

# Is There a Pre-Advent Judgment of God's Loyal People in Daniel 8:14?

By Roy Gane

George Knight's warning in his new book, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*,<sup>1</sup> of Adventism's progressive loss of vision and consequent slide to impotence in fulfilling our mission is on target, and so is his biblically-balanced call to recapture holy urgency that focuses on and cooperates with Christ's end-time, love-centered Gospel commission (especially the Three Angels' Messages of Rev 14:6-12, and I would add the Elijah Message of relational reconciliation in Mal 4:5-6).<sup>2</sup> However, I would like to dialogue a bit with something he said about Daniel 8:14 and, in the process, strengthen somewhat his overall message.<sup>3</sup> After affirming his belief that prophecy was fulfilled in 1844, Knight goes on to say that he cannot find an investigative or pre-Advent judgment of the saints in Daniel 8:14, only a judgment on the little horn and a "cleansing of the sanctuary in relation to that power at the end of the 2300 days."<sup>4</sup> He also finds a pre-Advent judgment against the "little horn" and for the saints in Daniel 7,<sup>5</sup> but is only able to see it beginning in 1844 on the basis of the parallelism between Daniel 7 and 8.<sup>6</sup>

## The Context of Daniel 8:14

Knight is certainly right about the two-edged judgment in Daniel 7, the existence of a strong parallel between chapters 7 and 8, and the need to arrive at conclusions through solid interpretation that does not jump to conclusions by reading one text into another. It is true that the parallel between the chapters is enough to link the pre-Advent judgment (chap. 7) with the cleansing of the sanctuary (chap. 8), so that the timing of the latter applies to the former. But what is in Daniel 8:14 itself? Is it true that it mentions only an end-time pre-Advent judgment on the "little horn," but has no investigative or pre-Advent judgment of the saints?

Actually, Daniel 8:14 itself does not explicitly mention the "little horn" either. It says only: "And he said to me, 'Until 2,300 evening(s)-morning(s); then a sanctuary will be justified'" (my translation). This doesn't sound like a complete thought because it answers the question in verse 13: "Until when is the vision (that includes) the regularity and giving the desolating rebellion, and a sanctuary, and trampling a host?" (my translation). So justifying a "sanctuary" at the end of 2,300 "days" (v. 14) solves the problem summarized in verse 13. We cannot understand the meaning of justifying the sanctuary without grasping the nature of the problem it is intended to address.

The problem in verse 13 has four parts: (1) the "regularity" (or "daily"), (2) giving the desolating rebellion, (3) a sanctuary, and (4) trampling a host.<sup>7</sup> But this cryptic list does not tell us much by itself. What has happened to "the regularity" and "a sanctuary"? Who is responsible for the "desolating rebellion" and for "trampling a host"?

Verse 13 is abbreviating, referring back to key points of "the vision" described in Daniel 8:1-12.<sup>8</sup> In light of the interpretation later in the chapter (vv. 15-26), the vision covers the periods of Medo-Persia (vv. 3-4, 20), Greece/Macedonia, and its four Hellenistic kingdoms (vv. 5-8, 21-22), which are superseded by another, greater empire symbolized by a younger "horn" that starts small but expands horizontally on earth as a political power and then vertically up toward heaven as a religious force (vv. 9-12, 23-26).

In verse 13, "Until when is the vision...?" means: What is the ending point of the vision as a whole (starting from the time of Medo-Persia), when the evils perpetrated by the "little horn" will be redressed? Key evils include (in the order of the summary in v. 13):

- (1) Removing the regularity (regular worship/ministry) from the prince of the host of heaven, i.e., Christ (v. 11; cf. Josh 5:13-15).

- (2) Rebelliously giving/appointing another host against “the regularity” (Dan 8:12).
- (3) Overthrowing the site of the sanctuary that belongs to the prince of the host, i.e., Christ (v. 11).
- (4) Trampling some of the host of heaven (v. 10).

The “little horn” quite obviously sticks out, but where are the loyal people of God (= saints/holy ones) in all this? The “holy people” are in v. 24 (cf. v. 25) portrayed as objects of destruction by the power which the horn symbolizes. Since the holy people belong to the God of heaven and therefore to the prince of the heavenly host, it appears that destroying them literally expresses the same thing as trampling some of the host of heaven (v. 10; cf. v. 13). In any case, Daniel 8 explicitly identifies two opposing parties: (1) the rebellious “little horn” power; and (2) God’s faithful people, whom the horn persecutes.

