

"The Last Message of Mercy"

Exploring God's Focus at this Time of Earth's History

Part 1 (Prophecy)

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The Last Message of Mercy

What does this title mean, "The Last Message of Mercy"?

The Last Message of Mercy

Last = arriving at the end portion of something; no more of it is coming

Message = communicating something that the sender desires the receiver to understand and receive; usually intends an action response

Mercy = not getting what you deserve; implies grace, which is getting what you don't deserve

Thought Questions

How do we know this is the "last"?

Do we really need a "message"? Who would want to communicate with us, and why?

What is this thing about "mercy"? Who needs mercy?

Preview

In our search for this "last message of mercy,"

1. We will consider how people in New Testament times needed prophecy to see where they were in time. We will look at this through the experience of Christ's disciples, especially Peter.
2. Next we will look at how the New Testament uses the word "last" to describe days, hour, and other things.
3. Then we will look at the prophecies in Daniel, focusing on chapters 7 and 8.
4. From chapter 8 of Daniel we will divert to explore the broader picture of what it means to "cast down the truth."
5. And finally we will examine how something as broad in time as "the everlasting covenant" can be seen in something as focused in time as "the last message."

Consider "the last"

What evidence do we have that we are at the time in earth's history that requires a "last message"?

One of Two Options

In looking to the future, either what we see around us in this world will continue in some fashion, or it will not.

The Bible tells us that it will not continue.

Let us examine some evidence from the Bible that is compellingly supported by world history.

We will use the experience and writings of Peter, Christ's disciple, to find our way into that Bible evidence.

Peter Tells of Scoffers

Let us read 2Pet. 3:1-15.

"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

"For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness,

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation."

Key Points

Remember: prophets and apostles = there is something very important that we need in what these men told us

Scoffers in "the last days": "all things continue" = there is no "last"
Willingly ignorant of (1) creation, (2) flood = global events, out of the ordinary
Walking after their own desires; do not want to consider "the day of judgment"

"The heavens and the earth, which are now": reserved for "the day of judgment" ("day of the Lord"): "pass away" and "be burned up" = will not continue, therefore there must be something called "the last days"

One day, a thousand years = God's view of time is much different than ours.
God is longsuffering = salvation
Ps 86:15 "But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

Since "all things" will not continue, our God who is "plenteous in mercy and truth" would certainly want to let us know when we near the end.
And a God who is "full of compassion, longsuffering" and "not willing that any should perish" may even prolong things so more can know and prepare for the end of this world.

What comes after that "day of judgment"?
A "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"

Peter's Appeal

"Remember", "be mindful", "be not ignorant"
"What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness"
"Look for and hasten unto the day of God"
"Be diligent to be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless"

Since all things will not "continue" and there are "the last days" which will lead to "the day of judgment," how can we know where we are?
And how can we "be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless"?
"The last message of mercy" gives answers to these questions.

Peter's Perspective

Back in 2Pet. 1:10, 11, we find an earlier call to diligence, with a look to the future:
"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

What does the future hold? More of the same? All things continuing as they have from the beginning?
Peter believed that we will enter "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
This must be that "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Key Questions

How do we prepare for this amazing transition?

This has never happened before.

In a practical way, how do we get ready for the end of this world, and the remaking of it into a new one?

We are not talking about dying, and then being ushered into a new realm.

We are talking about living through this awesome, never-before-experienced event.

What We Need

We need the following:

1. To recognize where we are in the process.
2. To identify what will not survive the transition.
3. To understand and identify with the principles of the coming kingdom.

These all we will have if we know God as He desires for us to know Him.

All of human history has been moving toward this point, the end of a sinful world.

The problem we have is that our individual lives are so short, we have difficulty seeing that progress just in our own lifetime.

That is why we need God's perspective as recorded in the Bible, both of the past and of the future.

Divine Viewpoint

Peter and all the apostles needed this same divine viewpoint.

A few verses later in 2Pet. 1:16, Peter said:

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

"For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit." (verses 16-21).

"Sure Word of Prophecy"

Do we in our day also need to "take heed" to the light of this "word of prophecy" given "in old time" by men who "were moved by the Holy Spirit"?

The world and time in which we live are a dark place that needs desperately this light.

This "light" is particularly what will last forever, what will survive the end.

Living Hope

Peter in his first letter spoke also of the importance of this message of prophecy.

Starting in 1Pet. 1:3

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls.

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

"Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (verses 3-13).

Summary Points

"Begotten us again unto a lively hope"

"Inheritance ... reserved in heaven for you"

"Trial of your faith"

"End of your faith"

"Prophets have inquired and searched diligently"

"What or what manner of time"

"The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow"

"Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (alternate version: "Perseveringly direct your hope unto the favour, being borne along to you, in the revealing of Jesus Christ")

"Begotten us again unto a living hope"

What does this refer to? When had Peter's hope died?

Consider what the two on road to Emmaus said two days after the crucifixion of Christ:

"But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." (Luke 24:21)

This must have been Peter's emotions as well.

Continuing in verse 25, Christ responded to their hopelessness: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (verses 25-27)

"Suffering, followed by glory"

"Moses and all the prophets": "concerning Himself"

Christ came to the 11 disciples a little while later, and repeated this process.

Further in Luke 24: starting with verse 44:

"And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.

"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (verses 44-49)

This is where Peter and the others were "begotten ... again unto a living hope." How? By the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and from Jesus' explaining to them the prophecies!

"Law of Moses, prophets, psalms": "concerning Me"

One Key Prophet

There is one prophet among the prophets that Christ must have opened to the disciples that day of the resurrection.

We will next examine how this prophet deals with what Peter described:

- "judgment"
- "the everlasting kingdom" (= "inheritance")
- "the power and coming of our Lord"
- "what manner of time"
- "the sufferings" and "the glory"

Review to This Point

1. The "last message of mercy" relates to the end of the "last days." It comes on time.
2. It is a message of "mercy" because it prepares us for a future we do not deserve, but which we are given as a gift.
3. It prepares us both to go through the "last days" and to fit into the "everlasting kingdom" that follows.

4. According to Peter, prophecy tells us where we are in relation to the "last days."
5. This prophetic light, like all of Scripture, point us, especially in our day, to Him who is Light, Jesus Christ.

Prov. 22:3 "A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished."

Do you want to see the coming evil and hide yourself?

Christ described our options in Luke 6:47-49.

"Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the **foundation** on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

"But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a **foundation** built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

The flood is rising. Do you desire not to be shaken by it?

Christ says three things are needed:

1. His sayings (the Word of God; the "message", the "light")
2. Hear what He says (have ears to listen)
3. Do what He says (receive His word into your heart, so it becomes your motive)

Appeal

Do you want to receive His sayings, to choose to hear what He says?

Will you take His word as the motive of all your actions?

Do you desire to be prepared for the storm that is coming?

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Part 2 ("The Last"; Prophecy)

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Review

1. This world cannot continue because it is based on ungodliness, following one's own desires, not God's.
2. History (creation and the flood) and prophecy (fulfilled in the past and still to be fulfilled in the future) also tell us that this world cannot continue.
3. God is longsuffering, of great mercy, and wants all to be saved, so He has told us about this plan.
4. We need to understand prophecy to know what Christ is doing in our day, just as Peter and the other disciples needed to understand in their day.

Preview

Today we want to do two things:

1. To see how the New Testament uses the term "the last," to prepare us to understand Daniel 7 better.
2. To understand why prophecy was given us, and what it is that keeps us from understanding it as God wants us to.

"The Last"

I want to read some texts and have you tell me whether they referring in their day to the present or future.

"The Last Day"

"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." John 6:39 (Jesus repeated this phrase in verses 40, 44, and 54. Martha used it in John 11:24)
Is "the last day" here present or future in regard to the resurrection?

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John 12:48
Is "the last day" here present or future in regard to the judgment?

Chapter on Resurrection

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1Cor. 15:26)
Is "the last enemy" here present or future in regard to when it is destroyed?

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1Cor. 15:51, 52).
Is "the last trump" here present or future in regard to when it is sounded?

So "the last day" is consistently used in the future tense to the New Testament writers' time in regard to the resurrection and the judgment.

"The Last Days" (Plural)

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." (Acts 2:17).

Is "the last days" here in Peter's time present or future in regard to when the Spirit is poured out?

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." (2Tim. 3:1).

Is "the last days" here in Paul's time present or future in regard to perilous times?

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...." (Heb. 1:1, 2).

Is "these last days" here present or future in regard to when God spoke by His Son?

"Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." (James 5:3).

Is "the last days" here in James' time present or future in regard to the rich heaping together treasure?

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." (2Pet. 3:3).

Is "the last days" here present or future in regard to scoffers coming?

"The Last Time(s)"

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1Pet. 1:5).

Is "the last time" here present or future in regard to when salvation is revealed?

"Christ verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." (1Pet. 1:19, 20).

Is "these last times" here present or future in regard to when it is Christ was manifest?

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." (1John 2:18).

Is "the last time" here present or future in regard to when the antichrist coming?

"How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after

their own ungodly lusts." (Jude 18).
Is "the last time" here present or future in regard to when mockers would be present?

So in regard to the ministry of Christ, the Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit, the blindness of the rich hoarding wealth, the coming of the antichrist, and the coming of mockers, "the last days" and "the last time(s)" was present in New Testament times.

But in regard to the coming of perilous times, the coming of scoffers, and salvation being revealed, "the last days" and "the last time" was future in New Testament times.

We are going to explain later how in one sense "the last" could apply to the days of Christ and his disciples, and how also "the last" could apply to a time future to that. Keep that in mind for our study of Daniel 7, and our understanding will expand of that important chapter.

Prophecy's Purpose

Prophecy was given to us for these purposes:

1. "Concerning Me": Luke 24: 44 "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me."
2. "Believe that I am": John 13:19 "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am."
3. "Light that shineth in a dark place": 2Pet. 1:19 "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

We can tie these three points together in this one statement:

In this dark world, prophecy gives us light as it enables us to see who Christ really is, and what He is doing.

Unable to Understand

When one is in the dark, he cannot see. Therefore he cannot know.

Prov. 4:19 "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble."

The Bible speaks of this condition when we "know not" in three ways:

1. We are in darkness; we need the light.
2. We are asleep; we need to awaken.
3. We are deceived; we need the truth.

Children of Light

Paul in 1Thes. 5, starting with verse 1, wrote to the Thessalonians of how they had no reason to be in the dark as to "the day of the Lord":

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." (1Thes. 5:1-8).

Key Points

"The day of the Lord" will come "as a thief in the night"

Will everyone be caught off guard?

No, for Paul says, "You are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

It is those who are in darkness, who are asleep, that say, "Peace and safety" when they should be giving the Last Message of Mercy, that cannot tell when this day will come. If we accept what has been given to us "of the times and seasons" then we will "know perfectly." We will be "children of light" and "of the day".

Knowing the One who inspired prophecy, we will walk as He walked as He battled darkness, sleepiness, and drunkenness in His day. We will have on a breastplate and a helmet.

What is the breastplate made of?

Faith and love

Compare this to Eph. 6:14, "the breastplate of righteousness."

If "the breastplate of faith and love" is the "the breastplate of righteousness," then "faith and love" is "righteousness." What a significant truth this is!

If we only have faith and love as He did, then we are prepared to give the last message of mercy, for we see things as He does, and we are ready for the coming kingdom.

So prophecy was given to us enlighten us, to awaken us, to show us the truth.

When we see what we need to see, we see Christ who is the light and the truth, of Whom all the prophets spoke.

When we receive the light of prophecy, we are not in a dream world, but walk with Him

fully awake.

Christ mentioned the following prophets by name: Isaiah (Matt. 15:7), Daniel (Matt. 24:15), Jonah (Matt. 12:41), Zechariah (Matt. 23:35).

But it was Daniel that Christ specifically tied to the "last days."

Recall the setting, and see the parallel to our day.

The Passion Week

This was Christ's last week with His people. The focus was on the temple and the leaders in relation to Him. Would they recognize who He was?

