

Messiah in Daniel 8

Key Issues in Daniel 8:13 and 19

Background

For us who belong to the Seventh Day Adventist Church all prophecies are very important but especially Daniel 8. We are convinced that Daniel 8 was fulfilled in 1844 and since our denomination was founded in the aftermath of the great disappointment, we must have a significant role to play. Our interpretation of Daniel 8 gives a good reason for our existence. It leads us to believe that we are an important stepping stone in God's history. On the other hand, if we don't have this support from Daniel 8, many feel that our existence is not justified.

But, the concept of looking at ourselves is certainly not the theme of the Gospels and not in the rest of the Bible either. The focus in the New Testament is on Jesus Christ and on what He has accomplished! Wouldn't it make sense that this perspective also should be the guideline in our interpretation of Daniel 8? I pray that you will be willing to look at Daniel 8:19, 13 and 14 with Jesus Christ, the Messiah as the focus and the fulfillment of this prophecy.

The purpose is NOT to cause factions – but healing to a divided church; not to cause confusion – but Joy in the Lord. This happens when we lift up Jesus Christ and not ourselves. The significance of these articles is to glorify Jesus and to see Him as the primary fulfillment of all prophecy. This attitude gives Daniel 8 a new perspective and opens doors for new understanding. The simple key is to take the time periods in Daniel 8-12 literally.

I invite you to an exciting study with the focus on Daniel's Messiah. Personally I give all glory, honor and praise to God who through His Spirit has given me the insight I am about to share with you as a reader.

A Sacred Feast

In Hebrew writings we often find a summary first followed by a more detailed description. It is very important to recognize this when studying the Bible. In Daniel 8 we don't find the summary in conjunction with the vision in verses 1-14, but in the interpretation part in verse 19. The importance of this summary needs to be acknowledged, if we want to find the correct interpretation. When it is recognized, the prophecy in Daniel 8 should highlight three issues:

1. A "time of wrath"
2. An "appointed time" and
3. A "time of the end."

Number one does not need further explanation, as long as its fulfillment in Daniel 8 refers to an explicit event of God's wrath. The moment the 2,300 evenings and mornings in Daniel 8 ends, God's wrath should be manifested. I have in a book showed that Daniel 8 refers to Christ's first coming as the Messiah and that is what I will portray in these articles.¹ With this perspective Jesus took upon Himself God's wrath on mankind when He died on the cross. That is a well accepted fact and does not need to be proven in this article.

The word for "appointed" in the second criterion refers to a "sacred season" or a "set feast." "The appointed time," would then refer to the Passover feast and, of course, we all know that Daniel's Messiah died during that feast.

¹ Daniel and the Visions about the End Time. www.TobyJoreteg.com
Daniel's Messiah: DVD

The third criterion refers to the time of the end but it is extremely important to find out how “the end” is defined in the context. The “time of the end” is an expression which is often mistakenly thought to refer to the end of this world. In Daniel 12:13 the word “end” is used twice. The first time it refers to the death of Daniel and the second time, “the end of days,” to Jesus’ second coming. But mostly the “end” in Daniel 8-12 refers to the time when Israel chose to end their Covenant with God. This happened when they condemned Jesus Christ and handed Him over to the Gentiles to be crucified.² But to prove that is outside the scope of this article.

If not all three components stated in Daniel 8:19 are fulfilled, we do not have a true interpretation of this prophecy. How many of these three criteria are met in our traditional interpretation of Daniel 8?

How Long?

Our focus here will be on the core part of Daniel 8:13-14. In verse 13 a conversation takes place. The question is “how long” will it be before the vision in Daniel 8 is fulfilled? The first thing we need to notice is that this question points to “the end” of the vision. When the 2,300 evenings and mornings have come to an end, these four questions will have found their answers. The obvious reasons for these four questions are to define the vision, to help us understand it correctly and to point to a very important event at the end of the 2,300 evenings and mornings. Daniel 8:13:

Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "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?" (NKJV)

1) The Daily Sacrifices

The first question to define the end point for the 2,300 evenings and mornings concerns the “daily sacrifice.” The good news is that we do not need to speculate what the Bible has in mind. We already know from Daniel 8:11 and 12 what this question refers to. There it says that the daily sacrifice “was taken away.” So that is the issue Daniel 8:13 refers to! In that case the time period, which we soon will study, ended when the daily sacrifice was taken away.

