

# From Contamination to Purification



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Daniel 8, Dan. 2:38, Gen. 11:4, Leviticus 16, Heb. 9:23–28.*

**Memory Text:** “And he said to me, ‘For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed’” (*Daniel 8:14, NKJV*).

The vision reported in Daniel 8 was given to the prophet in 548 or 547 B.C., and it provides some significant clarifications about the judgment referred to in Daniel 7. Unlike the visions of Daniel 2 and 7, the vision of Daniel 8 leaves out Babylon and starts with Media-Persia, because at this time Babylon was in decline and the Persians were about to replace Babylon as the next world power. The vision of Daniel 8 parallels that of Daniel 7. The language and the symbols change in Daniel 8 because it brings into sharp focus the purification of the heavenly sanctuary in connection with the heavenly Day of Atonement. Thus, the distinctive contribution of Daniel 8 lies in its focus on aspects of the heavenly sanctuary. Whereas Daniel 7 shows the heavenly tribunal and the Son of man receiving the kingdom, Daniel 8 shows the purification of the heavenly sanctuary. So, as the parallels between these two chapters indicate, the purification of the heavenly sanctuary depicted in Daniel 8 corresponds to the judgment scene of Daniel 7.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 29.

## The Ram and the Goat

**Read** Daniel 8. What is this vision all about, and how does it parallel what we have seen in Daniel 2 and 7?

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As in Daniel 2 and 7, we are given here another vision of the rise and fall of world empires, though with a different kind of symbolism. This symbolism is directly related to God's sanctuary. In this case, the symbols of a ram and a goat are used because of their connection with the Day of Atonement sanctuary ritual, a time of judgment for ancient Israel. Rams and goats were used as sacrificial offerings in the sanctuary service. But only on the Day of Atonement are the two mentioned together. Hence, these two animals are intentionally chosen here to evoke the Day of Atonement, which is a major focus of the vision.

As the vision unfolds, Daniel sees a ram pushing in three different directions: westward, northward, and southward (*Dan. 8:4*). This triple movement indicates the expansion of this power: "so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great" (*Dan. 8:4, NKJV*). As the angel explains, the ram with two horns represents the Medo-Persian Empire (*Dan. 8:20*), and the three directions most likely literally pointed to the three major conquests of this world power.

Next, a goat emerges with a big horn, which represents the Greek Empire under the command of Alexander the Great (*Dan. 8:21*). That the goat moves "without touching the ground" (*Dan. 8:5, NKJV*) signifies that it is moving quickly. This symbolism conveys the rapidity of Alexander's conquest, which Daniel 7 presents as a winged leopard. But, as the prophecy indicates, when the goat "became strong, the large horn [is] broken" (*Dan. 8:8, NKJV*) and gives way to four horns, which extend to the four quadrants of the compass. This is fulfilled when Alexander dies in Babylon in June of 323 B.C., and his kingdom is divided among his four generals.

**Between Daniel 2:38 and Daniel 8:20, 21, three of the four empires revealed in the visions have been named for us. How should this amazing fact help confirm the correctness of our interpretation of these prophecies?**

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## The Rise of the Little Horn

**Read** Daniel 8:8–12 carefully. In which directions is this little horn moving, and why is this important to understand?

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After depicting four horns spreading to the four winds of heaven, the biblical text says that from one arose a little horn. The question here is whether this horn or power comes from one of the four horns, which, as we saw yesterday, represent the four generals of Alexander—or one of the four winds. The grammatical structure of the text in the original language indicates that this horn comes from one of the four winds of heaven. And since this power arises after the Grecian Empire and its four offshoots, a common understanding is that this horn is Rome, first pagan and then papal. “This little horn represents Rome in both its phases, pagan and papal. Daniel saw Rome first in its pagan, imperial phase, warring against the Jewish people and the early Christians, and then in its papal phase, continuing down to our own day and into the future.”—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 841.

According to the biblical text, the little horn first undertook a horizontal movement and “grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land” (*Dan. 8:9, NKJV*). These three directions correspond to the three major areas that fell under the domination of pagan Rome.

