BENEATH HIS WINGS

Several years ago National Geographic magazine published a story about a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park in the United States. After it ended, forest rangers trekked up a mountain to assess the damage. One ranger found a bird literally burned to ashes at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick.

When he moved it, three tiny baby birds scurried from under their dead mother’s wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings. She could have flown to safety, but had refused to abandon her babies. What a picture of Christ!

The fires of God’s judgment burned themselves out on Him at Calvary, and all who are in Christ are safe forever beneath His wings. At the cross Christ was judged as a condemned sinner so that we could be judged as righteous citizens of the heavenly kingdom. He was judged as a criminal so that we could be set free from the destructive fires of eternal loss, both figuratively and literally.
Write out Daniel 8:14 and 9:24–27 from the translation of your choice. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map it.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

Why is it significant that the death of Jesus, as revealed in Daniel 9:24–27, is directly linked to the judgment in Daniel 8:14?

What great truth is taught here by this link?

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**2,300 DAYS**

As we have already seen, there must be a judgment before Christ comes. The angel announces in a loud voice that “the hour of His judgment has come” (Rev. 14:7), and the book of Daniel gives us the time when this judgment began.

Each Jew understood the meaning of the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary. It occurred annually on the Day of Atonement, which was the day of judgment. Although Daniel understood the concept of the cleansing of the sanctuary and the judgment, he was confused about the 2,300-day prophecy (see Dan. 8:14).

Sent by God, Gabriel began to explain the vision to Daniel (Dan. 8:15–26). He revealed that the ram represents Media-Persia and the goat represents Greece (verses 20, 21). Though not explicitly named like the two powers before it, the next entity, the little horn, is clearly Rome (verses 9, 23, 24). Gabriel then described a kind of religious-political phase of Rome, which would “cast down the truth to the ground” (verses 10–12) and interfere with Christ’s heavenly ministry (verses 10–12). The cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14, the climax of the chapter, is God’s answer to the challenge of earthly and religious powers that have attempted to usurp His authority. It is part of God’s divine solution to the sin problem.

At the end of chapter 8 we can clearly see that Daniel did not understand the part of the vision about the 2,300 days: “I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it” (verse 27). The part about the ram, the goat, and the little horn had already been explained, the first two powers having been identified by name (verses 20, 21), but the cleansing of the sanctuary was not. Daniel was therefore speaking of the 2,300 days.

The next chapter, Daniel 9, records the angel Gabriel returning to explain the 2,300 days: “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand” (verse 22). Gabriel amazed Daniel as he revealed the answer to his prayer, which was much broader than he ever imagined. He took Daniel down the stream of time and revealed the truth about the coming Messiah, nearly giving the exact dates of the beginning of His ministry and His cruel death, events that are directly tied to the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. In other words, Christ’s death and the judgment are inseparably linked.

Some argue that the 2,300 days are literal days rather than years. They also believe the little horn of Daniel 8 applies to the Seleucid military leader Antiochus Epiphanes (216 B.C.–164 B.C.), who attacked Jerusalem and defiled the Jewish temple. However, this interpretation is erroneous for two reasons: First, 2,300 days does not fit Antiochus’ time frame. Second, this belief directly contradicts the angel’s clear instruction that the vision applies to the “time of the end,” because Antiochus obviously did not live at the time of the end.
490 DAYS

The angel plainly instructed Daniel to “consider the matter, and understand the vision” (Dan. 9:23). What matter, and what vision? Because there is no vision recorded in Daniel 9, the angel Gabriel must have been speaking of the part of the vision in Daniel 8 that the prophet did not understand—the 2,300 days (Dan. 8:27).

The first portion of the explanation in Daniel 9:24–27 relates to God’s people, the Jews: “Seventy weeks are determined for your people” (verse 24). In biblical prophecy, one prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezek. 4:6; Num. 14:34). In Daniel and Revelation, when there is symbolic imagery, there is usually a symbolic time prophecy as well. One of the ways we can be certain that the day-year principle of prophecy applies here is that when we use it in Daniel’s prophecy, a historical event lines up perfectly with the prophesied time line (see inVite). If we apply this principle, 70 weeks are composed of 490 days. Since one prophetic day equals one literal year, 490 days are 490 literal years.

Gabriel tells Daniel that 490 years are “cut off” (the literal meaning of the Hebrew word chathak, sometimes translated “determined”). Cut off from what? It could be the only other time prophecy alluded to here: the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14. These 490 years, a time prophecy, are directly linked to the time prophecy of Daniel 8:14. Thus, we can see that Gabriel came to help Daniel understand what he struggled with in the previous chapter: the 2,300 days.