We have two possible options. One is when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D and the other option is when the True Lamb, Jesus Christ, was slain on the cross in 31 A.D. Daniel 9:27 tells us plainly that in the middle of the last week, i.e. in 31 A.D., “he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.” When the True lamb had been slain, no more sacrifices were needed. Thus, the first statement regarding the prophetic time period in Daniel 8 was fulfilled at the cross.

2) The Rebellion that Causes Desolation

The second defining statement is the “transgression of desolation,” according to the NKJV, or “rebellion that causes desolation” as the NIV writes it. Both alternatives are appropriate. The word for “transgression” could also be translated to “rebellion.” It was the persistent transgression of Daniel’s people that finally led to “desolation.” The house of Judah was given 490 years to “finish transgression,” “put an end to sin” and “atone for wickedness” – but it did not happen. The desolation was a fact!

If we do a word study on “desolation,” we will find two possible interpretations. The most common one means that an area has no or very few inhabitants. The second option suggests “separation,” being “forsaken,” “not married” or “divorced.”³ The second option is the one that fits best to Daniel 8. When Jesus died on the cross, the desolation was a fact. The Old Covenant people was no longer married to God when Christ died.⁴ Thus, the second question regarding this prophetic time period in Daniel 8 finds its answer at the cross.

² Matthew 20:18-19, John 19:15, Romans 7:2.

³ 2 Samuel 13:20, Isaiah 62:4-5, Isaiah 54:1, Matthew 23:37.

⁴ John 19:15, Romans 7:2.

3) The Sanctuary Trampled Underfoot

The third defining statement to explain the time period in Daniel 8:14 refers to the sanctuary that will be trampled underfoot. This is probably meant in a symbolical way since we don't believe in giants that literally would "trample" the sanctuary. In John 2:19-21 Jesus plainly tells us that He is the Sanctuary. Similar statements can be found in Revelation 21:22 and Isaiah 8:13-14. If we accept that Jesus is the Sanctuary, He was "trampled" on when He died on the cross. This interpretation would also fit the expression, "His sanctuary was cast down," found in Daniel 8:11. Thus, the third defining statement regarding this prophetic time period in Daniel 8 finds its fulfillment at the cross.

4) The Host Trampled Underfoot

The fourth question concerns a "host" that also was trampled underfoot. If you put the vision in verses 1-14 and the interpretation in verses 15-27 side-by-side in two columns, you will find that the counterpart to "the host of the saints" in verse 12 is "holy people" in verse 24. The holy people in the Old Covenant were the Israelites and we have already seen how the "divorce" was a fact when Messiah died on the cross. In this sense Israel, as God's holy people, were trampled underfoot. Thus, the fourth question regarding this prophetic time period in Daniel 8 also finds its answer at the cross.

It is interesting to see that questions one and three in Daniel 8:13 pertain to Messiah and questions two and four to the Old Covenant people.

Summary

The four criteria that define the question "how long" all refer to the same crucial point in history. It is easy from the context to realize that all were fulfilled as Christ died on the cross. Furthermore, this was the time when Israel's leaders chose to "end" their Covenant with God. It happened at the Passover feast when Christ took God's wrath on Himself. To summarize it we will read Daniel 8:13 paraphrased:

"How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled, the vision about the daily sacrifice (that will be taken away), the rebellion that causes desolation (separation from God), the trampling of the Sanctuary (Jesus Christ) and the trampling of the host (the Old Covenant people)."

This Christ centered interpretation builds a foundation for a new understanding of the prophecy in Daniel 8. Therefore, we need to have another approach when studying the 2,300 evenings and mornings! What at first might look as a deviation from the truth will actually lead us to the real Truth, Jesus Christ. This is the reason for our existence as a denomination! We are here to GLORIFY GOD and not ourselves! In the next two articles we will analyze it further.

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