As the little horn becomes the main player in the vision, its vertical expansion receives detailed attention. In this regard, the horn corresponds closely to the little horn of Daniel 7, as the following comparison shows: (1) Both horns are little in the beginning (*Dan. 7:8, 8:9*). (2) Both become great later on (*Dan. 7:20, 8:9*). (3) Both are persecuting powers (*Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:10, 24*). (4) Both are self-exalting and blasphemous (*Dan. 7:8, 20, 25; 8:10, 11, 25*). (5) Both target God’s people (*Dan. 7:25, 8:24*). (6) Both have aspects of their activity that are delineated by prophetic time (*Dan. 7:25; 8:13, 14*). (7) Both extend until the time of the end (*Dan. 7:25, 26; 8:17, 19*). (8) And both face supernatural destruction (*Dan. 7:11, 26; 8:25*). Last, because the little horn of Daniel 7 represents the papacy, the vertical expansion of the little horn in Daniel 8 must represent the same power. Thus, as in Daniel 2 and 7, the final main power is Rome, both pagan and papal.

## The Attack on the Sanctuary

**Read** Daniel 8:10–12. What kind of activity is the little horn depicted as doing here?

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In Daniel 8:10, the little horn attempts to replicate, at the spiritual level, the efforts of the builders of Babel (*Gen. 11:4*). The terms “host” and “stars” can designate God’s people in the Old Testament. Israel is designated the host or armies of the Lord (*Exod. 12:41*). Daniel also depicts God’s faithful people as shining like the stars (*Dan. 12:3*). This is obviously not a literal attack on the heavenly bodies, however, but a persecution of God’s people, whose “citizenship is in heaven” (*Phil. 3:20, NKJV*). Although thousands of Christians were murdered by pagan emperors, the focus now is on the vertical activities of the little horn. Thus, the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy must be linked with papal Rome and its persecution through the ages.

Also, Daniel 8:11 talks about a “Prince,” who is elsewhere mentioned in Daniel as “Messiah the Prince” (*Dan. 9:25*), “Michael your prince” (*Dan. 10:21*), and “Michael” the “great prince” (*Dan. 12:1*). No one but Jesus Christ could be the referent of this expression. Jesus Christ is the Prince of the aforementioned “host” and our High Priest in heaven. Therefore, the papacy and the religious system it represents obfuscates and attempts to supersede the priestly role of Jesus.

In Daniel 8:11, the “daily sacrifice” is a reminder of what happened in the earthly sanctuary to designate the various and continual aspects of the ritual services—including sacrifices and intercession. It is through these services that sinners are forgiven and sins are dealt with in the tabernacle. This earthly system represents Christ’s intercessory ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. So, as the prophecy predicts, the papacy exchanges the intercession of Christ for the intercession of priests. By means of such counterfeit worship, the little horn takes away Christ’s intercessory ministry and symbolically casts down the place of Christ’s sanctuary.

“And he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered” (*Dan. 8:12, NKJV*). Jesus declares Himself to be the truth (*John 14:6*) and also points to the Word of God as truth (*John 17:17*). In contrast, the papacy prohibited the translation of the Bible into the language of the people, put the interpretation of the Bible under the authority of the church, and placed tradition, alongside the Bible, in theory, but, in practice, tradition is placed above the Bible as the supreme rule of faith.

**What should this study tell us about how important the knowledge of biblical truth really is in contrast to human traditions?**

## The Cleansing of the Sanctuary

**Read** Daniel 8:14. What happens here?

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After the devastating attack of the horn, the announcement is made that the sanctuary will be cleansed. In order to understand this message, we must bear in mind that the cleansing of the sanctuary mentioned in Daniel 8:14 corresponds to the judgment scene depicted in Daniel 7:9–14. And since that judgment takes place in heaven, the sanctuary must be located in heaven, too. Thus, while Daniel 7 portrays God’s intervention in and relationship with human affairs from a judicial perspective, Daniel 8 describes the same event from a sanctuary perspective.

