

## 10. From Confession to Consolation (1Q 2020—Daniel)

**Biblical Material:** Daniel 9; Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10; 2 Kings 19:15–19; Matt. 5:16; James 5:16.

### Quotes

- Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays.” *Soren Kierkegaard*
- God can handle your doubt, anger, fear, grief, confusion, and questions. You can bring everything to him in prayer. *Rick Warren*
- Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire? *Corrie ten Boom*
- God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer. *Mother Teresa*
- There comes a time in each life like a point of fulcrum. At that time you must accept yourself. It is not any more what you will become. It is what you are and always will be. *John Fowles*

### Questions

Why is “God’s timetable” significant? Why should we study such matters? Is it a question of knowing that God has everything operating according to plan? If so, what *is* the plan?! What does it really mean, “in the fullness of time, Christ came”? What of unfulfilled prophecy? What are the dangers of overstressing these issues?

### Bible summary

Daniel 9 relates Daniel’s concern over the time of the exile prophesied through Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10). The 70 years were coming to an end yet he didn’t see anything happening. So God provided the answer. 2 Kings 19:15–19 details Hezekiah’s prayer for deliverance from Assyria. We are to reveal God in our lives (Matt. 5:16). “Earnest prayer from those who live right is very effective.” James 5:16 FBV.

### Comment

With all the wealth of data in the lesson regarding times and dates, the often-asked question is relevant: does it matter for my salvation if I don’t understand all this? Surely it does not. Nor is this information to satisfy our curiosity, or to get into numerological sidetracks. Only as it demonstrates God’s continuing working out of the issues of the Great Controversy; the prophesied coming of Jesus as saviour and God-revealer; and confirmation of God’s foreknowledge and sovereignty does this passage deserve our attention. Sadly too many have lost their way and their focus in the quicksands and mirages of prophetic interpretation, with all the maps, charts, and calculations.

It reminds me of a lady who, when I asked her how she had joined the church, told me “I came in with the beasts.” As I observed at the time, I hope she didn’t stay there... For while it is surely important to establish prophecy and divine control, the use of images of various prophetic beasts can be overdone!

Daniel had been doing bible study in the book of Jeremiah, and like us, had questions. His vision is a response to his prayer, especially regarding the 70 weeks. He also prays in confession and appeal, and seeks to influence this particular conflict in the Great Controversy. Perhaps, as has been suggested, this helps in dealing with God’s self-imposed limitations, and positively addresses the “rules of engagement” between Christ and Satan.

God wishes to reassure Daniel that he is still working, even though it may be behind the scenes. Here is revealed God's plan for the coming of Jesus, and also what he knows will happen—his rejection by his own people (us!). While there is the immediate comfort that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, the “cutting off” of the anointed one (=Messiah, Christ) is the poignant tragedy that God reveals to Daniel. For in this world, the good news is always tinged with sadness, and whatever we might hope for here and now will always be transient and disappointing. Daniel too was learning that lesson, even as he tried to work for his nation and people. The ultimate reassurance is that God is there, he continues to work, he has not forgotten—and that one day the great controversy will be over.

I have a recurring dream. Well, more of a nightmare, really. In a beautiful scene (I dream in Technicolor), I'm there with a bunch of fellow Adventists as Christ returns. The fulfillment of the blessed hope, the consummation of the divine promise, the completion of God's salvation. As the world ends in chaos, we look up to welcome our returning King.

Except my fellow Adventists are far from happy.

“Can't be,” says one.

“Another counterfeit?” wonders another.

“Doesn't fit my chart,” mutters a third, looking down at an elaborate sheet of time-lines and dates and symbols. They confer. For the longest time. As the world ends, they debate the relative merits of symbolic interpretations, calculate complex mathematical formulae, and extrapolate times and dates to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  degree.

Ultimately they reach a conclusion. From their research, they are able to categorically and conclusively prove that this is *not* the second advent, because the King of the North has not attempted the defilement resulting in the abomination of desolation under the rule of Persia in which the armies of Armageddon overcome the hordes of the East under the sixth seal at the time of the multiplied myriads of trumpets that the 24 elders are to blow. Or something like that. As I said, this is just a dream. Not to be taken too literally... The scene fades on my comrades, still debating the End as the End arrives all around them. Maybe it's as well that the scene fades then, since I cannot tell you the Lord's response to their desire to send Him back to heaven.

But the image troubles me still. What is it about us that makes the calculating of the End more important than the return of Jesus? Why are we so preoccupied with the events of the time of trouble? Where is God in all of this Last-day mania?

Isn't it possible that as Adventists we concentrate so much on the external Christ who is to return that we fail to recognize the internal Christ now, active in our daily lives? The words of Christ to his disciples were not “I am leaving now, and I'll see you when I return,” but “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” In our desire to proclaim the return of Christ, we surely need to also emphasize the presence of Christ in the believer's life, day by day walking with Him on the way. As well as preaching the coming, we need to practice the presence of Christ. I don't need any more nightmares...

### **Ellen White comments**

We are living in the last days, when error of a most deceptive character is accepted and believed, while truth is discarded. The Lord will hold both ministers and people responsible for the light shining upon them. He calls upon us to work diligently in gathering up the jewels of truth, and placing them in the framework of the gospel. {RC 216}

Thus, viewing the things of time in the light of eternity, we may, like Daniel and his fellows, live for that which is true and noble and enduring. {PK 547-8.}