The first 490 years of the 2,300-year prophecy were designated especially for the Jewish nation of antiquity and the coming of the Messiah. The remaining part of the 2,300 years has to do with God’s people, both Jew and Gentile, along with the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and ultimately, the second coming of Christ.

The first 490 years apply to the first Advent of the Messiah, which ended in A.D. 34. Subtracting 490 years from 2,300 years leaves us with 1,810 years. These next 1,810 years apply to God’s people. If we begin at A.D. 34 and add 1,810 years, we come to the year A.D. 1844.

In light of the cleansing or restoration of the truth about the sanctuary and heaven’s end-time judgment, God makes His final appeal to all humanity in Revelation 14:6, 7 to respond to His love, accept His grace, and live godly, obedient lives.

Because of the people’s sins—their iniquities—Leviticus 16:16 teaches that the sanctuary had to be cleansed, which could happen only with blood. It’s the same with us. We need a Savior, whose life was symbolized by the animals slain on the Day of Atonement, as the only way to pass through the judgment.

On that annual day of judgment, Leviticus 23:26–29 states that the Israelites were to “afflict their souls.” This expression indicates that they were to humble themselves, examine their hearts, confess their sins, repent, and ask God to cleanse them, just as the high priest was cleansing the earthly sanctuary.

(Cont. on p. 53.)
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What relationship do the following verses have with Daniel 8–9?

Ezra 7
Matthew 3:13–17
Romans 5:6–9
Mark 15:38
Leviticus 16:16

What other verses/promises come to mind with Daniel 8–9?

(Cont. from inTerpret, p. 52):

The prophetic chapters of Daniel 7–9 and Revelation 14 focus especially on the urgent appeals to prepare given in the judgment hour. Since 1844 we have been living in the judgment hour, affirmed by the message of the first angel: “The hour of His judgment has come” (Rev. 14:7).

(Cont. from inVite, p. 54):

in A.D. 31, Christ confirmed the everlasting covenant with His blood by dying on the cross, and the sacrificial system lost any and all prophetic and salvific significance.

These prophecies reveal that Christ, the Messiah, would be crucified and cause the sacrificial system to cease its prophetic function in the spring of A.D. 31. These predictions were fulfilled in every detail. Exactly at Passover, when the high priest was offering the Passover lamb, Christ was sacrificed for us.

(Cont. from inSight, p. 55):

sanctuary, and is there performing the closing work of His priestly office, in fulfillment of the words of the angel to the prophet Daniel.

The 2300 days had been found to begin when the commandment of Artaxerxes for the restoration and building of Jerusalem went into effect, in the autumn of 457 B.C. Taking this as the starting point, there was perfect harmony in the application of all the events foretold in the explanation of that period in Daniel 9:25–27. . . . The seventy weeks, or 490 years, were to pertain especially to the Jews. At the expiration of this period, the nation sealed its rejection of Christ by the persecution of His disciples, and the apostles turned to the Gentiles, A.D. 34. The first 490 years of the 2300 having then ended, 1810 years would remain. From A.D. 34, 1810 years extend to 1844. “Then,” said the angel, “shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”

Our faith in reference to the messages of the first, second, and third angels was correct. The great waymarks we have passed are immovable. Although the hosts of hell may try to tear them from their foundation, and triumph in the thought that they have succeeded, yet they do not succeed. These pillars of truth stand firm as the eternal hills, unmoved by all the efforts of men combined with those of Satan and his host. We can learn much, and should be constantly searching the Scriptures to see if these things are so. (Ellen G. White, *Maranatha* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976], 247.)

Review your memorized verse from Daniel 8–9.
THE MESSIAH “CUT OFF”

Another easy way to look at the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27 is in three parts: first, the 70 weeks (verse 24) as a whole; second, the seven weeks and 62 weeks, or 69 weeks (verse 25) that are part of the 70 weeks; and third, the last week, the seventieth (verse 27). This last week is divided, “in the middle of the week” (verse 27), into two three-and-a-half-year sections.

That’s it. Seventy weeks, which are broken down into 69 weeks and one week, and that one week divided in half. So we have the formula, but what is the beginning date? In talking about the 2,300 days, Daniel 8 never specified when the 2,300 days began. “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (verse 14). Unto two thousand and three hundred days—from when? Why not from when Daniel had the vision itself, the “third year of the reign of king Belshazzar” (verse 1)?

