kingdom of God**

DESMOND FORD

Bible Department, Australasian Missionary College

[In many parts of the world our men are digging deeply into the prophetic word, in harmony with God's purpose. In the book *Evangelism*, page 198, we read: "Increased light will shine upon all the grand truths of prophecy, and they will be seen in freshness and brilliancy, because the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness will illuminate the whole."

With this thrilling promise in mind we present this article as a stimulus to deeper study of some familiar prophecies. — Editors.]

**S**EVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS stand almost alone today in affirming that the prophecy of Daniel 8 has special significance for the church in this generation. More than a century ago expositors of many countries and creeds affirmed a similar position, but undoubtedly the majority of commentators throughout the Christian Era have applied the little-horn symbol to the times of the Maccabees, or to Antiochus Epiphanes, as a type of antichrist. If Seventh-day Adventists are to maintain their traditional position regarding the latter-day application of this prophecy, every possible clue to interpretation must be studied and used.

It is the suggestion of this article that a primary key to the interpretation of Daniel 8 has been neglected, and now requires recovery and application. This key consists of the dominant theme of the whole book as suggested not only by its contents but by its historical context.

Daniel 8:14 has too often been considered virtually on its own, and its setting in the whole book, and as regards the times of the book, has been almost universally overlooked. The taking away of the daily ministration and the treading down of the sanctuary as well as its promised vindication is not just the theme of this eighth chapter, it is the theme of the entire book. This prophetic volume was written at a time when it seemed that God's kingdom on earth had crumbled. The sanctuary at Jerusalem, the earthly centre of the theocratic kingdom, had been trodden underfoot by the Babylonians. The daily sacrifice had been suspended and the host of worshipers carried away into bondage. At this time the heathen were in evident supremacy, while the people who were the possessors of God's truth seemed but the offscouring of the earth. From all earthly appearances, prospects of restoration for God's kingdom in Israel, as symbolized by the sanctuary services, seemed slight indeed. At such a time God inspired the captive Daniel (whose name means "God is the Judge") to foretell His final judgments and the restoration of His kingdom to the saints. To the sorrowing prophet, who had ever before him the vision of the desecrated sanctuary site at Jerusalem, God gave other visions promising the vindication of all that was symbolized by the sacred Temple. Thus the history of Israel's earthly sanctuary is used as a microcosm in which the age-long controversy between good and evil is illustrated. It represents God's kingdom on earth apparently overshadowed by evil but finally to be vindicated.

It is not by chance that the book of Daniel begins and ends with reference to the attacks of wicked powers upon the church and sanctuary of God (Dan. 1:1, 2; 11:31, 45). These references to the apparent success of wicked powers in the great conflict between good and evil give point to the dominant motif of the whole book, which is the eventual vindication of God's truth and people, as manifested in the setting up of the eternal kingdom of heaven and the preceding destruction of its opposers. No prophecy of Daniel can be fully interpreted without recognizing this emphasis on the establishment of the kingdom of God. Any interpretation that would limit the fulfilment of any of these visions to Maccabean times

rather than to the “time of the end” is entirely out of harmony with the context and theme of the prophecy. Each and every vision given to the exiled prophet climaxed in a view of God’s kingdom or the events that would usher it in. Therefore, let us consider some key verses of Daniel that make it very plain that Daniel 8:14 is but one facet of a theme traceable through the whole book.

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon into Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God” (Dan. 1:1, 2).

Here is Daniel’s introductory picture of history relating to the suspension of the sanctuary services due to the invasion of Babylon. Daniel mentions only the first capture of Jerusalem by Babylon, but this event was the beginning of the end. At this time the smaller golden vessels of the sanctuary were removed to Nebuchadnezzar’s temple as trophies of his victory. Probably these included the golden candlesticks and the ark, and thus the sanctuary of Jerusalem remained but a shell. The final dissolution of its services eighteen years later occurred when the glorious Temple of Solomon was burned to the ground. It is hardly possible to conceive of the stunning nature of this blow to Israel. To the devout Israelite the triumph of evil seemed complete. The sanctuary of God, the dwelling place of the Shekinah, had been desecrated, and the daily sacrifices pointing to the coming Messiah had been taken away. In addition to this, the guardians of the oracles of God were in chains. Truth, therefore, had been cast down to the ground, and the host was being trodden underfoot.

