

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – From Confession to Consolation – 29 Feb-6 Mar 2020

Christ would have us study the prophesies in Daniel. This week's Lesson is on Daniel 9, which we touched upon last week. In chapter 8, Daniel fainted (verse 27), and the angel was obliged to postpone any further explanation. In chapter 9, the angel came back, as the result of Daniel's prayer, to make known the remainder of the vision, namely, about the days (Daniel 9:20-23). Beginning where he left off, as though not a moment had intervened, the angel gives Daniel the rest of the interpretation. Notice how the angel conveys heavenly feeling towards Daniel, "for thou art greatly beloved" (verse 23). Think of celestial beings, the highest in the universe, the Father, next the Son, next the holy angels, having such regard for a mortal man and letting him know that he was greatly beloved! This is one of the highest pinnacles of glory to which mortals can attain. It was said of Abraham that he was a "friend of God." Of Enoch, that he "walked with God." As God is no respecter of persons, we too can be His friend and walk with Him. The Lord has promised: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). To sup with the Lord denotes an intimacy equal to being greatly beloved by Him, walking with Him, or being His friend.

Before we continue, worth noting that the Lesson writer says that 'ten years' intervened between the two parts of the interpretation in Daniel 8 and 9. This is really an unimportant matter, but since the Lesson writer has raised it, we need to comment on this. A standard view on this in the time of our Adventist pioneers was given by Uriah Smith as follows: "The vision recorded in the preceding chapter was given in the third year of Belshazzar, B. c. 553. The events narrated in this chapter occurred in the first year of Darius, B. c. 538. A period of fifteen years is consequently passed over between these two chapters" (Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the revelation*, Review and Herald 1882, p.243). The actual time, however, between the two portions of the interpretation, is, as we have already intimated, a matter of comparatively little importance. There is no escaping the conclusion that the ninth is a continuation of the eighth, and the reader can connect verse 24 of chapter 9 with verse 26 of chapter 8, and follow the interpretation through without a break. So far as the interpretation is concerned, it makes no difference whether the time between the two parts of it was years or minutes.

Back to the interpretation, the angel said: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people" (Daniel 9:24) – four hundred and ninety years devoted to the Jews. Was it a time in which God would be partial, in that He would not regard the salvation of any other people? Impossible; for "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). It was simply an evidence of the long-suffering of God, in that He would wait yet so many years on the people of Israel, to give them an opportunity to accept their high calling as priests of God, to make the promise known to the world. But they would not. On the contrary, they themselves so far forgot it that when the Messiah came they rejected Him. So from being the ones around whom the kingdom of Israel, the fifth and last universal kingdom, should centre, they ceased to have any distinctive place in the covenant. Individuals of the race may be saved by believing the Gospel, just the same as other persons; but that is all. The desolate temple, with the rent veil revealing the fact that the glory of God no more dwelt in its most holy place, was a symbol of that people's standing in connection with the covenant. As individuals they may be grafted into the good olive tree, the same as any Gentiles, thus becoming Israel; but their position as leaders, as the religious teachers of the world, is for ever gone, for they did not appreciate it.

And now what remains? – Only this, that God's people hear and obey the call to come out of Babylon, lest by remaining there they receive of her plagues. For although the city on the Euphrates was destroyed many hundreds of years ago, even several hundred years before Christ, yet nearly one hundred years after Christ the prophet John was by the Spirit moved to repeat the very threats uttered by Isaiah (47:7-10) against Babylon, and in almost the identical words: "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine" (Revelation 18:7-8). Babylon was a heathen city, exalting itself above God. As shown in Belshazzar's feast (Daniel 5), it represented a religion that defied God. The same spirit

exists today, not simply in a certain society, but wherever men choose their own way in religion, rather than submit to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). God in His longsuffering and tender mercy is but waiting until His people, coming out of Babylon, and humbling themselves to walk with Him, shall preach this Gospel of the kingdom, with all the power of the kingdom, even the power of the world to come, "in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

That 'end' will be the destruction of Babylon, just as spoken through Jeremiah, but as Babylon of old was a universal kingdom, and its real king, as shown in Isaiah 14, was Satan, the god of this world, so the destruction of Babylon is nothing less than the judgment of God on the whole earth, when He delivers His people. For now read the words which "Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations," when he prophesied about the end of the Babylonian captivity: "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the Lord had sent me: to wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse, as it is this day; Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; and all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Askelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod, Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, and all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which are beyond the sea, Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners, and all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert, and all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes, and all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth; and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

"Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you. And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ye shall certainly drink. For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by My name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He shall mightily roar upon His habitation; He shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, He will plead with all flesh; He will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground" (Jeremiah 25:15-33). This is the fearful doom to which all the nations of the earth are rushing. They are arming for that great battle.

Many of the nations of this earth are dreaming of federation and of universal dominion; but God has said of universal dominion on this earth, "It shall be no more, till He come whose right it is, and I will give it Him" (Ezekiel 21:27). The last general revolution will be at the coming of "the Seed to whom the promise was made" (Galatians 3:19), who will then take the kingdom to Himself. Yet a little while are these terrible judgments delayed, that all may have opportunity to exchange the weapons of the flesh for the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, which is "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). This captivity is freedom. By God's Word we come from the Babylonian bondage of pride and self-confidence to the freedom of God's gentleness. May we by the grace of God come out, and exchange the bondage of human tradition and speculation for the freedom God gives.