In their midst was One who was greater than:

- the temple, their greatest building with all its sacrificial system ("in this place is one greater than the temple" Matt. 12:6)
- Jonah, their most successful prophet ("a greater than Jonah is here" Matt. 12:41)
- Solomon, their greatest king ("a greater than Solomon is here" Matt. 12:42)

Matt. 21 & 22

Christ had entered Jerusalem riding a donkey.

He cleansed the temple, calling it "My house" (quoting Isa. 56:7).

He cursed the fig tree.

He answered multiple questions from the leaders, and then asked them a question they could not answer, and silenced them.

Through all the events of this week there was no indication of a willingness on the part of these leaders to humble themselves, and accept Christ for who He was, and for what He stood.

Christ then proceeded to unmask the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. And He closed His final lament and appeal with a prophecy and a farewell.

Reading in Matt. 23 starting with verse 34:

"Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

"That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

"For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Continuing into chapter 24:

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

"And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 23:34 to 24:3)

Notice Carefully

"when shall these things be?" = "what manner of time" (1Pet. 1:11)

"the end of the world" (or age) = "the last days" (2Pet. 3:3)

The following two chapters are of great significance. Embedded in them is part of the last message of mercy.

Matthew 24, 25

It is here that Christ refers to Daniel by name.

In the middle of chapter 24, He mentions when "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)." (Matt. 24:15). We will examine that later.

But what was Jesus' first words of reply to the disciples question?

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you." (Matt. 24:4)

Don't miss this warning against deception.

Again, the purpose of prophecy is to counter deception with the truth--

The truth about God's plans, the truth about the hidden battle taking place in this world, the truth about the issues behind this war, and particularly the truth about the One who is the truth.

All of what prophecy teaches us is important, but most important is the heart of prophecy: what is says "concerning Me" (in the words of Christ).

The battle between truth and error, between truth and deception, between the truth and the lie, involves the things "concerning" Christ.

The people of Christ in His day were deceived, and most of them did not see who He was. Two things were involved in causing this terrible situation:

1. They rejected the prophets and their messages.

2. They loved darkness more than light.
Let's explore the evidences for saying that.

Rejecting the Prophets

Earlier in chapter 23, as Christ described the condition of the scribes and Pharisees, He made this sad observation (starting in verse 29):

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

"Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." (Matt. 23:29-32)

In rejecting Him, the greatest of all prophets, they were showing the same spirit of their fathers who killed the prophets.

And as we saw, He predicted they would continue in the same spirit:

"I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city." (Matt. 23:34)

Can we learn from this?

In rejecting the prophets, we reject the message, the messenger, and the One who sent the message.

After all, as Peter said, the prophets did not speak "by the will of man" but "as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2Pet. 1:21).

Who did Peter say was "in them"?

"What, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." (1Pet. 1:11)

So the prophets do not speak of themselves, or by themselves. They give to us "the testimony of Jesus."

The angel told John, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10)

Rejecting the prophet is rejecting Jesus who testifies through the prophet.

Do we reject the prophets' messages?

Loving Darkness

The second reason for being deceived is the love of darkness.

Peter as we have seen called it "walking after their own lusts (desires)." (2Pet. 3:3)

Christ called this "hating the light."

Paul called it "all deceivableness of unrighteousness."

Let us look at the last two references.

At the end of his conversation with Nicodemus, Christ made these observations, starting in John 3:19:

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:19-21)

One stays in the dark, because he does not want to change the evil he is doing. That is the cause of why he loves darkness and hates light.

Paul described "loving darkness" as loving the lie. Speaking in a prophetic way about the soon-coming fulfillment in his day of the deceiving power of Daniel 7 and 8, he stated the following (in 2Thes. 2 starting with verse 10):

Paul said that this power would work "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2Thes. 2:10-12).

Unrighteousness deceives those who have "pleasure in unrighteousness."
They do not believe the truth because "they received not the love of the truth."
Therefore they "believe the lie."

"The truth" and "the lie" are specific concepts that are opposites in this battle we call the great controversy. We will study them later.

Here we want just to focus on how it is that we can miss the message of the prophets. For if we are deceived, we will not receive their message. The last message of mercy will not be able to do its work in our lives.

We might even be trying to give the message to others, while rejecting it ourselves.

This would be like the disciples of Christ trying to preach to those of their day, telling them what Christ said, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny Himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." And at the same time they were arguing among themselves as to who was the greatest.

May that not be our experience!

Appeal

Let us receive a love of the truth.

Let us love Him who is the truth.

"The Last Message of Mercy"

Exploring God's Focus at this Time of Earth's History

Part 3 (Daniel 7)

Fred Bischoff

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Review

1. The Bible uses "the last" to refer to events in the time of Christ and His disciples. But it also uses it to refer to the time of the resurrection, judgment, and salvation, preceded by scoffers and perilous times.
2. In order to understand and benefit fully from the prophecies, we must:
 - love light and not darkness
 - be awake and not asleep
 - love the truth and not the lie
3. The prophecies tell us about Christ, what He is doing in our day. So we must understand the prophecies.

What do we find in Daniel 7 that is "concerning" Christ, which will lead us to "believe" that He is, and which will be to us a "light" shining in a dark place?

Without a doubt, Christ is the light that we need.

Consider an overview of Daniel 7

- the prophetic / historical setting
- the theological / practical setting

Daniel 7 Themes

It repeatedly mentions Kingdom, Judgment, Coming.

Along with the other dreams and visions in Daniel, it pictures the end of world history.

Let's consider these themes particularly in light of the New Testament history and prophecy.

Preview

There is a summary of all of Daniel 7 in two verses, 17 and 18:

"These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

It sounds very simple, but history and the Bible show a long and difficult process.

Questions to Consider

1. What is the relation of these earthly kingdoms in general (and the fourth in particular) to God and His people?
2. Why do these kingdoms not last forever?
3. How is God's kingdom set up?
4. Why does it last forever?

1. All lead to...

There are four main kings/kingdoms pictured from the time of Daniel to God's kingdom. (Chap. 8 starts with the second.) The dream and visions of Dan. 2, 7, and 8 lead to **God's everlasting kingdom**. (Explicit: Dan. 2:44; 7:14; implied: 8:14).

2. The first three...

The first three kings/kingdoms are explicitly named. **First**: Nebuchadnezzar/Babylon (1:1; 2:37, 38); **Second**: Media and Persia (8:20); **Third**: Greece (8:21). Daniel lived under the first two (1:1; 5:28; 9:1). The third ruled during the period between Malachi and Matthew.

3. The focus is on...

The earthly focus in the vision of Dan. 7 is on the **fourth beast**. From end of the third beast, the prophecy deals with fourth until the judgment and God's everlasting kingdom. A total of 10 verses of vision deal with fourth beast in all its phases and activities, whereas 7 verses cover God's kingdom, 4 verses the vision overall, and 1 verse with each of first three beasts.

4. The New Testament time...

The entire New Testament (Christ's life on earth, and the apostles') was under this fourth beast. This kingdom is mentioned by its **Caesars** (the first, Luke 2:1, Caesar Augustus; the second, Luke 3:1, Tiberius Caesar; the fourth, Acts 11:28, Claudius Caesar) and by its name ("the **Romans**", John 11:48). (Monarchy>Republic>Empire)

John was shown that this fourth beast is a three-fold power: dragon, beast, false prophet. (Rev. 12, 13; compare Dan. 7:14 and 8:23 with Rev. 11:18). These appear to describe characteristics of the fourth kingdom that are in some respects chronological and in others continuous.

John was told that these three united were Babylon, a union shown to fail eventually (Rev. 16:13, 19; 17), with each individual component meeting its end (Rev. 19:20; 20:10). Peter called Rome Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13). The ancient religion was and is still alive.

5. Kingdom and judgment...

The **coming of Christ / His kingdom / judgment** includes His first, second, and third comings to this earth. The first coming judgment is in John 12:31. The second coming judgment is in Rev. 19:11. The third coming judgment is in Rev. 20:12, 13. However, His coming to the Ancient of days in Dan. 7:13 is a pre-second coming judgment.

All of these comings occur in the time of fourth beast. Each coming in its own specific way contributes to the final end of that power. Realize that the fourth beast is the final corporate manifestation of the great controversy against God.

6. How does God do it...

How does God's kingdom get set up? Does it "break" just like the fourth kingdom "broke" the previous ones?

It is set up by warfare, but not by a carnal one (2 Cor. 10:4). It comes by salvation, power, authority, the blood of the Lamb, and the word of testimony (Rev. 12:10, 11).

The throne of God's kingdom is David's throne (Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:32). It is set up by judgment, a judgment that involves all comings.

7. His first coming...

His **first coming** announced the kingdom ("at hand"). It explained it ("is like"). Matthew is the major source for these phrases: "at hand" 3:2 by John the Baptist; 4:17 by Jesus; 10:7 by disciples; "kingdom is like" 11 times (7 in chapter 13!). Most important for our day is the last, 25:1.

Note how this coming was announced: "shall bring forth a son", "unto you ... a Saviour", "behold the Lamb of God." (Matt. 1:21; Luke 2:11; John 1:29). What an amazing way to announce a kingdom!

The first coming also ratified the covenant behind the kingdom by the death of the One making the covenant (Luke 22:20, 29; Heb. 9:15-17). Such a death was necessary because of sin in multiple ways. The main reason is that agape must sacrifice self. In the face of sin, this sacrifice means death.

This sacrifice was typified by the death of the sacrifices on all the Old Testament festivals, especially the Day of Atonement.

8. Impact on fourth beast...

The first coming occurred during the fourth beast (Luke 2:1-5), but did not stop or prevent the fourth kingdom from speaking great things nor end his power over the saints.

The descendants of Abraham, having adopted a Babylonian philosophy, actually instigated this power (Rome), and identified with it, to accomplish the death of Christ (Matt. 2:16; John 11:48; Matt. 23:34-37, compare Rev. 18:24; Acts 3:13-15; John 19:15).

The death of the Holy One, while the greatest cosmic victory ever, foreshadowed the continued prevailing of this beast over other holy ones (John 15:20; 16:33).

In fact the greatest boasting (2 Thes. 2:3) and persecution (Matt. 24:21; Luke 21:12, 16; Rev. 2:10) came after first coming. Therefore, Christ's first coming was not the complete fulfillment of Daniel's judgment.

9. Satan cast...

The first coming was the judgment of this world in the sense that Satan was cast down in the eyes of all unseen participants and observers in the controversy. They could now say, "That world is judged" (John 12:31; compare Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:9, 13). The first coming was also judgment on Christ as He was made a curse for us, on our account (Gal. 3:13).

The first coming was the opening of these hidden things of the truth and the lie, as the mystery of God was revealed (Rom. 16:25; compare Eph. 3:3-10; 6:19; Col. 1:25-27). But the mystery of God was not finished in a final sense.

10. Those who don't know...

The events of the first coming were observed by few in the world, and were understood by yet fewer (Luke 24:18, 25, 26, 46-48). The gospel commission was given to go and to tell everyone else in world (Matt. 28:19, 20).

"This gospel of the kingdom" is the good news brought at the first coming about the everlasting kingdom mentioned in Daniel. When "this gospel" goes as a witness to all the world, "then the end" (the second coming and what follows) will come (Matt. 24:12-14).

11. Between the 1st & 2nd...

In between the first and second comings, came the "son of perdition." He was one who was in the inner circle like Judas. And like Judas, he refused to be cleansed of the principle of the worldly kingdoms (self-exaltation, which all of us are infected with). Instead, he brought it into the temple of God.

The key point in this was the fact that those so deceived love not "the truth" but believe "the lie." (2 Thes. 2:3-12; compare John 17:12; Luke 22:19-29). This "son of perdition" is the little horn of Daniel and the sea beast of Revelation (Rev. 13:1-10).

Those who did love "the truth" and rejected the "great things" spoken "against the Most High" were worn out, made war against, and prevailed against, **TILL...** (Dan. 7:21,25).