Thus in the opening verses of Daniel we have the historical embryo of the prophecy concerning the work of the little horn described in Daniel 8:9-14. It cannot be affirmed too strongly that we also have here the key to the whole book. Many Bible students have remarked on the frequency with which the introductions to various Bible books provide the clue for the interpretation of the subsequent matter. It is certainly so in this case. In view of the apparent crumbling of God’s visible kingdom on earth, epitomized by the mysteries of the sanctuary, the captive prophet is now given visions that foretell the vindication of truth and its believers and the final establishment of God’s eternal kingdom. An integral part of this theme is the destruction of wicked powers and thus their prominence in each vision, which is climaxed by the victory of the kingdom of truth and righteousness.

Consider now the various chapters of Daniel in the light of this theme, paying special attention to the verses relative to the vindication of God’s people, judgments upon the wicked, and the setting up of God’s kingdom.

Chapter 2 climaxes in verse 44: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

In Daniel 3 the same theme is discernible although it is not quite so obvious. Here is a vignette of Israel’s experience — oppression of the saints by a heathen power, apparent supremacy of false worship, impending destruction of the true worshipers of Jehovah, but finally their vindication and deliverance accompanied by judgment of the wicked (verses 25-30).

In chapter 4 “a watcher and an holy one ... from heaven” (verse 13) is described as decreeing judgment upon “those that walk in pride” (verse 37). The purpose of these events is described in verse 17 — “to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth.”

Chapter 5 is similar, with its description of Heaven's decree of judgment upon the heathen who polluted the sacred vessels of the Temple. Note the emphasis given to the sanctuary in verse 3. "Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God." Then verse 5 declares, "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace." Some commentators — for example, Barnes — believe the candlestick here mentioned to be the one taken from the sanctuary and that the reference to the writing being inscribed nearby was to denote that the coming judgment was because of the sacrilege connected with the profaning of the sacred Temple vessels.

In chapter 6 we have a repetition of the theme of chapter 3. Here again we have war upon the saints, false worship exalted, and then God's intervention to save His own, accompanied by the destruction of the wicked. The God of Daniel is acknowledged by the heathen King as "the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end" (verse 26).

In Daniel 7 we have projected into the future a large-scale enactment of the persecutions Daniel witnessed during Babylon's opposition to Israel and Israel's God. The climax is reached in verses 25-28, where the 1260 years of papal supremacy is brought to view: "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Once more the stress is upon the vindication of the saints, the destruction of the wicked, and the setting up of God's kingdom.

Leaving chapter 8 until last, let us consider chapter 9. Apparently the prophet felt that the previous vision intimated a prolonging of Jerusalem's desolation, and the prospect of delay in restoring the sanctuary and its services moves him to earnest intercessory prayer. Note especially verses 17-19: "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. ... Behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name ... O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God." Daniel pleaded not for material blessings upon his people but for the progress of the kingdom of God. Thus his words "defer not, for thine own sake." Undeniably, to Daniel the sanctuary stands for the kingdom of God on the earth.

In the prophecy of the seventy weeks we read of that which must have pierced the heart of the aged seer. "The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined" (verse 26). The same prophecy that foretells the restoration of the city and the sanctuary also foretells their destruction because of the unfaithfulness of the people of the covenant. There is yet another reference to the sanctuary in this chapter — "to anoint the most Holy." Every Adventist minister is aware that this expression is almost always applied to things rather than to persons and that it has particular application to inauguration of services in the heavenly sanctuary. (See Exodus 30:25-29.) We would not pretend that Daniel understood the full significance of this revelation. Undoubtedly the words of Peter apply specifically to this captive prophet when he wrote, "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently ... ; searching what, or what manner of time the spirit

of Christ which was in them did signify” (1 Peter 1:10,11). The point to be stressed with reference to this chapter is that once more the sanctuary is prominent as the centre of the great controversy between good and evil, and that the progress of the kingdom of God is vitally associated with the history of the sanctuary.

