

Sabbath School Lesson #9 – From Contamination to Purification – 22-28 Feb 2020

Christ would have us study the prophesies in Daniel. This week's Lesson is on Daniel 8, but it has an intimate connection with Daniel 9, to which connection we first turn. Daniel chapter 8 records a vision which the prophet had "in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar." In that vision Daniel saw the last three great universal empires of the world, under the symbols of a ram, a goat, and a little horn; and at the close, he heard one angel, in reply to the question, "How long shall be the vision?" say, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Daniel 8:14). Then the angel Gabriel received the divine command, "Make this man to understand the vision," which he at once proceeded to do. He briefly, yet comprehensively, sketched the course of empires from the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire to the overthrow of the Roman power. Verses 20-25 of chapter 8 cover the interpretation of what Daniel saw, and in verse 25 the angel begins the interpretation of what Daniel heard. Said he, "And the vision of the evening and the morning is true." Then Daniel fainted, and the angel was obliged to postpone any further explanation.

The commission which the angel had received remained, however, in full force, and Daniel himself was not the one to rest quietly with the vision unexplained. In the first year of Darius, Daniel knew that the time of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon had nearly expired, and thinking, doubtless, that his vision in the third year of Belshazzar, part of which was still unexplained, applied to this time, he engaged in earnest prayer to God. Verses 4-19 of the ninth chapter of Daniel record this prayer, and in the twentieth verse the prophet begins: "And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision" (Daniel 9:20-23). Now note these points: 1. Part of the vision of the eighth chapter was still unexplained. 2. Daniel was pleading for light upon this unexplained portion, as is evident from verse 22. 3. The same angel who had received the commission to make Daniel understand the vision, and who had partially done his work, now came the second time. 4. Daniel identifies him as "the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning," an obvious reference to "the vision" of chapter 8. 5. Almost the first thing the angel said was, "understand the matter, and consider *the vision*." What vision? Why, the only one that needed considering, the only one to which such matter of fact reference could possibly be made, – the vision recorded in the eighth chapter. 6. And lastly, without any further introduction, the angel began the explanation by saying, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people," etc. The point in the vision where he had ceased his explanation, was the time portion, and right there he begins. These facts prove that verses 24-27 of Daniel 9 are the completion of the explanation of the vision of Daniel 8. The close connection between the two chapters having been demonstrated, we proceed the narrative.

Daniel saw in vision a ram with the peculiarity that one horn was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. He "saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great" (Daniel 8:3-4).

Next he saw a goat coming furiously from the west, having one notable horn between his eyes. "And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns; and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. Therefore the he goat waxed very great; and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and

toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the Prince of the host," etc (Daniel 8:5-11). After giving some further details concerning this wonderful little horn, Daniel thus concludes account of the vision (8:13-14):

"Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spoke, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

An angel explains the vision to Daniel as follows: "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia; and the great horn between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many; he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. And the vision of the evening and the morning is true" (8:20-26).

Two universal kingdoms that were to follow Babylon are named, and the other one is so clearly indicated, that we can readily name it. The power that acquired the lordship of the world as the result of the third revolution spoken of by Ezekiel was Rome, here plainly indicated by its work of standing up against the Prince of princes. After the death of Alexander, king of Greece, his kingdom was divided into four parts, and it was by the conquest of Macedonia, one of these four divisions, in BC 68, that Rome acquired such strength that it could dictate to the world. Hence it is said to come forth from one of them.

But there was a period of time connected with this vision, which the angel did not explain with the rest of the vision. It was the twenty-three hundred days, or, literally, twenty-three hundred evenings and mornings. That these are not literal days may be known from this: This is a prophecy of symbols, in which short-lived animals are used to represent kingdoms that existed during represent a longer period, in the interpretation, since two thousand three hundred days – a little more than six years – would scarcely be the beginning of the first kingdom. So we are warranted in concluding that each day stands for a year, as in Ezekiel 4:6, where the Lord uses days in symbolising years. Later on the same angel came back, as the result of Daniel's prayer, to make known the remainder of the vision, namely, about the days (Daniel 9:20-23). Beginning where he left off, as though not a moment had intervened, the angel said, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people," etc (Daniel 9:24).

Seventy weeks, four hundred and ninety years, were determined or cut off from the two thousand three hundred years, upon the Jewish people. They were to begin from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem. This commandment full and complete we find in Ezra 7:11-26, and it was given in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, which was BC 457. Beginning in the year 457 BC, four hundred and ninety years would end in the year 34 AD. But the last one of these prophetic weeks was divided. Sixty-nine of them – 483 years – reaching to the year 27 AD, marked the time of the revelation of the Anointed One, the time when Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost at His baptism.

In the middle of the last week of years, namely three and one-half years after the baptism of Jesus, Messiah was "cut off, but not for Himself." During the entire week, or seven years, the covenant was confirmed. The whole period of two thousand three hundred years, which can readily be calculated, reaches to the year 1844 AD. Since 1844, "We are in the great day of atonement, and the sacred work of Christ for the people of God that is going on at the present time in the heavenly sanctuary should be our constant study. Everyone who teaches the truth by precept and example will give the trumpet a certain sound. You need ever to cultivate spirituality, because it is not natural for you to be heavenly-minded. The great work is before us of leading the people away from worldly customs and practices, up higher and higher, to spirituality, piety, and earnest work for God" (5 *Testimonies* 520).