TILL when?...

vs. 9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down...

vs. 11 I beheld even till the beast was slain...

vs. 22 Until the Ancient of Days came...

vs. 25 until a time and times and the dividing of time

12. Beginning of judgment...

The beginning of the **second advent judgment** spanned from end of the 1260 years (1798; Dan. 7:25) to end of the 2300 years (1844; Dan. 8:14). Leading up to and included within this period of beginning judgment are the following five major developments:

a. Land beast

The rise of land beast, which Revelation also calls the false prophet (USA): It has horns like a lamb = show true power. Eventually it makes an image to the sea beast (becomes the "New Rome"). This is the last effort of little horn to war against the saints, even as judgment is proceeding. (Rev. 13:11-18)

b. Beast from bottomless pit

Beast from the bottomless pit (the new manifestation of satanic power, seen in the French Revolution, carried over into the Bolshevik Revolution): While a reaction against sea beast, it is not different in character from it. (See Napoleon's desire to be Caesar.) (Rev. 11:17)

c. The deadly wound

"The most promising of the disciples betrays the master." The descendents of the Franks (the French) turn on bishop of Rome. (Rev. 13:3)

d. Beginning messages

The beginning of messages to prepare a people for the second coming of Christ and the events preceding it. There are three messages: 1831: First angel's message proclaiming gospel as judgment announced; 1844: Second angel's message announcing Babylon's fall; 1844: Midnight cry announcing bridegroom's coming. (Rev. 14:6-8; Matt. 25:1-13)

These three messages are half of the last message of mercy.

e. Day of Atonement

The beginning of antitypical day of atonement: The blood of atonement begins to be applied in a final, specific way. (Dan. 8:14)

Again, the beginning of the second advent judgment included all of those events that cluster around 1798 through 1844.

Preparation for What?

Usually we speak of "preparation for Christ's coming."

This is accurate, but the problem is that we usually consider "Christ's coming" as the point in time when He shows up in the skies. Consider the following:

June 2, 1889 Ellen White wrote to H. Miller:

"Christ is coming in power and great glory, but His coming is not such a mystery as the things to take place before that event. Man must be a partaker of the divine nature in

order to stand in this evil time, when the mysteries of satanic agencies are at work.

"Only by the divine power united with the human can souls endure through these times of trial. Says Christ, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Then there must be far less of self and more of Jesus." {1888 332.1}

So if "His coming is not such a mystery as the things to take place before that event," then the preparation we need is not just for His arrival in the skies, but for those "mysteries of satanic agencies" that are at work before we see Him.

13. Judgment underway...

The judgment was underway in earnest (investigative and "proclamative" in nature) after October 22, 1844 with the following four major developments:

a. More messages

Three more messages which are a further opening of hidden things: 1844: Third angel's message revealed wrath, cross; 1852: Laodicean message revealed wretchedness; 1888: Loud cry revealed God's glory in contrast with Babylon. (Rev. 14:9-12; 3:14-21; 18:1-8)

These three messages are the other half of the last message of mercy. All together, they comprise the Elijah message, to prepare a people.

b. Image to the beast

Within 50 years of 1844 the image to the beast began to be formed (coercing counterfeit worship) (Rev. 13:14; see A. T. Jones, *What is Patriotism in the United States?*)

c. Invitation goes out

The invitation into the marriage supper is given (Matt. 22:2-4; compare Luke 12:35, 36). This is the final preaching as a witness of "this gospel of the kingdom." This is enduring agape love in face of abounding lawlessness (no agape) (Matt. 24:12-14). It is sealing to stand, settling into "the truth" so one cannot be moved when storm / plagues break. (Rev. 7:3, 4 compare 14:1)

Using two different metaphors, this is the giving of the kingdom to the Son in heaven, and the making ready of the bride for the marriage. (Dan. 7:14; Rev. 19:7, 8).

This is where we are!

This is the setting for all of the Advent Movement.

And all of this while we are still under the fourth beast.

d. Mystery finished

Then will the "mystery of God be finished" (Rev. 10:7)

14. As a thief...

As a thief in the night will come the end of the pre-second advent investigative and

"proclamative" judgment and the beginning of the executive judgment as the storm / plagues begin. (Rev. 15, 16).

15. His second coming...

The second coming in visible presence and power will signal the following:

- a. This world system reaches its END. (Dan. 2:35, 45; 7:11, 26)
- b. The ripe harvest of the earth is reaped. (Rev. 14:14-20 compare Matt. 13:19)

- c. The beast and false prophet are given to flames (part of the destruction prophesied by Daniel) (Rev. 19:19, 20)
- d. The righteous are told, "Come ..., inherit the kingdom" and ushered into the marriage supper of Lamb (Matt. 25:34; Rev. 19:5-9)

16. Judgment continues...

The judgment continues 1000 years, during which time: (Rev. 20:1-6)

- a. The dragon is cast down again.
- b. The earth is desolate.
- c. There is a further opening of hidden things in heaven, a final investigation.

17. His third coming...

Third coming of Christ / His kingdom bring the following:

- a. The final opening of hidden things occurs in the great panorama (Rev. 20:12)
- b. Every knee will bow (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10). But those who do not have His seal/name in forehead bow only because the evidence forces them; they are cast to the fire.

- c. The dragon is cast to fire. This is the final casting of devil, and is the end of Daniel's judgment (Rev. 20:7-15)
- d. The final establishment of the everlasting kingdom occurs in the the victory of agape love (Rev. 21:1-5) and the end of antitypical Day of Atonement.

This day, as a 1000 years, deals with all the powers of wickedness, in one day. The dawning of this day began a few prophetic moments earlier in the events leading to and preparing for its beginning. At its end, the harmony, the "at-oneness" of agape is restored to the universe. All issues of the great controversy have been covered. (Rev. 20:2, 3 compare 2 Pet. 3:8.)

Appeal

Do you want to join with God in "the greatest events of all ages" as the earthly systems come to their end, and His kingdom is established?

It will mean that Rome will have to be cleansed from your heart and life as you follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

You then can also give the last message of mercy.

"The Last Message of Mercy"

Exploring God's Focus at this Time of Earth's History

Part 4 (Daniel 8)

Fred Bischoff

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Review

We need prophecy to see Jesus, what He is doing.

The central issue in this world is character, what God is like and thus how He has made things to function. (Law is simply a description of that.)

The essence of God's character is self-sacrificing love. This is "the truth."

We must love the truth in order to understand prophecy.

The earthly kingdoms fall because they are based on "the lie," self exaltation.

God's kingdom will last forever because it is based on "the truth", agape love.

The great controversy has always been over these issues. But in a special way this becomes the focus at the end, "the last" portion.

Christ's first coming began "the last" part, as His life and death revealed the truth. This is the gospel.

His second coming is the next main event in "the last" part.

We are in the period just prior to His second coming.

"Present truth" (truth especially for our day) is a final message of the gospel. This delivers people from the final deceptions of "the lie," and prepares them for the second coming.

Overview

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Background of the Vision
- ◆ A Vision of *Self-Gadal*
- ◆ Grieving over Desolations
- ◆ *Self-Gadal* in the New Testament
- ◆ *Self-Gadal* after the 490 Years
- ◆ The Final Cleansing
- ◆ Review of Desolations
- ◆ Parallels of Desolations and Cleansings

Introduction

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and **the prophets**." Matt. 22:37-40

As Christ was hanged on a tree (Acts 5:30; 10:39; Gal. 3:13), two pieces of wood, one vertical and one horizontal, so we are told by Christ that Daniel hangs on two commandments, one vertical, love to God, and one horizontal, love to our neighbor.

But what kind of love is revealed in all such hanging?

In their correct interpretation "all the law and the prophets" hang totally dependent upon this very love, for He who is such love (1John 4:8, 16) is the One revealed "in all the scriptures"--"in the law of Moses, and in **the prophets**, and in the psalms" (Luke 24:27, 44).

This is the theme of this study.

Background of the Vision

The vision in Daniel 8 seen within its context is an amazing overview of the core issues of the controversy between good and evil. To see this we must understand the basic purpose of the sanctuary system given by God to Israel for the world, in light of this conflict.

The great controversy began in heaven. The heart of the battle is over the character of God. The new view of God was fathered by the devil.

His contention (called by Scripture "the lie", John 8:44; cf. Rom. 1:25 and 2Thes. 2:11) was and is that God is self-seeking and self-exalting, and thus those character qualities define the way that all should live, for they promise the ability to become like God (Isa. 14:14; cf. Gen. 3:5).

Since God is not this way, nor does His vast universe function on this principle, He has had to reveal His eternal, unchanging character of self-sacrificing love.

The Bible points to several ways in which He accomplishes this revelation.

First, He announced to the angels that Michael the archangel is not an angel that has ascended to the inner councils of the Godhead, but actually the eternal member of that Godhead called the Son, who has gone down to be an angel to the angels.

Secondly, He proclaimed His law, the transcript of His character, showing how other-centered He is, and how all were designed to live this way. The only alternative was stated to result in death. This alternative is called sin, the living of the lie.

When the controversy infected the human race by Adam and Eve's accepting the lie (Gen. 3:5) and the denial of its consequence (Gen. 3:4), they became subject to both, namely sin and death.

God immediately began to reveal the cost of sin to Himself (Gen. 3:15, 21), which was also the means by which mankind would be restored. Again, God did not have to change who He was to do this.

However, His changeless character of self-sacrificing love would be revealed in a way the universe had never seen. His faith and love, now for fallen creatures, would be tried in the fire of the lie, and would come forth shining with a brilliance that will forever astound all His creatures.

The simple assurances of His sacrifice of Himself in the face of sin, embodied in the symbolic blood offerings, gave way after time to an amazing tapestry of symbols in the sanctuary system.

He was going the extra mile to reveal to lie-blinded mortals the truth about Himself in the context of sin, with a compelling invitation for each to enter back into that truth by faith. The sanctuary was His fortress against the lie.

Israel repeatedly turned from the truth to the lie, vividly showing how mesmerized humanity is with living for self, worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.

Ezekiel 8 reveals in graphic terms the abominations Israel brought into the sanctuary (vs. 6). Intended to reveal the truth, the sanctuary was desolated as the lie instead was portrayed, both in the lives of Israel and in their worship.

The fortress was breached, and God saw fit for the spiritual desolation to be followed by a physical. And Daniel had lived through those, with insight to understand the reasons behind the destruction of Jerusalem and its glorious temple.

Though individually not responsible for the causes of this disaster, he was intimately involved with the corporate consequences of such national apostasy, as he was taken to Babylon, castrated, and made a slave in the conquering king's court.

In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (chapter 2) and its conclusion with God's kingdom being established upon the entire earth, and in his own later vision (chapter 7) and its final picture of the Son of man receiving the kingdom,

Daniel must have sensed something of the eventual victory of the truth, but the overall impact on him of the future conflict left him grieved and troubled (7:15, 28).

A Vision of Self-Gadal

Within that context, he is given his vision in chapter 8. Observe its themes and impact on Daniel.

First it begins not with Babylon the destroyer of the temple (though given before its fall, vs. 1), but with Medo-Persia the rebuilder of the temple (Isa. 44:28).

Next, instead of using various unclean creatures like the chapter 7 vision did, it uses sanctuary, sacrificial beasts to represent the earthly kingdoms. Even the little horn finds echoes in the sanctuary horns.

Next and most significantly we see a crescendo of self-exaltation described, with the impact that this has on "the truth" and "the sanctuary". In fact the vision can be summarized with this theme.

The first allusion to it appears in the initial scene Daniel sees (verse 3) where the Hebrew word "gaboahh" occurs three times (translated "high" and "higher"). This word is often used to speak of the proud who exalt themselves against God. (See 1Sam. 2:3 and Ezek. 21:26.)

However, the Hebrew word most clearly used to describe the lie in this chapter is the verb *gadal*. It is used many times in the Old Testament to speak of "magnifying" God.

But here the action of magnifying is not of God, but of self (thus self-*gadal*).