Chapters 10 to 12 are the record of Daniel’s final vision and should always be studied as a unit. According to chapter 10:14 the focal point of the vision is “the latter days.” As the actions of the opposer of God’s church is described, the sanctuary is brought to view once more. “And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate” (Dan. 11:31). In the last verse of Daniel 11 is described the assault of an invading power upon the “glorious holy mountain.” However we may interpret this verse, undoubtedly to the prophet it enshrined allusions to the assaults of Babylon on the mountain city of Jerusalem, called glorious and holy because of its possession of the sanctuary and the Shekinah. Some Adventist scholars believe that this portrays the final assault on the church of God by the antichrist and that the following verse (chapter 12:1) describes Christ’s intervention and deliverance. One thing is quite clear — that in this climactic prophecy of the book, again the sanctuary is in focus in connection with the latter days and the setting up of the kingdom of God as described in chapter 12:1-3.

What then shall we say regarding the prophecy of chapter 8? As chapter 7 amplified chapter 2, we find chapter 8 amplifies chapter 7. Daniel 7:25 describes the oppression of the saints and warfare upon the sacred things of God, including His times and laws. In chapter 8:9-13 a similar work is discussed. Again is pictured the wearing out of the saints (the host), and again is described how the truth of the most High would be handled insolently. Under the symbolism of the desolating of the sanctuary is pictured how false worship would apparently displace the true “for many days” even unto “the time of the end.” “The place of his [the prince of the worshiping host] sanctuary was cast down.”

When viewed in its relationship to the whole book and to the historical context of Daniel it is evident that Daniel 8:11-14 is not discussing only an isolated incident of persecution in the days of the Maccabees. Rather, it is portraying, in the symbolism characteristic of the whole book, the issues of the great controversy between good and evil; the issue of false worship as opposed to true worship, the issue of the apparent success of wicked powers, et cetera. The prophecy can be rightly interpreted only when placed alongside the other visions of Daniel, which culminate in the ultimate resurgence of right and truth. As the prophetic chains of chapters 2, 7, and 10 to 12 describe the prelude to the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth, so it is with the vision of chapter 8.

Daniel 8:14 declares: “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (“vindicated” or “justified”). This is a promise that the hour will dawn in “the time of the end” when the worshiping saints who have been made as the refuse of the earth will be vindicated before men and angels. The truth that has been cast down to the ground will be uplifted. The dominion of wicked powers over the hearts and minds of men will be taken away and the kingdom of darkness gradually displaced by the kingdom of light. Revelation 18:1 reveals that the earth is to be lighted by the spiritual glory of the final message to the world before the return of Christ in literal glory, and Daniel 8:14 promises that prior to the restoration of God’s visible kingdom there shall be a restoration of truth among men. The 2300 days began with literal Israel coming out of literal Babylon to rebuild and restore literal Jerusalem, and they will end with spiritual Israel coming out of spiritual Babylon to be “the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.” Two of the historical books of the

Old Testament — Ezra and Nehemiah — described the exodus from Babylon and the restoration of Jerusalem and the sanctuary. Isaiah 58:12, 13 and Revelation 18:1-4, and other passages, apply this movement as prefiguring the final work of God in the earth. The people who turn away their foot from the Sabbath have it said of them, “And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations.” In God’s final work upon the earth the closing chapters of Isaiah will be fulfilled. The glory of the Lord will rise upon His church and the Gentiles will be the light and brightness of its rising.

The prophecy of the cleansing of the sanctuary thus parallels the prophecies of the restoration from Babylon given in the Old Testament. Both point to the ushering in of Christ’s kingdom as the beauty of holiness and truth become enshrined in the latter-day church.

Such an interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel 8 is in harmony with the theme of the whole book, the vindication of God’s truth and His worshipers, and the victory of His kingdom over opposition and counterfeits of wicked powers. Such an interpretation is in agreement with the last book of the New Testament, which by its repeated references to Babylon and the prophecies of Daniel teaches that the events of that day were typical of latter-day events in connection with spiritual Israel.

The references in Daniel to the sanctuary (chapters 1:3 5:2-5; 8:11-14; 9:17, 24, 26; 11:42, 56) are thus seen to form a complete pattern portraying the agelong controversy between good and evil in the microcosm of Israel’s sanctuary. To restrict the meaning of Daniel 8:9-14 to Maccabean times only is to ignore the over-all theme of this part of the sacred canon.

It was not by chance that almost in the same breath in which Christ spoke of the gospel of the kingdom going to all the world, He commanded His church to understand Daniel the prophet. There is a vital relationship between the two. When we as a people understand this precious book and permit Christ to reign in the sanctuary of our hearts, then the kingdom of God will be hastened and we will see our Lord.

*January, 1960*

THE MINISTRY