We have found that Daniel 8:14 answers a question regarding a scenario (v. 13) that is unpacked in the rest of the chapter, both earlier in a vision and later in its interpretation. So all of Daniel 8 informs verse 14: “Until 2,300 evening(s)-morning(s); then a sanctuary will be justified.” Now we know what this means: At the end of a long period of 2,300 “days” (obviously much longer than literal days) reaching from the Medo-Persian period through to the end of the period of domination by the “little horn” power, a sanctuary will be justified. This end-time event (vv. 19, 26) will remedy problems caused by the “little horn,” which has disrupted worship of the true God, set up an opposing, counterfeit worship system, attacked the place of Christ’s sanctuary, and harmed some of Christ’s subjects.

#### **Nature of the Judgment in Daniel 8:14**

How could justifying a sanctuary tackle all those issues? It is true that overthrowing the site of God’s sanctuary is only one of the horn’s crimes, but its other felonies also interfere with the sanctuary because that is where God’s loyal subjects regularly direct their true worship. In fact, the “sanctuary” (literally “[place of] holiness” in Dan 8:14) refers to the temple in heaven, the headquarters of God, representing His administration, just as “the White House” represents the administration of the President of the United States or “the Kremlin” represents the administration of the Russian Federation. So justifying God’s “sanctuary,” a real place where He resides in heaven (Ps 11:4; Rev 4), comprehends nothing less than vindicating His holy form of government, as opposed to the system of the “little horn.”

“Be justified” (Niphal of *tsdq*) in Daniel 8:14 is legal language, indicating a judicial process which demonstrates that God’s administration, represented by His sanctuary, is in the right.<sup>9</sup> The same Hebrew verb (in other stems) is used in other legal contexts (including with God as Judge) referring to judgment in one’s favor (e.g., Gen 38:26; 44:16; Deut 25:1; 2 Sam 15:4; 1 Kgs 8:32; Ps 51:4 [Heb. v. 6]; Isa 5:23; 43:9, 26). Obviously the outcome of vindicating God’s government would be good for the “holy people” (v. 24), who are His loyal subjects. But the result for the “little horn” power is decidedly negative: Condemned by the justifying of God’s sanctuary, it is ultimately “broken”/destroyed by no human power, that is, by God Himself (v. 25).<sup>10</sup> This execution of judgment implies a prior, pre-Advent process of investigation/demonstration, which Daniel 8:14 describes in terms of demonstrating that God’s administration is in the right.

Looking at Daniel 8 by itself, we have found that in this context the end-time justifying of God’s sanctuary (v. 14) involves a process of justice that results in benefit to His faithful people but condemnation of rebels. So there is a judgment involving the “saints” here after all, even though the text does not say it with these words.

The Day of Atonement background to Daniel 8:14 is unmistakable, indicating a typological relationship: the Day of Atonement type points forward to the end-time judgment antitype. The Day of Atonement was Israel’s judgment day, when ritual purgation of God’s earthly sanctuary represented vindication of His justice in reaffirming the loyal (Lev 16:29-31) but condemning the disloyal (23:29-30) among His nominal people.

Those whose sins had already been forgiven at an earlier stage of atonement (4:20, 26, 31, 35, etc.) and who showed continuing loyalty on the Day of Atonement (16:29, 31; 23:26-32) were morally “pure” (free from any impediment to the divine-human relationship) as a result of the cleansing of the sanctuary (16:30).<sup>11</sup> We are starting to find that there is more in Daniel 8 than immediately meets the eye, including a judgment that involves God’s loyal people.

Daniel 8 does not detail the investigative process by which the Lord’s “holy people” are deemed to be such and by which the “little horn” is found irredeemably guilty of high treason. But the chapter’s lurid litany of the horn’s crimes makes the charges against it clear. On the other hand, the behavior of the “holy people” is not spelled out: The emphasis is not on what they do, but on the Prince to whom they belong (Dan 7:13-14; cf. 9:25; 1 John 5:11-13). Nevertheless, the fact that they and the horn are on opposing sides implies that the Lord’s people are doing just the opposite of the work done by the little horn, by holding to true worship focused on the Lord’s true sanctuary (cf. Heb 8:1-2).

### Relation of Daniel 7 and 8

As Knight recognizes, it is in Daniel 7 that the process of judicial investigation (for created beings) and demonstration (by God, who needs no investigation) is described in some detail. He also acknowledges the strong parallel between Daniel 7 and 8 (referring in 8:1 back to the vision of chap. 7), showing the correspondence between the pre-Advent judgment and the cleansing of the sanctuary respectively. A table can strengthen this important point:

Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Lion	
Bear	Ram (= Medo-Persia; v. 20)
Leopard	Goat (= Greece; v. 21)
Monster	Little Horn: growing horizontally
Little Horn	Little Horn: growing vertically
<i>Pre-Advent Judgment (vv. 9-14)</i>	<i>Cleansing of Sanctuary (v. 14)</i>

Daniel 8 repeats the same historical period covered by Daniel 7 (except Babylon, which had almost ended and so was no longer relevant). The empires are the same and the nature of the problem of the “little horn” power is the same. The fact that the same symbol is used (although the horn in Daniel 8 includes horizontal expansion by pagan/imperial Rome in v. 9) reinforces the tightness of the parallel. After the horn’s depredations, there is a divine solution in each chapter, which rules in favor of the holy ones and against the power that has oppressed them.