All of the following verses use this word as a thread woven through the vision and its interpretation, revealing its core issue.

In vs. 4 Medo-Persia "became great". In vs. 8 Greece "waxed very great". In vs. 9 the little horn "waxed exceeding great". This heart magnifying (vs. 25) extends "to the host of heaven" (vs. 10) and "even to the prince of the host" (vs. 11).

Regarding "host", the word is used in the very beginning of the sanctuary setting to refer to God's earthly people (Exo. 12:17). It has distinct allusions to God's people in heaven (1Kings 22:19). The lie has been effective in casting many of them down (Dan. 8:10, 13).

The picture of "stamped upon them" (vs. 10) is also that which the spirit of self-exaltation does to others in putting them down in the act of putting self up.

This verb (of "stamping") is also used to describe what God's people did to the sanctuary by bringing into it the spirit of self and perverting its worship (Isa. 1:12).

Later uses in Daniel of *gadal* repeat the extent of this self-exaltation."... He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods...." (11:36).

"Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all." (11:37).

This spirit is not something that is short-term or intermittent. It is a continual, prevailing attitude in the political and religious powers depicted in the vision. (Daniel uses the sanctuary term *ha tamid*, "the daily", to depict this spirit. We will review this word later.)

The consequence to the truth is that it is "cast down to the ground" (vs. 12). The sanctuary given to reveal the truth is "trodden under foot" by this "transgression of desolation" (vs. 13), as are the people who were to witness to the truth.

We must reaffirm here that such putting of self first is the essence of sin, of transgressing the order of the universe, of rejecting the law, of attacking the very character of God.

The consequence of such a path is progressive desolation, for the ultimate result of putting self first is self all alone, desolate. Unity and harmony come only by each putting the others first, with God being first of all. The only other alternative is deceit and destruction (vv. 24, 25).

The devastation is so significant that those who value the sanctuary because of what it reveals are heard speaking of how long this vision of desolation was to extend. (The word for "saint" in vs. 13 comes from the same word as does "sanctuary" in vs. 13 and 14.)

The answer is literally, "until evening and morning two thousand three hundred."

As we will see, this carries one down past all the earthly empires, to the end of the divided kingdoms, into "the time of the end" (vs. 17), "in the last end of the indignation", "at the time appointed", "the end" (vs. 19), "many days" (vs. 26) past Daniel's time.

"At the time appointed" (vs. 19) can also be seen as an allusion to the yearly sanctuary festivals (the Hebrew word *mow`ed* is used with both "time appointed" and "feast"; for example, see 2Chron. 8:13), which were to be fulfilled in their order, even to "the end" (vs. 19).

The end of the festivals is the feast of tabernacles, which points powerfully to what will occur when the cleansing, restoration, and vindication is completed in the fulfillment of the prior festival, the Day of Atonement.

The vision's details resulted in Daniel's fainting and sickness for days. He stated he was desolated by what he was shown (vs. 27). The word translated "astonished" is the same word as "desolation" in vs. 13. The picture of desolations lasting 2300 years desolated him.

Recall that he had lived through the desolation of his nation, Jerusalem, and in particular the temple. He could not fathom the "many days" of the vision. Gabriel does not explain that portion, simply asserting it was true and was to be shut up (vs. 26).

Grieving over Desolations

And so it is we come to chapter 9, and see the same themes continued. Daniel is focused on Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 25:11, 12) of "seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." (vs. 2).

He can understand that prophecy (9: 2), while he could not understand what he had been shown in his vision (8:27). How can he reconcile Jeremiah's 70 years with the 2300 years he was shown in his last vision?

He humbly and powerfully confesses the sins of his people, identifying with them. (He says "we" or "our" in 13 verses, and "they" or "their" in only 2.) Here it is clear he knows the cause of the desolations.

"Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him." (vs. 11).

Notice his concluding plea regarding the desolate sanctuary and city, which were designed to reveal the truth about God's character (His name).

"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.

"O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies." (vv. 17, 18).

While grasping righteousness by faith (vv. 7, 16, 18), corporate identity (both in reproaching God and in confession of the same in an example of corporate repentance, even in behalf of the fathers), and the honor of God's name (vv. 6, 15 = renown, 18, 19),

Daniel's prayer to God is focused on Jerusalem (vv. 2, 7, 12, 16), "thy people" (vv. 15, 16, 19), "thy city" (vv. 16, 19), "thy holy mountain" (vv. 16, 20), and "thy sanctuary" (vs. 17).

Daniel longs that there be no delay: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." (vs. 19).

The word translated "defer" here means also "delay" or "tarry" (cf. Hab. 2:3). Daniel couldn't understand why the 70 years would be delayed for 2300!

In response, Gabriel comes to enable him to understand ("understand" and "consider" is the same word, vs. 23) both what he heard ("matter") and what he saw ("vision").

Gabriel speaks to Daniel of "thy people" and "thy holy city" (also "Jerusalem", "the city", "the street", "the wall"). He does not call the people and city "God's" as Daniel did. He also refers to "the holy of holies", "the sanctuary", and "the sacrifice and the oblation".

Gabriel first explains their national probationary time left, clearly tied to the issues of the great controversy (the manifestations of self-gadal, transgression, sins, and iniquity, with their resolution).

There is a clear issue here with "holy" in the light of what makes unholy or "desolates", namely the transgression. But his central focus is Messiah, the embodiment of righteousness in conflict with and victory over transgression.

Most pointedly Gabriel affirms the coming fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. In four short verses the heavenly messenger makes several amazing points.

With clear allusions to the very purpose of Israel's existence as stated to Abraham in the beginning, the blessing for the entire earth, Gabriel states that the Messiah would come on a timetable rooted in the decree to rebuild the desolate city.

Gabriel weaves together the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy with details of when Messiah will come and what He will do.

He of whom the sanctuary in its purity witnessed continually would reveal the opposite of self-gadal as in an ultimate ratification of the covenant He is cut off with nothing. The verb "cut off" is translated "made" in the covenant texts Gen. 15:8 and Exo. 24:8.

But related alongside Messiah's work is yet another picture of abominations with consequent desolation and destruction because the city and the sanctuary will seek refuge not in Him, but in abominations. Can one begin to understand Daniel's consternation?

The work of Messiah, while only hinted at in Daniel 8 (vs. 11 prince of the host), is detailed in Dan. 9. However, it is Dan. 8 that details, in the very setting of the coming of Messiah, the yet-future desolations.

We see the coming desolation and destruction of the sanctuary (8:11, 13; also 9:26) and the host/people (8:13, 24) (the city is added by 9:26), which is tied to the spirit of self-*gadal* (8:8, 9, 10, 11, 25), "the daily" (8:11, 13), "the transgression of desolation" (8:13), and "craft" (8:25).

The only answer to that coming destruction is the cleansing/restoration/vindication stated to come at evening-morning 2300.

What is not apparent from Daniel's visions is that the desolation after the Messiah actually has two phases, one local and one global.

The resolution of these pictures (of self-exaltation leading to judgment, and of self-sacrificing love leading to covenant and cleansing) on these two different scales can be seen clearly only as we move to the gospel records of the Messiah's work.

There we can trace the same spiritual issues through the events especially of passion week, and on into the related prophecies of the New Testament (especially 2Thes. 2, and all of Revelation). That is what we will do in our next study.

Appeal

Does that which Daniel saw inspire you with the importance of the sanctuary?

Do the desolations that trouble Daniel also trouble you?

Are you cooperating with God in the cleansing, restoration, and vindication of the sanctuary?

"The Last Message of Mercy"

Exploring God's Focus at this Time of Earth's History

Part 5 (Daniel 8 & 9 into NT)

Fred Bischoff

www.scripturefirst.net

Review

All of the law and the prophets depend on what two commandments?

What is the fulfilling of the law?

What caused the desolation of the sanctuary?

What then will cleanse the sanctuary?

"The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth...." {1888 518.2}

A Short Diversion

Some may wonder why I quote so infrequently from Ellen White. I have been convinced by reading her that I am to go to the Bible and present public studies from it.

I use the Ellen White CD-ROM continually, and I am continually indebted to her writings. And I find them drawing me into Scripture to look deeply, and discover things I could not otherwise see.

Consider this--

Once in 1901, speaking to a group of SDA leaders, she made this appeal and promise:

"But don't you quote Sister White. I don't want you ever to quote Sister White until you get your vantage ground where you know where you are. Quote the Bible. Talk the Bible. It is full of meat, full of fatness. Carry it right out in your life, and you will know more Bible than you know now.

"You will have fresh matter - O, you will have precious matter; you won't be going over and over the same ground, and you will see a world saved. You will see souls for whom Christ has died. And I ask you to put on the armor, every piece of it, and be sure that your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel." {SpM 174.1}

Some "Gems"

I think we have gotten our "vantage ground" from the Bible over the last few days.

Having done that, I believe I can now share some powerful "gems" from her writings. See if you think we have been faithful in what we have been emphasizing here this week. (I searched for "love" and "essence.")

"Sanctification is a progressive work. It is a continuous work, leading human beings higher and still higher. It does not leave love behind, but brings it into the life as the very essence of Christianity." {HP 31.4}

"Wherever there is union with Christ there is love. Whatever other fruits we may bear, if love be missing, they profit nothing. Love to God and our neighbor is the very essence of our religion." {RC 104.2}

"The spirit of Christ's self-sacrificing love is the spirit that pervades heaven and is the very essence of its bliss. This is the spirit that Christ's followers will possess, the work that they will do." {SC 77.2}

"It is the work of the Christian to mend, to restore, to heal. This healing process saves many a soul and hides a multitude of sins. God is love; God is, in Himself, in His essence, love." {TM 265.1}

"Selfishness destroys Christlikeness filling man with self-love. It leads to continual departure from righteousness. Christ says, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' But self-love is blind to the perfection which God requires." {RH, June 25, 1908 par. 4} (Article entitled "Self-Love or Self-Sacrifice")

"Christ came to the world to convince men, by evidence that could not be controverted, that 'God is love.' This fact, so long disputed by Satan, is forever put at rest with unfallen worlds and with heavenly intelligences.

"It is put at rest with those who look upon an uplifted Saviour, who are convinced by the manifestation of the love of God displayed at Calvary". {ST, March 7, 1895 par. 1}

"The people were thronging after Christ, anxious to be healed, and eager to listen to his words. Many felt drawn to him; for he seemed to them to be the fountain of all blessings. Mercy and truth and the very essence of love were expressed in his words." {ST, August 5, 1897 par. 2}

So we can ask again, what is "present truth" for our day?

Is there evidence that what we have been presenting regarding this "very essence of love" is "present truth"?

"Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, 'Behold your God.' The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.

"The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them." {COL 415.5}

"Lead the people along step by step, dwelling upon Christ's efficiency until, by a living faith, they see Jesus as He is--see Him in His fullness, a sin-pardoning Saviour, One who can pardon all our transgressions.

"It is by beholding that we become changed into His likeness. This is present truth. We have talked the law. This is right. But we have only casually lifted up Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour." {1888 429.3}

Outline

- ◆Introduction
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- ◆Grieving over Desolations
- ◆*Self-Gadal* in the New Testament
- ◆*Self-Gadal* after the 490 Years
- ◆The Final Cleansing
- ◆Review of Desolations
- ◆Parallels of Desolations and Cleansings

***Self-Gadal* in the NT Times**

From the beginning of His earthly ministry, initiated on the precise date Daniel was given by Gabriel, the Christ had embodied self-sacrificing love (Phil. 2:5-8). At the very outset He was declared to be the sacrificial Agent of universal cleansing (John 1:29).

But this essence of His character (and of each Member of the Godhead) was poorly appreciated and often openly opposed. One of His first acts was to cleanse the sanctuary from the activities of self-seeking that defiled it.

He called it "My Father's house" when He said, "Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." (John 2:16).

The Greek word for "merchandise" is the same one used in the Septuagint in Ezek. 28:16 ("merchandise") and 18 ("traffick"), used to describe the self-exalting business that Lucifer initiated in "the holy mountain of God" (vs. 14).