The earthly sanctuary was modeled after its heavenly counterpart and served to illustrate the broad contours of the plan of salvation. Every day, sinners brought their sacrifices to the sanctuary, where the people were forgiven their confessed sins as the sins were, in a sense, transferred to the sanctuary. As a result, the sanctuary became contaminated. Therefore, a periodic process of purification was needed in order to cleanse the sanctuary from the sins recorded therein. It was called the Day of Atonement and took place once a year (*see Leviticus 16*).

Why should the heavenly sanctuary need cleansing? By analogy, we can say that the confessed sins of those who have accepted Jesus have been “transferred” to the heavenly sanctuary, just as the sins of the repentant Israelites were transferred to the earthly sanctuary. On the earthly Day of Atonement, numerous animals were slain, symbolizing the future death of Jesus, which is how sinners were able to stand in the Day of Atonement.

And just as that happened in the earthly Day of Atonement when the sanctuary was cleansed, how much more so in the heavenly, when Christ’s blood alone gets us through the judgment? The cleansing of the sanctuary, depicted in Daniel 8:14, is the heavenly counterpart of the earthly service, whose basic message is: as sinners, we need the blood of the Messiah to forgive us our sins and enable us to stand in judgment.

**Read Hebrews 9:23–28. How do these verses reveal the salvation we have in Jesus through His sacrifice for us?**

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## The Prophetic Timetable

**Read** Daniel 8:13. What is the question asked here, and how does it help us understand the answer in the next verse?

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What is the timing of the 2,300 evenings and mornings? First, we must note that after Daniel is shown the ram and the goat, followed by the actions of and the damage caused by the little horn, the vision turns into a question in Daniel 8:13. This question is especially concerned with what will happen at the end of that prophetic period, as well as the duration of the entire vision. In addition, such a period cannot be limited only to the duration of the actions of the little horn, because the term *vision* includes everything from the ram to the actions of the little horn. So, this must be a long period of actual historical time.

To the question “How long shall be the vision” (ram [Media-Persia], goat [Greece], and the little horn and its actions [Rome, pagan and papal]), the other heavenly being replied: “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” (*Dan. 8:14, NKJV*). As has already been noted, this period is so long because it begins during the time of the Medo-Persian Empire and extends through the timing of the Greek Empire and pagan and papal Rome, thousands of years. According to the historicist method of interpretation (see lesson 1), this prophetic period should be calculated on the basis of the year-day principle, which means that the 2,300 evenings and mornings correspond to a time span of 2,300 years. Otherwise, the 2,300 days would amount to a bit more than just six years, an impossibly short time for all the events of the vision. Hence, the year-day principle must be in effect.

Daniel 8 does not provide the information to allow us to calculate the beginning of this time period, which, of course, could establish its end. But Daniel 9 provides the crucial piece of information (see next week’s lesson).

**The 2,300 years of this prophecy constitute the longest time prophecy in the Bible. Think of it: 2,300 years! That’s a long time, especially in comparison to how long we live now. How can this contrast help us learn to be patient with God and in our own anticipation of the timing of final events?**

**Further Thought:** Below is a chart summarizing what we have looked at so far regarding the sequence of kingdoms depicted in Daniel 2, 7, and 8. What does this tell us about the cleansing of the sanctuary?

Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Babylon	Babylon	—————
Media-Persia	Media-Persia	Media-Persia
Greece	Greece	Greece
Pagan Rome	Pagan Rome	Pagan Rome
Papal Rome	Papal Rome	Papal Rome
—————	Judgment in heaven	Cleansing of sanctuary
Second Coming	Second Coming	—————

As we can see here, there are parallels between the chapters. Not only are the nations depicted in parallel to each other, the judgment scene in Daniel 7—which arises after the 1,260 years (A.D. 538–1798) of papal Rome—directly parallels the cleansing of the sanctuary, which in Daniel 8 arises after Rome, as well. In short, this heavenly judgment in Daniel 7—the judgment that leads to the end of the world—is the same thing as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. We are given here two different depictions of the same thing, and both occur after the 1,260-year period of persecution perpetrated by the little-horn power.