The matching prophetic profiles in Daniel 7 and 8 (cf. cleansing the sanctuary as a work of judgment in Lev 16, 23) show that the pre-Advent judgment and the justifying of God’s sanctuary are different ways to describe *the same event*: Vindication of God before His created beings through an end-time Day of Atonement judgment that demonstrates His justice in condemning the disloyal but saving His loyal, holy people.<sup>12</sup> This tightens the connection between Daniel 7 and 8 and confirms that the event beginning at the end of the 2,300 prophetic “days” involves us, as the SDA pioneers found.<sup>13</sup>

We have the privilege and responsibility of taking God's *last* Gospel invitation *to the whole world* (Rev 14:6-12) during the *last* phase of atonement, when Christ is doing a *special work for us*. What could be more important and urgent than that? This is the largest undertaking in human history, and it is totally impossible by human effort alone. Like never before, we must earnestly seek and receive the power of the Holy Spirit from Christ (Acts 2; cf. Joel 2), where He is ministering right now in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, 55). The Spirit freely and lavishly pours into our hearts the divine gift of love (Rom 5:5), the power that impels us to unselfishly and sacrificially break out of our little boxes to reach precious people for Christ so that they can have a better opportunity to be rescued and enjoy eternal life.

Let us keep on responding to Knight's challenge to explore, live, and proclaim our apocalyptic vision instead of neutering it!

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<sup>1</sup> George R. Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2008). See the review by Gerhard Pfandl in *Reflections 27* (July 2009), 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> On the connection between the Third Angels' Message and the Elijah Message, see Roy Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment? The Good News About Christ's Work in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 2006), 126-128.

<sup>3</sup> I could also briefly point out that Hebrews 9:4 is not mistaken regarding the location of the incense altar (contra Knight, 72). The holy of holies is "having a golden altar of incense" (NAS95) in terms of *function* (cf. 1 Kgs 6:22—"that belonged to the inner sanctuary"), even though it was located in the outer apartment (Exod 30:6). Also, the Greek term *parabolē*, "parable" in Hebrews 9:9 describes the analogy in the immediate context of this chapter, which is not strict sanctuary typology; the word does not characterize sanctuary typology as a whole (contra Knight, 73-74). See Clinton Wahlen, "The Pathway into the Holy Places' (Heb 9:8): Does it End at the Cross?", *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary 11* (2008) 47-51.

<sup>4</sup> Knight, 68.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>7</sup> On the translation and structure of Daniel 8:13, see Roy Gane, "The Syntax of *Tēt V²*...in Daniel 8:13," in *Creation, Life, and Hope: Essays in Honor of Jacques B. Doukhan* (ed. J. Moskala; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2000), 367-382.

<sup>8</sup> The word "vision" in v. 13 is *hazon*, which introduces the vision proper in vv. 1-2 and occurs several times more in connection with its interpretation (8:15, 17, 26; 9:21, 24).

<sup>9</sup> The Niphal is a passive form of the verb *tsdq*, which means, "be (in the) right" or "be just" (Job 9:15, 20; Ps 19:10; 51:6; 143:2; Isa 43:9, 26, etc.). In Job 4:17, one who is "just" (*tsdq*) before God is "pure/clean" (verb *thr*) from blame, that is, "vindicated."

<sup>10</sup> Cf. 2 Thess 2:8—destruction of the "lawless one" at Christ's Second Coming.

<sup>11</sup> On the judgment dynamics of the Day of Atonement, see Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 305-333. Compare the way Jews still observe Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, as a day of judgment according to rabbinic tradition (Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* [Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000], 128-129).

<sup>12</sup> See Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment?*, 40-45.

<sup>13</sup> On Daniel 8 and the good news of the end-time judgment (including relatively simple exegetical steps to 1844 and answers to objections to SDA interpretation), see further Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment?* and sources cited there. For more detailed analysis of the Hebrew text of Daniel 8:9-14, see Martin Pröbstle, "Truth and Terror: A Text-Oriented Analysis of Daniel 8:9-14" (Ph.D. diss.; Andrews University, 2006).