This "business" had resulted in the statement, "Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries...." (vs. 18). Thus we have clear evidence of the origin of the theme of a defiled sanctuary, what it is that causes it, and who originated it.

Christ then cryptically spoke of destruction and restoration of the temple, clearly Daniel 8 and 9 themes, applied to the One of whom the earthly temple was but a symbol (John 2:19-22).

But even His own disciples near the end of His ministry still rejected any intimation of a sacrifice of Himself in death (Matt. 16:22) and vied in the spirit of *self-gadal* for the top spot in His kingdom (Mark 10:37).

Christ repeatedly had to affirm verbally, along with His living example, that true greatness was found in humility, not in self-exaltation (Matt. 18:1-4).

So finally He entered Jerusalem as the hour of His greatest sacrifice of self neared, in the manner appropriate to Israel's kings, not on some mighty steed, but on a lowly colt of an ass (Luke 19:35).

And the simmering conflict between *agape* and *self-gadal* blazed into its ultimate confrontation.

Christ's final entry into Jerusalem on the colt, seeing with a prophetic eye what no one else saw, He brought the procession of celebration to a grinding halt. Why?

He wept over the city that lay spiritually desolate before Him, knowing not the things that belonged to her peace (Luke 19:42), namely the spirit of self-sacrificing love. He then declared the coming physical desolation (vv. 43, 44).

Agape came again to the sanctuary itself and cleansed it of *self-gadal*, this time calling it "My house", using Old Testament declarations of the purpose of the sanctuary. "My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves." (Luke 19:45-47; cf. Isa. 56:7).

Thieves are not in the business of self-sacrificing service. They are serving self at the expense of others.

As Christ had stated earlier, "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers.... The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might

have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:8, 10).

He is the great Giver. All others are takers.

Repeatedly that week, Messiah made His final plea for cleansing (e.g., Matt. 23:26), but as His hour drew yet closer He clearly saw no humbling of self.

Observe His descriptions of self-*gadal* and where it would lead. The spiritual leaders loved "the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues" (Matt. 23:6).

He plainly stated, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (vv. 11, 12).

Their spirit of self-justification rather than corporate repentance (as we saw in Daniel) would bring upon them corporate guilt (vv. 30-35), as they partook of the guilt of killing the greatest of the prophets.

Christ's final, heart-rending cry is laden with Daniel language. Rejecting the protecting wings of *agape*, they would be exposed to the desolating wings of abominations. (vv. 37, 38).

He no longer calls the sanctuary "My Father's house" or "My house", but ominously, "your house." "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple." (Matt. 24:1).

As Christ leaves the temple for the final time, the disciples sensed something of the doom in Christ's words, and still caught up in the physical, external trappings of religion, pointed Christ to the magnificence of the buildings.

Christ repeated what He had stated in His entry at the beginning of the week, declaring a physical desolation was coming (Matt. 24:1, 2).

He then proceeded to outline both local and global desolations. He spoke of the continuation of self-*gadal* (here rendered "rise against" vs. 7, and "rise", vs. 11), and the accompanying deception.

In fact His first words are a warning against deception, a harking back to Eve's first buying of the lie. Christ then made the core issues unmistakably clear.

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. 24:12-14).

In the battle between lawlessness (absence of *agape*) and *agape*, many would fall for the lie, as the demand on self abounds. But *agape* never fails, and those who refuse to the end to live the lie will be saved.

This living of *agape* when lawlessness abounds will be a witness of the gospel to all the world. The entire world will be called to a decision by this final appeal of self-sacrificing love, as Israel was in a local way by Christ Himself.

Two things will happen. Some will join the witness, while many will reject it as the Jews rejected Christ.

And as Christ prepared the inhabitants of Palestine for their coming destruction with a reference to Daniel's prophecy ["When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place..." (vs. 15)],

so His prophetic words with their parables (chapters 24 & 25) were designed to prepare His people for the final desolations, the great tribulation (vs. 21), and all that followed.

Very rapidly the last confrontations between *agape* and self-*gadal* unfolded in the earthly life of the Messiah.

Greeks that arrived for the Passover sought for Jesus (John 12:20-22), being drawn by the witness of *agape*.

Jesus, who repeatedly avoided the final conflict, awaiting the time Daniel has foretold (John 2:4; 7:6, 30; 8:20), states in response, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (12:23; cf. 27).

He specifically unfolds the eternal, fruitful principle of self-sacrificing love as the only alternative to the desolate aloneness of loving self (12:24, 25).

The light of the glory revealed in the ultimate humbling of self (glorifying the *agape* name or character of God) in the face of the self-exalting spirit of those who would crucify Him would be a power to draw all to Him (12:28-36).

At the Lord's supper Christ gave the new symbols of the new covenant, His poured-out life which embodied the promises of God to the fallen race (Luke 22:19, 20).

But in that very context the disciples revealed their devotion still to self-*gadal*. "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22:24).

In light of their spirit, Christ predicted that all would be offended because of Him that very night, as He trod the path of self-sacrifice.

Peter in essence responded by denying the divine diagnosis of lack of *agape*, as he asserted that though everyone else might abandon Him, he would not (Matt. 26:31-33). The story is painfully familiar.

As Christ refused to defend Himself, and instead gave Himself to those who came to arrest Him, His disciples revealed they were concerned more about themselves than Him. "They all forsook Him, and fled" (Mark 14:50).

But observe them just a few days later. Christ challenged Peter with the question, Is your *agape* for Me greater than these others? Amazingly, Peter refused to compare himself to others, and humbled affirmed his less-than-*agape* human affection for Christ (John 21:15).

In fact, Luke records that they were actually "with one accord" (Acts 1:14; 2:1), a condition impossible for self-*gadal* motivated individuals. Unity comes only by putting the others first. How had the cleansing taken place?

The foot washing, Gethsemane, and Calvary had vividly revealed to them their lack.

Agape stood in stark contrast with self-gadal. The disciples were shown by the unfolding of these events how desolate they were in themselves.

Christ had come to them after His resurrection, opening the Scriptures to reveal that as *Agape* He could have done nothing other than give Himself (Luke 24:44-46). As He unfolded to them this truth "in the prophets" (vs. 44), do you think He took them through Daniel's prophecies? For sure!

By their own experience in seeing Him in His glory (the ultimate giving of self), and seeing themselves in their vain glory (the desperate attempt to preserve themselves), they were led into repentance and freedom from sin, and were commissioned to witness to these facts (Luke 22:47, 48).

Do you see what they were enabled to do? In their preaching henceforth (and in their written accounts in the gospels themselves) they were to tell the story of His fame and their shame.

Thus they were able to be "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God", not themselves (Luke 24:53). Here were cleansed human temples enabled to engage in true worship (and that "continually") in a temple that otherwise was still desolate and doomed for destruction.

This humbling of self, the fruit of Christ's own humbling of Himself, was what led them to be in one accord, which could be sealed by the most powerful outpouring of the Spirit seen to date (Acts 2:1-4).

Again, this local experience of a cleansed sanctuary foreshadowed the yet-to-come global experience of the same under the fulfillment of the symbolic Day of Atonement.

Consider then in summary what happened in fulfillment of Dan. 9:24-27. In their self-exalting blindness Daniel's people pursued and killed the Messiah, which was His ultimate act of overcoming self-gadal.

He laid down His life, not just to the Jews ("thy people" in Gabriel's words) or even to the Romans (the first phase of the "little horn"), but to the sins of the world.

He would die justifying rather than live condemning, for *Agape* humbles self and justifies

others, while self-*gadal* exalts self and condemns others. (Must we wonder what desolates families, churches, and nations?)

Messiah ascended to heaven to anoint the holies located there by His poured out life, and to intercede in behalf of all sinners. In forgiveness, He sent His followers to preach repentance and remission of sin first to the very perpetrators of His death.

But they proceeded to kill His disciples, and thereby sealed their own desolation and destruction, a local judgment on Jerusalem in Palestine (Acts 7). At this end of the determined 490 years of Dan. 9, the kingdom was taken from them and given to a people who would love righteousness (Matt. 21:43).

What then is the restoration of which Dan. 8:14 speaks, and why is it pictured so far in the future? What need is there of yet another cleansing?

Here we must realize that the greatest development of self-*gadal* is possible only *after* the greatest revelation of *agape*, because only after the truth has been proclaimed in its ultimate clarity can a rejection of that revelation lead to the greatest manifestation of the opposite.

So next time we will consider the fulfillment of Dan. 8 in the years after the 490-year period.

Appeal

Can you see more clearly the battle?

Do you perceive it in your own heart and life?

Do you desire to be cleansed of self-*gadal* and be filled with *agape* love?

"The Last Message of Mercy"

Exploring God's Focus at this Time of Earth's History

Part 6 (After the 490 Years)

Fred Bischoff

www.scripturefirst.net

Review

1. How does it appear that Christ "knew that His hour was come"?

2. What was the ultimate confrontation between agape and self-gadal?
3. What prepared the disciples for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

4. What chapter in the Bible records God's investigative judgment on Israel for rejecting agape clear to the end of the 490 years of Daniel 9?

Conflicting Times & Outcomes

Dan. 8: "how long the vision?"

Dan. 9: "determined upon thy people"

Outline

- ◆Introduction
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- ◆A Vision of Self-*Gadal*
- ◆Grieving over Desolations
- ◆Self-*Gadal* in the New Testament
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- ◆The Final Cleansing
- ◆Review of Desolations
- ◆Parallels of Desolations and Cleansings

Self-*Gadal* after 490 Years

Paul was one of those who was won by the witness of *agape*. He recorded in 2 Thes. 2 the yet-future spiritual desolation, again in the language of self-*gadal*.

This "falling away" (from *agape*) would reveal "that man of sin", "the son of perdition" (vs. 3). The only other time this phrase, "the son of perdition," occurs in is John 17:12, referring to Judas. This is one who is in the inner circle of Christ's followers, who refuses to be cleansed of self-*gadal*.

In this spiritual desolation would be the world's greatest revelation of self-*gadal* when this "mystery of iniquity" (vs. 7) carries the spirit of self-exaltation to its ultimate height.

He "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (vs. 4; cf. Dan. 11:36). Can we miss the desolation of the sanctuary described here?

In fact, this is the pinnacle of Daniel 8 as well, where the two phases of the fourth kingdom are woven together in their exaltation against the Prince of the host, first against His very person (the pagan phase), and finally against His body the church (the papal phase).

And again, those who do not receive a love of "the truth" which is *agape* (2Thes. 2:10) will be left with the only other alternative, to believe "the lie" of self-*gadal* (vs. 11).

This spiritually desolate and desolating power is pictured also in Revelation as part of the three-fold power called Babylon, the very desolating power of Daniel's day, who mothered the self-exalting mixtures of the truth and the lie. (Rev. 17:5).

Recall that the little horn extends from Greece until the cleansing at the end. Revelation specifically calls this power the beast from the sea, who gets his authority from the dragon himself. (Rev. 13:2)

This is the greatest development of self-*gadal*. Observe the self-exalting, desolating nature of this beast in Rev. 13, starting in verse 5:

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." (13:5-7)

Even though this power receives a "deadly wound" (vs. 3), it is healed. The end of this power occurs at Christ's second coming, when it is cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). The amazing thing is that the cleansing Daniel hears of, occurs during the existence of this little horn, as we will see.

The Final Cleansing

We must note that the final restoration of which Dan. 8:14 speaks is not the building of some temple on some mountain in some city in the midst of some people in Palestine (or Rome).

However, this restoration is involved with a temple, a mountain, a city, and a people. This

restoration is not replacing what was physically lost by the apostasy of Jerusalem, but what was spiritually lost first by the Jews and secondly the Christians themselves.

We must consider more the setting in which Scripture portrays this end-time cleansing.

Another power pictured in Revelation adds to this scene, expanding the overview Daniel was given. During the existence of the little horn of Daniel (the sea beast of Revelation), another power is picture as arising from the land (Rev. 13:11).