**Discussion Questions:**

- ❶ How does the chart above show us that the cleansing of the sanctuary, the same thing as the judgment in Daniel 7, must occur sometime *after* the 1,260-year prophecy of the little horn—and yet before the establishing of God’s final kingdom?
- ❷ The prophecy of Daniel 8 depicts history as something violent and full of evil. The two animals, symbolizing two world empires, fight each other (*Dan. 8:5–7*). The little-horn power that arises after them is a violent and persecuting power (*Dan. 8:23–25*). Thus, Scripture here makes no attempt to downplay the reality of suffering in this world. How should this help us learn to trust in God and His goodness, despite the reality of evil we see all around us?

## ***Part I: Overview***

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**Key Text:** *Daniel 8:14*

**Study Focus:** *Daniel 8, Dan. 2:38, Gen. 11:4, Leviticus 16, Heb. 9:23–28.*

**Introduction:** The main topic of Daniel 8 is the heavenly day of atonement. For this reason, the symbolic animals representing the world empires are the ram and the goat, two sacrificial animals that appear in the service of the Hebrew sanctuary but only on the Day of Atonement.

### **Lesson Themes:**

- 1. The Little Horn.** The little horn represents the power that attacks God's sanctuary and God's people. This power represents Rome in its pagan and papal phases.
- 2. The Day of Atonement.** A main focus of the prophetic message conveyed by this chapter is on the purification of the sanctuary, which according to the ritual system of the earthly tabernacle was carried out on the Day of Atonement.

**Life Application:** In our daily struggles with sin and suffering, we are not alone. We have a High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary performing a special ministry on our behalf. We can enjoy the manifestation of God's grace and share our assurance with those around us. The sanctuary message not only shows us that we are forgiven but also points to the ultimate eradication of sin.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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Let us examine more closely the lesson's themes as outlined above:

### **1. The Little Horn**

While in chapter 7 the little horn grows out of the fourth animal (pagan Rome), the little horn of chapter 8 originates from one of the quadrants of the compass. Some commentators argue that this horn represents Antiochus IV, a Seleucid king, who came from one of the four divisions of the Grecian Empire of Alexander and invaded Jerusalem, defiled the

temple, and persecuted the Jews. A close look at the biblical text, however, points to another referent, an interpretation that holds more validity for two main reasons.

First, we must note that some Bible translations convey the impression that the little horn comes from one of the four horns that succeeded the big horn of the Grecian goat. If so, that might fit with Antiochus. However, the Hebrew text indicates that the little horn comes from one of the quadrants of the compass. The Hebrew text says: “Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land” (*Dan 8:8, 9, NKJV*). There are clear indications in the Hebrew grammar to suggest that in the phrase “out of one of them,” the antecedent of “them” is “the four winds of heaven.” That being the case, the little horn must have originated from one of the quadrants of the compass. Second, the horn starts little but becomes exceedingly great. Antiochus was never such a great king. In spite of his attack on the Jews, he was subsequently defeated by the Romans and had to return home humiliated. Third, because of the recapitulation principle operative in the visions of Daniel, we know that the scene depicted in Daniel 8:9–14 corresponds to the heavenly judgment scene of Daniel 7:9–14. Therefore, the sanctuary attacked by the little horn must be the heavenly sanctuary, not the temple of Jerusalem desecrated by Antiochus.

Because Antiochus does not fit the specifications of the little horn, the question emerges: to what entity does the little horn refer? At this point, we keep in mind the parallelism between the prophetic visions of Daniel. Thus, the little horn of Daniel 8 must correspond to the little horn of Daniel 7. That being the case, papal Rome emerges as the most obvious referent for the little horn of Daniel 8. However, there seems to be a subtle difference worth noticing between the horns of Daniel 7 and 8. The little horn of Daniel 7 emerges from the fourth beast, which indicates that papal Rome is the continuation or extension of imperial Rome. In contrast, the little horn of Daniel 8 apparently does not emerge from any beast, which may suggest that it represents two continuous phases of Roman oppression: first, the imperial Roman phase, the horizontal expansion (*Dan. 8:9*); and then the papal Roman phase, the vertical expansion (*Dan. 8:10–13*). It is interesting to note that in Daniel 7 the little horn attempts to change God’s law; in Daniel 8 it aims its attack at the prince of the sanctuary and at the foundation of the sanctuary itself. Such symbols indicate that the papal system puts in place a counterfeit of the plan of salvation. It attacks both the law of God and God’s plan of salvation.