That doesn’t work. The vision in Daniel 8 didn’t include Babylon, instead starting with events after it, such as Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome, up to “the end.” Why date an event (the cleansing of the sanctuary) that is in the vision from an event (Babylon) that is not? The starting date for the climax of the vision should come from within the vision itself, which started with Media-Persia and extends to “the end.” That’s a lot of years. Which one began it? We are not told in Daniel 8. We are told in Daniel 9.

Gabriel began the explanation of the 490-year prophecy with an event that was extremely important to the Jews: the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Though various decrees had been passed regarding Jerusalem, in Ezra 7 we discover that the decree passed in 457 B.C. allowed the Jews not only to return to their home-land but also to establish themselves as a religious community (see Ezra 7:13, 27).

It is significant to note that Artaxerxes’ decree was issued in the autumn of 457 B.C. According to Daniel, the time from this decree until the Messiah should be 69 weeks, or 483 years. If we begin at 457 B.C. and move forward in history’s time line, we arrive at A.D. 27. So what happened in A.D. 27?

The word “Messiah” means “the anointed one.” In A.D. 27 Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was baptized (see Matt. 3:13–17). Daniel predicted the exact year for the baptism of Christ, the time at which Jesus would begin His three and a half years of ministry, hundreds of years in advance.

“And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself” (Dan. 9:26). The Messiah would be “cut off,” or crucified. The verse adds “but not for Himself.” In other words, the death of Christ on Calvary’s cross was for us, not for Himself, which is why Paul could write: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

Returning to our prophetic time line, in Daniel 9:27 we read that in the middle of the week, in the last literal seven years of the 70-week prophecy, Christ would “bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” In the middle of this seventieth week, (cont. on p. 53)
CALCULATING CORRECTLY

Our calculation of the prophetic time was so simple and plain that even children could understand it. From the date of the decree of the king of Persia, found in Ezra 7, which was given in 457 before Christ, the 2300 years of Daniel 8:14 were supposed to terminate with 1843. Accordingly we looked to the end of this year for the coming of the Lord. We were sadly disappointed when the year entirely passed away, and the Saviour had not come.

It was not at first perceived that if the decree did not go forth at the beginning of the year 457 B.C., the 2300 years would not be completed at the close of 1843. But it was ascertained that the decree was given near the close of the year 457 B.C., and therefore the prophetic period must reach to the fall of the year 1844. Therefore the vision of time did not tarry, though it had seemed to do so. We learned to rest upon the language of the prophet: “The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” Habakkuk 2:3.

God tested and proved His people by the passing of the time in 1843. The mistake made in reckoning the prophetic periods was not at once discovered, even by learned men who opposed the views of those who were looking for Christ’s coming. Scholars declared that Mr. Miller was right in his calculation of the time, though they disputed him in regard to the event that would crown that period. But they, and the waiting people of God, were in a common error on the question of time.

Those who had been disappointed were not long left in darkness; for in searching the prophetic periods with earnest prayer the error was discovered, and the tracing of the prophetic pencil down through the tarrying time. In the joyful expectation of the coming of Christ, the apparent tarrying of the vision had not been taken into account, and was a sad and unlooked-for surprise. Yet this very trial was necessary to develop and strengthen the sincere believers in the truth. (Ellen G. White, Life Sketches of Ellen G. White [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915], 57–59.)

But such subjects as the sanctuary, in connection with the 2300 days, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, are perfectly calculated to explain the past Advent movement and show what our present position is, establish the faith of the doubting, and give certainty to the glorious future. These, I have frequently seen, were the principal subjects on which the messengers should dwell. (Ellen G. White, Early Writings [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1882, 1945], 63.)

We should be earnest students of prophecy; we should not rest until we become intelligent in regard to the subject of the sanctuary, which is brought out in the visions of Daniel and John. This subject sheds great light on our present position and work, and gives us unmistakable proof that God has led us in our past experience. It explains our disappointment in 1844, showing us that the sanctuary to be cleansed was not the earth, as we had supposed, but that Christ then entered into the most holy apartment of the heavenly (cont. on p. 53)
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How is the biblical understanding of Creation different from a deistic understanding of it? Why is this difference so important?

Why is being created by God not enough for humanity? Why does humanity also need the promise and fulfillment of redemption?

How have you personally experienced God’s love through His creative power working in your life?

How does the reality that God created the entire cosmos comfort you? How does it humble you?

What does it say about God if He used evolutionary methods such as death, violence, destruction, suffering, and mass extinction to “create” humanity?

How does this week’s study impact your private and public worship of God?