This land beast appears to arise during the wounding of one of the heads of the sea beast (13:3), as the power of this second beast, and thus its authority, was based on lamb-like qualities (13:11), implying Christ-like humility and self-sacrifice.

This power became a haven for the final messages of cleansing, the full development of the reformation.

It thus was intimately involved in the restoration work of Dan. 8:14, not that this work was sponsored by some earthly power, but that God ordained that there be in a sense a modern Cyrus who would grant freedom for that cleansing to occur unimpeded.

However, like Balaam of old, this modern power is pictured as perverting its God-given abilities into mercenary endeavors. As with any defilement, this introduced the dragon principles. It specifically is said to speak "as a dragon" (13:11).

As self-*gadal* is introduced, it becomes a deceptive power, and develops an image to the sea beast (13:13, 14).

It is finally pictured as a false prophet, whose destiny is that of the sea beast, to be cast into the lake of fire at Christ's second coming (Rev. 19:20).

Thus the New Testament clearly shows the realities that have ever existed behind the nations and the religions, whether Jewish or Christian. Agape (the mystery of godliness) and self-*gadal* (the mystery of iniquity) have been battling each other!

The mystery of iniquity was shown as the majority of the Jews clung to their external

forms of religion while rejecting the One revealing *agape*. The mystery of iniquity also was (and is) being shown as the Christians cling to their forms while rejecting the heart of God, *agape*.

Paul states clearly that we must leave the bondage of the earthly Jerusalem for the freedom of the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:25, 26). The book of Hebrews is an eloquent plea to leave the shadows and accept the better "Very Image" (Heb. 10:1).

Abraham himself, the father of the faithful, did not seek an earthly city, but a heavenly (Heb. 11:10, 16). The call is leave all earthly mountains, cities, and people, to follow Christ into the heavenly. He has been there mediating His covenant (Heb. 12:22-24).

And in our day the final phase of this mediation has begun on Daniel's timetable, according to the vision of evening-morning 2300. At the appointed time (Day of Atonement festival antitype) the entire world is being called to follow Christ in this final work of cleansing from self-*gadal*.

This is accomplished by a replacement of the lie by the truth. As the sanctuary symbols revealed, the blood is taken into the Most Holy place and sprinkled on the mercy seat above the law. That is where Christ has been since 1844! And that is the work He is doing.

Thus we see that the poured-out life of Christ, the greatest expression of *agape*, is understood fully only in the context of the unchanging law, itself an expression of *agape*. Mercy is the meeting of Calvary and the law of God. The cosmic dimensions begin to be appreciated fully.

So the final cleansing is a heart appreciation of the cross of Christ in this setting. The cross is proclaimed to the world as a witness in the words and lives of those who have taken up their cross (*agape* in the face of sin) to follow Christ.

This results in those accepting the cross identifying with Christ so fully that nothing can move them from depending upon and revealing His spirit of *agape*. And all rejecting the cross fully develop the spirit of self-*gadal*.

Before Christ entered the Holy of Holies He sent three messages to prepare people to follow Him there. Recall what they were: 1831: First Angel's Message (Rev. 14:6, 7); 1844: Second Angel's Message (Rev. 14:8); 1844 Midnight Cry (Matt. 25:1-13).

After Christ entered the Most Holy Place, three more messages have come from that location, inviting all to enter in. They were: 1844: Third Angel's Message (Rev. 14:9-12); 1852: Laodicean Message (Rev. 3:14-22); 1888: Loud Cry Message (Rev. 18:1-5). (These messages are all mentioned in the book *Early Writings*.)

Consider this very significant statement, written in 1887 to A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner:

"From the Holy of Holies, there goes on the grand work of instruction. The angels of God are communicating to men. Christ officiates in the sanctuary. We do not follow Him into the sanctuary as we should.

"Christ and angels work in the hearts of the children of men. The church above, united with the church below, is warring the good warfare upon the earth. There must be a purifying of the soul here upon the earth, in harmony with Christ's cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven.

"There we shall see more clearly as we are seen. We shall know as we are known."
{1888 27.1} (See "A Lesson from the Sanctuary", *RH* December 22, 1896.)

The realities and experience of the Most Holy Place has always been available to God's people. Observe Enoch and Elijah's experience. We are told there have been individuals like Enoch and Elijah in every generation (3SM146).

However, the entire world has never before been called into that experience. But since the end of Daniel's 2300 years, that has been the message. "Follow Christ into the Most Holy Place." There is no other way out of this world for those who live to see Him return, than to follow Him there.

The greatest hindrance to such cleansing has always been God's own people, and so history has repeated itself as the messages and the messengers have been resisted. What are we doing today with these messages from Jesus?

Line of Prophecy

Consider the sequence of desolations from Daniel's day to the end.

1. In Daniel's time Israel was spiritually desolated by abominations, and then was physically desolated by Babylon. Daniel was carried off a captive by the first of the world empires revealed in his visions.
2. Jerusalem would be restored on Jeremiah's timetable, and the decree to rebuild the temple by men cleansed of the abominations would begin the timetable for the coming of the Messiah.

That decree to restore Jerusalem would be made by the second of the world empires. Persia was moved by God's Spirit and the intercession of heavenly angels to enable such restoration. But Persia would still embody the spirit of self-*gadal*.

3. Messiah would come on Daniel's timetable under the fourth empire, Rome (A.D. 27). His spirit of *agape* would confront the spirit of self-*gadal* that once again was spiritually desolating Jerusalem and its temple, and He would accomplish a work of cleansing.

He would overcome by His life and death that ungodly spirit, but most would reject His victory. The fourth world empire would join with His own people to kill Him, again on Daniel's timetable (A.D. 31).

Israel's persistence in refusing to sacrifice self would lead it to make war on the body of Christ, and thereby close its time of probation per Daniel's timetable (A.D. 34), which would be followed by its physical desolation by that same world empire that joined it in killing the Messiah.

4. The kingdom of God would transfer to another nation, pictured also as the body of Christ, the church, the temple of the Holy Spirit, which began in a spirit of pure *agape*, confirmed by an outpouring of the Spirit never before seen.

But the mystery of iniquity would creep into this temple as well, bringing the abominations of self-exaltation in its multiple forms, to the point where it also was desolated spiritually.

It openly and boastfully took up the mantle of the fourth kingdom upon its demise, and developed self-*gadal* more than any pagan power could ever do. The global spiritual desolation and tribulation would be unprecedented.

5. As iniquity abounded and many people's *agape* waxed cold, God would miraculously prepare a witness to the gospel of *agape*. This witness will reach its climax according to Daniel's final timetable (A.D. 1844). The result will be a cleansing, restoration, and vindication of the temple, that sanctuary of *agape*.

This will call the entire earth to a final decision on *agape* versus self-*gadal*. Because most will continue to love the lie rather than the truth, the world will be spiritually desolated in a final way.

As the modern form of Babylon and Rome will move to destroy those who hold to *agape*, Messiah will come again, this time to rescue His bride, and the earth will be physically desolated (Rev. 17:16; 18:19).

Parallels of Prophecy

Local: Jerusalem (the people and the temple) were spiritually defiled by the spirit of self-*gadal* when the Messiah came. However, there was always a remnant of those who received and cherished *agape*.

Global: Christ's church became defiled by the spirit of self-*gadal*, leading to 1260 years of tribulation and persecution. However, there always existed the genuine body, nourished by the reality of God's *agape*.

Local: Christ engaged in a work of living and preaching *agape* to effect a cleansing, based on Daniel's timetable (A.D. 27). This involved Him giving His life.

Global: Christ began a global work of cleansing based on Daniel's timetable (A.D. 1844), by the preaching and living of end-time messages that recalled *agape* and its revelation in the sanctuary. This involves His people giving their lives.

Local: The cleansing was rejected by the majority of the Jews, which sealed their spiritual desolation (A.D. 34), leaving them ripe for physical desolation. They began to persecute those who accepted the cleansing.

Global: The cleansing will be rejected by the majority, which will seal the world's spiritual desolation, leaving it ripe for physical destruction. They will begin to persecute those who enter into the cleansing.

Local: Some of the Jews and Gentiles accepted the cleansing, and entered into unity,

enabling them to stand the persecution and to escape the coming desolation.

Global: Some receive the messages of the everlasting gospel presented in the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement symbols, and they enter into unity, enabling them to stand the persecution and to escape the coming desolation.

Local: Jerusalem was destroyed, but God's people were delivered.

Global: The world will be destroyed, but God's people will be delivered.

Appeal

What will you do with the message of *agape*?

Do you desire to follow Him into the Most Holy Place?

Does a revelation of Him lead you to a desire to be cleansed from self-*gadal*?

May we submit to that process, to His glory!

"The Last Message of Mercy"

Exploring God's Focus at this Time of Earth's History

Part 7 (New Covenant)

Fred Bischoff

Review

Prophecy tells us:

1. where we are in "the last" days: under the fourth kingdom, close to the second coming.
2. what Christ is doing: His ministry in the Most Holy Place, preparing people for the final events (final application of His blood).
3. what we should be doing: follow Him by faith into the Most Holy Place.

Six messages direct us to the Most Holy Place:

1. First Angel's Message (1831); Rev. 14:6, 7
2. Second Angel's Message (1844); Rev. 14:8
3. Midnight Cry (1844); Matt. 25:1-13
4. Third Angel's Message (1844); Rev 14:9-12
5. Laodicean Message (1852); Rev. 3:14-22
6. Loud Cry (1888); Rev. 18:1-5

Last Messages

How do we know these are "last"?

The Three Angels' Messages occur in Revelation just before Christ's second coming in Rev. 14:14-20.

The Midnight Cry is in the parable of the 10 virgins in Matt. 25 where Christ is teaching how to be ready for His second coming.

The Laodicean Message is the last of the 7 churches.

The Loud Cry is given just before Babylon's final fall.

Only One Labeled

Only one of the six messages is given a label in Scripture. It is the first one, the First Angel's Message. In Rev. 14:6, we read,

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having **the everlasting gospel** to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

Remember another passage we read earlier in our studies, one that pictured the preaching of the gospel to all the world just before the end.

Matt. 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come."

"This Gospel"?

What was "this gospel"?

The gospel of agape that endures unto the end in the face of abounding lawlessness.

Did you realize that "this gospel" is "the everlasting gospel"?

There is only one other verse in the New Testament that uses the words "everlasting" and "gospel" in one verse.

Rom. 16:25 "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since time everlasting."

So "the everlasting gospel" is "this gospel of the kingdom." The kingdom of God in Daniel's vision lasted how long? For ever. *Agape* never fails; it never passes away. And "the everlasting gospel" is "the preaching of Jesus Christ." It is "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since time everlasting."

This mystery of godliness (*agape* in these dimensions) has existed from everlasting past, not seen or expressed until it was needed. Then it was revealed in Jesus Christ. And it will endure against all lawlessness, and last to the everlasting future.

This is what is to be preached to everyone!

What a message!

Another Description

The "everlasting gospel" is also called the "new covenant" and "everlasting covenant."

The idea of "covenant" is a solemn, binding commitment.

New Covenant as Gospel

We see the "new covenant" is "gospel" when we compare 2Cor. 3 with 2Cor. 4:

2Co 3:6 Who also hath made us able **ministers** of the **new covenant**; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

4:1 Therefore seeing we have this **ministry**, as we have received mercy, we faint not...

What is "this ministry"? In vs. 3 "our gospel." In vs. 4 "the light of the glorious gospel."

In vs. 5 "we preach ... Christ Jesus."

Think also of "everlasting" as "ever new."

The New Covenant is the Everlasting Covenant.

We see this when we compare Heb. 12:24 with 13:20:

Heb 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the **new covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the **everlasting covenant**

Old Covenant

What then is the "Old Covenant"? Whatever will pass away. There are two ways it will pass away:

1. God-given symbols whose need is passed when the Reality to which they pointed comes. So this aspect of "Old Covenant" is *good*, as God gave it to point for a time to New Covenant realities.
2. Self-dependence in relating to God will not last; it fails to endure. This is never good. So even the God-given symbols must be united with faith in the reality, or they become *bad* because they are used in self-dependence.