## 2. The Day of Atonement

In view of the aggressive activities of the little horn against the sanctuary and its ministry (the imposition of a false worship system by the papacy), the question emerges: “How long will the vision be, concerning the *daily* and the *transgression* of desolation, the giving of both the *sanctuary* and the *host* to be trampled underfoot?” (*Dan. 8:13, NKJV, emphasis supplied*). This question presupposes that a long time will elapse before the sanctuary can be restored, because the word “vision” here refers to the vision of the ram and the goat, which extends from the time of the Persian Empire to the time of the evil actions of the little horn. Before we consider the answer to this “how long” question, let us consider the sanctuary imagery of Daniel 8:9–14.

This section of Daniel 8 is filled with sanctuary imagery and terminology. Words such as “host,” “prince,” “daily,” and “sanctuary” evoke the Hebrew ritual system. “Host” (*tsaba* ) may designate the cultic personnel at service in the sanctuary; “prince” (*sar*) may designate the high priest; “daily” (*tamid*) is a word used to qualify some cultic activities of the sanctuary as happening continually, such as incense, sacrifices, et cetera. Note that the word “sacrifice” used in some Bible versions does not occur in the original. It has been supplied by translators who assume the prophecy refers to the suspension of the temple sacrifices by Antiochus IV. Indeed, the Hebrew word *tamid* may be better translated as “continuity” or “regularity” and refers to the multiple activities of the sanctuary service, which include, but are not restricted to, sacrificial offerings. Interestingly enough, one of the two words used here for sanctuary (*qodesh*) occurs in Leviticus 16, in the context of the Day of Atonement (the other is *miqdash*). Moreover, the parallel between this sanctuary scene and the heavenly judgment depicted in Daniel 7:9–14 indicates that both visions portray the same event. Therefore, the sanctuary referred to in Daniel 8:14 must be located in heaven.

Now comes the answer to the question posed in Daniel 8:13: “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?” (*Dan. 8:13, NKJV*). The answer is: “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” (*Dan. 8:14, NKJV*). This response from one of the heavenly beings informs us that the sanctuary—which is depicted as under attack—will be cleansed or purified after 2,300 years (applying the year-day principle). Such a long timetable agrees with the time frame presupposed by the question, which reaches back to the time of the Persian ram. Although no information is given about when this period begins or ends, it is clear that it must start sometime during the Persian period.

But the heavenly being clearly states what will happen when this long period ends: namely, the cleansing of the sanctuary. In the Israelite cultic calendar, there was a special day assigned for the purification of the sanctuary—the Day of Atonement. On such occasions the tabernacle was purified (*taher*) from the sins of God’s people. Daniel 8 mentions a time for the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Such action is conveyed by the verb *nitsdaq*, which means to be restored, cleansed, and vindicated. So, the main ideas conveyed by this verb are that (1) the sanctuary must be cleansed from the sins of God’s people. (2) God’s intercessory ministry in the heavenly sanctuary must be restored. (3) God must be vindicated from the profanation of His sanctuary. The papal system introduced distortions to the plan of salvation and usurped Christ’s intercessory work by means of the sacrament of the mass, the penance, and absolution of sins by human priests. From the information given in Daniel 9:23–27, we can determine that the year 457 B.C. marked the beginning of this prophetic period of 2,300 years. Therefore, the end of this prophetic period must be in A.D. 1844.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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- 1. How do you feel about the idea that the papacy distorted God’s truth and established a distorted worship system?**

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- 2. From the symbols and language used in Daniel 8, what do you learn about God’s teaching method?**

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- 3. Reflect on this statement by Ellen G. White: “While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a**

special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 425.

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4. What is the connection between the purification of the sanctuary and the purification of your life as a follower of Christ? Can you think of any sin that you must abandon in order to feel you are totally loyal to Jesus?

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5. What difference do you see between the work Jesus completed on the cross and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary? What is the relevance of each in your life?

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6. Why does God need to undertake an investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary? Why not just make an instantaneous divine decision about the final destiny of the professed followers of Christ? What does this judicial procedure reveal about the character of God?

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