Elements of New Covenant

Let's look at nine elements of the New Covenant, taken from the key covenant passages in the Bible, and the implications of each element.

1. The New Covenant is based on (its foundation is): God's promise (NOT man's promises)

Heb 8:6 "He is the mediator of a better **covenant**, which was established upon better **promises**."

God's choice (NOT man's choice)

John 15:16 "Ye have not chosen me, but I have **chosen you**."

God's word (NOT man's word)

("promise" in OT = "word")

Ex 34:27 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these **words**: for after the tenor of these **words** I have made a **covenant** with thee and with Israel."

God's faith (NOT man's faith)

Ga 3:22 "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by **faith of Jesus** Christ might be given to them that believe."

Implication: Based on God's promise, choice, word, and faith, the New Covenant will produce in me a response of a similar nature.

2. The New Covenant was made primarily between the Father and the Son (NOT between God and mankind)

Lu 22:29 "And I **appoint [covenant]** unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath **appointed [covenanted]** unto Me."

Implication: Made primarily between the Father and the Son, the New Covenant includes all of humanity.

3. The New Covenant required the death of the Testator (NOT the death of the recipients of the covenant)

Heb. 9:14-17 "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

"For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."

Lu 22:20 "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.'"

2Co 5:14 "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died."

Implication: Requiring the death of the One making it, the New Covenant also includes in that death the death of all.

4. The New Covenant has universal dimensions and applications (NOT for a select few in intent)

Gen. 9:15 "I will remember my covenant, which *is* **between me and you and every living creature of all flesh.**"

Implication: Having universal applications and effects, the New Covenant will be fully experienced only by those who accept it.

5. The New Covenant expects, plans, desires the initial, basic human response of faith (NOT the response of works)

Rom. 4:11 "Abraham "received the **sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith** which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be **the father of all them that believe...**; that righteousness might be imputed unto them."

This is God working in us "to will" (Phil. 2:13).

Implication: Initially expecting only the response of faith, the New Covenant encompasses what faith does, the fruits of faith.

6. The New Covenant involves law being written on our hearts (NOT just tables of stone)

Faith leads us to give all, do all. Whereas the previous point was God working in us "to will," this point is God working "to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

Jer. 31:33 "But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my **law** in their **inward parts**, and write it in their **hearts.**"

Rom. 7:22 "For I delight in the **law** of God after the **inward man.**"

Implication: Being written on tables of our hearts, the New Covenant is the working out of what the tables of the covenant in stone represented, the eternal, unchanging principles of *agape* engraved on hard hearts, leading to a change of nature.

7. Leads us back to identity with God, giving up the enmity in our flesh against Him, and thus against one another (NOT my identity where I am my own god and king)

This is the kingdom that Christ mentioned in Luke 22. It is a covenant kingdom, based on the new covenant in blood, life poured out for others.

His faith working by love led Him to identity with us even after we fell into sin. (See Gen. 3:15 for the first covenant promise after sin.) We respond by identifying with Him, and thus others.

Jer. 31:33 "and [I] will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Implication: Restoring us to Him as His, the New Covenant encompasses the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, the oneness of self-sacrificing love in His earthly domain.

8. Restores an intimacy with the Lord that existed before sin (self-serving) severed our connection (NOT the shallow knowledge that results in His saying, "I know you not")
Jer. 31:34 "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD."

Ho 2:20 "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt **know the LORD.**"

Ho 6:3 "Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to **know the LORD**: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter *and* former rain unto the earth."

Implication: Leading us to know the Lord, the New Covenant encompasses eternal life. In fact the nature of the New Covenant is everlasting righteousness, the preservation of life by the giving of it.

9. Forgives sin through God's faith and love towards sinners, the victory of Christ over sin, and thus over death (NOT make-believe forgiveness that leaves sin and self enthroned)

Jer. 31:34 "for I will **forgive their iniquity**, and I will **remember their sin no more.**"

Mt 26:28 "For this is my blood of the new **testament**, which is shed for many for **the remission of sins.**"

John 1:29 "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Implication: Having wrought out our forgiveness, the New Covenant encompasses the reconciliation of the world, the full removing of the curse (disobedience to the law, self-seeking instead of Other-seeking) and its consequence (death).

Questions

How important is this final preaching of the "everlasting gospel"? What is the purpose of this witness of the "everlasting covenant"?

As we saw, in the Bible this is given just before Christ's second coming. Thus it is "the last message of mercy."

Permit me to read two very important passages from Ellen White.

About two years after the Minneapolis General Conference Session, Ellen White wrote about regarding the events facing the world, and the messages to prepare people for

them:

"Scenes of stupendous interest are right upon us, and these things will be sure indications of the presence of Him who has directed in every aggressive movement, who has accompanied the march of His cause through all the ages, and who has graciously pledged Himself to be with His people in all their conflicts to the end of the world.

"He will vindicate His truth. He will cause it to triumph. He is ready to supply His faithful ones with motives and power of purpose, inspiring them with hope and courage and valor in increased activity as the time is at hand....

"Mystic Babylon has not been sparing in the blood of the saints, and shall we be wide-awake to catch the beams of light which have been shining from the light of the angel who is to brighten the earth with his glory?

"Wake up the mighty men. Let the messages of the past 50 years that have been sounding now be seen in their true force and bearing by repetition. Let the same spirit which attended these messages come into our hearts in these last days. These things are not [to] be mentioned with gloom and sadness.

"We are [to] think how heaven regards these events, and to be in harmony with the transactions going on in heaven in preparing a people to stand in this, the day of the Lord, and having done all to stand. Let the light and power of the sunbeams of righteousness enter into the soul." Letter 112, 1890. {1888 762-3}

See also the article published just after Minneapolis in *RH* December 11, 1888, "The Approaching Crisis"

"Messages the Past 50 Years"

Did you notice she wrote of "the beams of light which have been shining from the light of the angel who is to brighten the earth with his glory"?

And then she said, "Let the messages of the past 50 years that have been sounding now be seen in their true force and bearing by repetition."

Integrity of the Messages

These messages are inseparable. Their purpose is to prepare a people for what lies ahead.

In them all we will find the elements of the New Covenant.

Observe the following statement recorded some 10 years after Minneapolis that weave five of the messages together:

"The first and second angels' messages are united and made complete in the third....

Under the proclamation of these messages the cry was made, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh.' The believers in these messages were compelled to go out from the churches because they preached the second appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven.

"The whole world was to hear the message, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' Many who heard these messages thought they would live to see Christ come; but there was a delay in the coming of the Bridegroom, in order that all might have an opportunity to hear the last message of mercy to a fallen world.....

"The first, second, and third angels' messages are to be repeated. The call is to be given to the church:

"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. ... Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.'

"Many who went forth to meet the Bridegroom under the messages of the first and second angels, refused the third, the last testing message to be given to the world, and a similar position will be taken when the last call is made." {RH, October 31, 1899 par. 8-12}

New Covenant in Messages

What do these six message have to do with the New Covenant? If we had time, we could trace the nine elements of the New Covenant through each of the six messages. The truths of the New Covenant permeate these messages. They are the last preaching of the "everlasting gospel," "the everlasting covenant." They are Christ centered.

Observe the New Covenant's picture of Christ:

He is God's Promise to us.

He is the Expression to us of the covenant made between Him and the Father.

He is the Testator who died and yet lives.

He is the Saviour of the world.

He is the Author of all faith.

He is the Law-giver who writes on our hearts.

He is the King who possesses His people in love.

He is the Bridegroom who yearns for us to know Him.

He is the Lamb who has borne the sin of the world.

Appeal

These messages of the "everlasting covenant" are His call into the Most Holy Place.

Have you followed Him there?

Have you accepted all that He is to you?

Have we invited others to do the same?

"The Last Message of Mercy"

Exploring God's Focus at this Time of Earth's History

Part 8 ("The Daily")

Fred Bischoff

www.scripturefirst.net

Overview

- ◆ "The Daily"
- ◆ The Sanctuary Daily
- ◆ The Opposite Daily
- ◆ "The Daily" Meets the Day

"The Daily"

Daniel's use of "the daily" in chapter 8 (vv. 11, 12, 13) is consistent with the rest of the sanctuary themes used in this vision (ram, goat, horns, desolate, cleansed).

The basic concept of "the daily" is something that is continual, that is repeated over and over, that goes on and on.

What would that be in the context of what the sanctuary reveals to us about God and our sin?

The Sanctuary Daily

The first occurrences of this Hebrew word are an amazing series of pictures given us in the newly established sanctuary system. The following are all the uses of this word in Exodus.

Shewbread: Ex 25:30. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me **alway**.

Candlesticks: Ex 27:20 And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn **always**.

Breastplate: Ex 28:29 (also 30) And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy *place*, for a memorial before the LORD **continually**.

Mitre: Ex 28:38

Morning and evening sacrifices: Ex 29:38, 42.

Incense: Ex 30:8

The powerful picture given here is that God is **continually** pouring out Himself for sinners. So this word "daily" but shows us the same reality of the truth we have

already noted, God's **continual** *agape*.

The sanctuary reveals to us that the life-blood of the universe is **continually** flowing from the heart of God to His universe. Specifically, the sanctuary symbols apply that truth to the setting of sinful humans. We can call this "the heavenly daily."

Ps 40:11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth **continually** preserve me.

The Opposite Daily

But there is a contrary use of this word that relates to the lie, instead of the truth. This other use is also a **continual** thing (though in no sense eternal as is the heavenly daily). Here is an example:

Ps 74:22, 23

Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.

Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth **continually**.

Israel's sanctuary was to be a lesson book for her and for all the nations of earth (Isa. 56:7). It should be obvious that the **continual** provisions that the sanctuary portrays for sinners, are given by God because of the **continual** need of sin.

Ever since the lie was invented, it has **continually** attacked the truth. We can call this "the pagan daily."

Do we grasp how unrelenting the battle is, in which God is engaged? And do we see how every day we are caught up in it?

"The Daily" in Daniel

The spirit of the worldly empires, increasing from kingdom to kingdom, is manifested in its highest form in the little horn, who incorporates this spirit of the pagan daily into its character and existence, even as it displaces the pagan powers preceding it.

The spirit and the titles of pagan Rome were carried right into the heart of Christianity. As noted, this began the greatest abomination, desolation, and tribulation that the world has ever seen.

"The Daily" Meets the Day

We now live in the time when the sanctuary is being cleansed of this spirit of self-*gadal*, the fulfillment of the answer to the question in Dan. 8:13. The way for this fulfillment of all symbolic Days of Atonement was prepared by the Reformation of the 16th

century.

The final phase began on evening-morning 2300, A.D. 1844. This fulfillment of the longest time prophecy of Scripture was anticipated and announced by the sounding of message after message.

Observe the following brief introductions to these messages, how each incorporate the cleansing truth.

1. In the decade (the 1830's) before the time came, the call of **the first's angel's message** of Rev. 14:6, 7 went forth, directly proclaiming the truth ("the everlasting gospel") and thus attacking the lie. "Worship the Creator, not the creature. Exalt Him, not self."

The time had come for judgment--the consequence of the lie was to be seen by the entire world, and all to prepare to reap what they had sown.

2. The proclamation of **the second angel's message** of Rev. 14:8, "Babylon is fallen," was sounded the summer of 1844. The continual exaltation of self against the God of heaven, the One who humbled Himself to die for all, is weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and found as wanting as was Belshazzar in old Babylon. (Dan. 5:22-28)

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov. 16:18). The mixing of the lie with the truth (fornication) is unmasked.

3. The "**midnight cry**" message of the coming bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-10) was powerfully presented starting the late summer of 1844, causing a tremendous revival and humbling of self. (GC400, 401)

The oil of the Spirit (the heavenly daily light from God) prepared hearts to be wed to Him who has ever desired to dwell with us in humility and service.

On October 22, 1844, Christ began the final fulfillment of the Day of Atonement at the appointed time on Daniel's very timetable. The final cleansing, restoration, and vindication of the sanctuary began. *Agape* is to be restored, and *self-gadal* removed.

4. **The third angel's message** of Rev. 14:9-12 began to be proclaimed, again calling all in the most solemn words not to worship the creature, which leads to desolating, continual torment.

The warning against the image of the beast and the mark of his name actually calls the

world *by contrast* to the image of God and His name (self-sacrificing love, as revealed in the Lamb). The eternal, enduring quality of *agape* (1Cor. 13:7) is manifested in saints (cf. Dan. 8:13), enabling them to endure.

5. In the next decade **the message to Laodicea** (Rev. 3:14-21) was seen in a new light. The same Witness who pointed out the self-justifying (Matt. 23:30), blinded (Matt. 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26) spirit of the leaders of His day, was heard speaking to the leaders of our day with the same message.

He offers the gold of *agape*-fueled faith, the clean garment of selflessness, and the eyesalve of continually seeing the poverty of self and the riches of the Selfless One.

6. Around 44 years after 1844 the final message began under the power of the Holy Spirit, a message to lay the glory of the creature in the dust, and restore *agape* to all of God's people who wanted it.

The judgment referred to in Dan. 8:14 (compare 7:10) and in the first angel's message entered a most solemn and glorious phase in the final judging of Babylon (Rev. 18:2, 3, 10).

Again *by way of contrast*, the other previous messages are repeated as the "**loud cry**" of Rev. 18 calls God's people to an experience

- where they will stand, not fall (18:2)
- where there will be continual light and union rather than darkness and no wedding (18:23)
- where there is rest and joy instead of torment and sorrow (18:7, 10, 15)
- where one lives and reigns with Christ in contrast to the death and lost dominion of self-exaltation (18:7, 8).

These six messages as a whole comprise the Elijah message to prepare a people for Christ to come the second time (compare John the Baptist; Mal. 4:5, 6; Matt. 11:7-14; 17:10-13; Luke 1:17).

Appeal

Have we received the messages God in His great mercy has sent?

Have we joined Him in giving the messages to others?

Have we seen how we can cooperate with Him in this work?

May we see that nothing is more important!

Christ's Prayer for the Daily

"Our Father which art in heaven": We have one Father, and He is in heaven. Do we truly identify with Him, as He in Christ humbly identified with us? (Isa. 9:6; John 14:9). The only alternative is to reflect the counterfeit "father" who left the truth when he fathered the lie (John 8:44).

"Hallowed be thy name": His very character is dedicated to the continual revelation of *agape*. He is solely, wholly, purely *agape*.

"Thy kingdom come": "The King of love my Shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never...." He is continual goodness, and thus forever He will be crowned King. May the rule of *agape* come soon!

"Thy will be done in earth": On this earth, this sphere infected with continual self-*gadal*, may self-sacrificing love be restored!

"As it is in heaven": Heaven itself was cleansed of self-*gadal*. May this happen on earth as well!

"Give us this day our daily bread": Continually we are dependent upon God's giving Himself to us. We do not live by physical bread alone. Daily, momentarily we need the nourishment of the Bread of God who is giving life to the world (John 6:33-35). We need to hunger for this!

"And forgive us our debts": We confess that we have continually taken from others rather than given, and in our selfish grasping, we have incurred a horrendous debt. Self-*gadal* has bankrupted us, and we have nothing with which to repay. Will You, O God, pay our debt for us, by forgiving it? Thank You that in Christ, in *agape* You have!

"As we forgive our debtors": We also must confess that others have taken from us. In our spirit of self-exaltation and self-justification we felt they had to pay back.

But now You have shown us that they in themselves have no more to give than we, and so we are willing to take the loss their self-*gadal* has incurred upon us, as You have taken our loss. Unless we do this, we cannot grasp Your forgiveness; in fact, we have rejected it.

"And lead us not into temptation": We confess the original temptation, the deception that to be like You we must exalt ourselves. Don't let us go there! The spirit is willing but

the flesh is weak (Matt 26:41). Help us avoid stirring up the flesh.

"But deliver us from evil": We need continual deliverance from our flesh, from the evil of putting ourselves first, and forgetting You and others. "My foes are ever near me, around me and within...."

"For thine is the kingdom": From You alone comes that which can rule the universe eternally. Only the Being who has daily humbled Himself the most is qualified to be exalted above all continually without end.

"And the power": Your *agape* is the power of the universe! You are the great Source! All things pertaining to life are of You (2Cor. 5:18).

"And the glory": There is such powerful, kingly glory in You! It comes from You, who You are, and what You are like. There is no other glory but Yours. There is no substitute for *agape*. Your character shines throughout the whole universe.

"For ever": You are who You are daily, continually, without end! These realities will never end.

"Amen": And so may it be. I believe it, and I want it. As small a part of Your universe that I am, I want to add my endorsement, appreciation, and approval to Who you are.

(Matt. 6:9-13)

Passages to Ponder

Reflect upon these descriptions of the contrast between the two daily, continual spirits, that is, between *agape* and *self-gadal*.

"... For ages Judah had been the repository of sacred truth. Here the knowledge of Jehovah had been cherished and preserved, when God had not been acknowledged among the nations, and his worship was lost in the earth.

"The streets of Jerusalem had been trodden by angel feet, and its very soil had been sacred to God. From its temple prayer and praise had ascended to God. From its altar the bleeding sacrifice had testified to human guilt, pointing to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

"The Lord had sent them messages of warning and reproof, of consolation and promise, by his prophets, rising up early and sending them, but they had beaten one and stoned

another, and it could not be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

"Finally God had sent his Son, and from the highest bough to the lowest he had searched for fruit, and had found none. For their sakes he had clothed his divinity with humanity, made himself of no reputation, fled before the feet of his accusers and haters, and yet carried a rebellious people upon his heart.

"He had done all that could be done, but they turned from him, demanding still more evidence. His life was one **continual** miracle, but they knew it not, and demanded that he should show them a miracle.

"But in the face of their utter rejection of **his love**, their unbelief in his mission and divinity, when he knew that the representative men of the nation were plotting for his destruction, he wept over the city of **his love**.

"His prophetic eye read the history of the past, and the woe and the guilt of the future, and his heart was breaking with agony because the people of God knew not the time of their visitation.

"Hell moved by a power from beneath, that the guilty inhabitants of Jerusalem might carry out the will of the prince of darkness. Stirred with enmity they would yield themselves to the control of the malignant foe, and make the Prince of life their victim.

"Clouds of wrath were gathering over the doomed city; for they called down upon themselves judgment, crying, 'His blood be on us and upon our children.' That blood by virtue of which the repentant sinner might be forgiven--that blood by which a guilty world might be saved,

"by which the Jewish nation might be saved and purified, which was paid a ransom for the sins of the world, was to them the final guilt in the cup of their iniquity. Jesus knew that his chosen people were to put him, the Prince of life and glory, to an ignominious death.

"He knew what was to be their doom. With prophetic glance he saw the Roman legions, he heard the tramp of armies, saw the city encompassed and in flames, and the temple a smoking ruin.

"The miseries of the people whom he longed to save, rose up before him. He beholds their guilt and agony, but they are as **unrelenting** as was Satan in his **rebellion** against God." (1888, p. 1059; emphasis supplied).

"Christ our Saviour came to the world to seek and save that which was lost. 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

"During **every moment** of Christ's life in our world, God was repeating His gift. Christ, the sinless One, was making an infinite sacrifice for sinners, that they might be saved.

"He came as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and those for whom He came looked upon Him as stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. The cup of suffering was placed in His hand, as if He were the guilty one, and he drained it to the dregs.

"He bore the sin of the world to the bitter end. And yet men **continue** to sin, and Christ **continues** to feel the consequences of their sin as if he Himself were the guilty one." (*13MR*, pp. 369, 370; emphasis supplied).

"The spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven. Christ's self-sacrificing love is revealed upon the cross. That man might be saved, He gave all that He had and then gave Himself. The cross of Christ appeals to the benevolence of every follower of the blessed Saviour.

"The principle there illustrated is to **give, give**. This, carried out in actual benevolence and good works, is the true fruit of the Christian life. The principle of worldlings is to **get, get**, and thus they expect to secure happiness; but carried out in all its bearings, the fruit is misery and death." (*9T*, p. 254; emphasis supplied).

"As you near the cross of Calvary there is seen love that is without a parallel. As you by faith grasp the meaning of the sacrifice, you see yourself a sinner, condemned by a broken law. This is repentance.

"As you come with humble heart, you find pardon, for Christ Jesus is represented as **continually** standing at the altar, **momentarily** offering up the sacrifice for the sins of the world. He is a minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man.

"The typical shadows of the Jewish tabernacle no longer possess any virtue. A daily and yearly typical atonement is no longer to be made, but the atoning sacrifice through a mediator is essential because of the **constant** commission of sin.

"Jesus is officiating in the presence of God, offering up His shed blood, as it had been a lamb slain. Jesus presents the oblation offered for every offense and every shortcoming of the sinner." (*ISM*, pp. 343, 344; emphasis supplied).

The question arises, why is the work of cleansing, restoration, and vindication not completed after some 160 years? Do we see the ongoing battle between *agape* and self-*gadal*? What will lead God's people to respond to the messages and consent to the cleansing?

Can we learn from the past the lessons so essential for us today? Can we sit at His feet in quietness and humility? Will we let Him cleanse us from the selfishness and pride of self-*gadal*, and plant our feet firmly on "the elevated-platform of love to God and love to our fellow-man"?

"The natural heart is not to bring its own tainted, corrupting principles into the work of God. There must be no concealing of the principles of our faith. The third angel's message is to be sounded by God's people. It is to swell to the loud cry.

"The Lord has a time appointed when he will bind off the work; but when is that time? When the truth to be proclaimed for these last days shall go forth as a witness to all nations, then shall the end come.

"If the power of Satan can come into the very temple of God, and manipulate things as he pleases, the time of preparation will be prolonged.

"Here is the secret of the movements made to oppose the men whom God sent with a message of blessing for his people. These men were hated. The men and God's message were despised, as verily as Christ himself was hated and despised at his first advent.

"Men in responsible positions have manifested the very attributes that Satan has revealed. They have sought to rule minds, to bring their reason and their talents under human jurisdiction.

"There has been an effort to bring God's servants under the control of men who have not the knowledge and wisdom of God, or an experience under the Holy Spirit's guidance. Principles have been born that should never have seen the light of day.

"The illegitimate child should have been stifled as soon as it breathed the first breath of life. Finite men have been warring against God and the truth and the Lord's chosen messengers, counterworking them by every means they dared to use.

"Please consider what virtue there came in the wisdom and plans of those who have slighted God's messages, and, like the scribes and Pharisees, have despised the very men whom God has used to present light and truth which his people needed.

"It is an offense to God that his work should be restricted by human beings. The word of the living God, appealing to sanctified reason, will never give to the work such an impress as is now revealed.

"There has been deceit, falsehood, artifice, selfishness. Schemes have been set on foot to rob God and to rob man, in order to make up to the work for what selfish devices have abstracted....

"Every system controlled by the principles of the gospel of Christ is pure, open, clear as the day, and is sound and healthful in all its operations.

"Everything entered into for the sake of ministering to pride or unsanctified ambition is to be cleared away, before the Lord's institutions shall stand securely upon the eternal rock. We need no crafty inventions to sustain the cause of God. We need no unjust dealing.

"Let the Lord breathe upon his work the spirit of heavenly principles, and it will live. Nothing that man can manufacture can take the place of God's Holy Spirit!

"Nothing that man's wisdom can invent will justify the violation of truth, or a disregard of the rights of humanity. Truth is too pure to set her delicate feet off from the elevated-platform of love to God and love to our fellow-man." (1888, pp.1525-1527)