

Message #10  
Daniel

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## THE RAM, THE GOAT AND THE SMALL HORN DANIEL 8

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Brian and Carol were both Christians. After a number of years of marriage and after producing a son and a daughter, Carol walked out and left the family. She had a history of emotional difficulties, and she got to a point where she could just not cope with being a wife and mother. Brian tried to talk her into getting Christian counseling, but she refused. So they ended up with a divorce.

Over the next few years Carol saw the children only occasionally. She finally entered an institution to be treated for depression. There she met a man with whom she began a relationship. After the two of them were released, that friendship continued. One night in New Orleans there was a party where Carol and this new friend were present.

Something happened where this man lost control. He produced a gun and took everyone hostage. A police SWAT team was called in and the house was sealed off. Several hours later Carol went into another room. The boyfriend in a fit of rage went in after her and shot her dead. Then he turned the gun on himself.

It is a tragic story. It has special meaning to me because Carol was my sister-in-law, and Brian is my brother. I was one of two pastors who participated in their wedding ceremony. I realized at the time that Brian and Carol might face some challenges in their marriage. I had no inkling of the sad story that would develop in the future.

Last week in our consideration of Daniel #7 we saw that 68 year old Daniel received information from the Lord in a vision about the future course of Gentile history. There were hints there that Daniel's people would also face more sadness. (PROJECTOR ON--- 4 BEASTS) He saw a vision of four beasts which included a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a fourth strange monster. My interpretation was that the lion represents Babylon, the bear represents Persia, and the leopard represents Greece. There would be a last beastly world power which pictured the Roman Empire, but would not find final fulfillment until the end of history. This fourth beast would cause great problems for the Jewish people. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Now in #8 the Lord describes more specifically how the course of Gentile history will affect the Jewish people. This news has difficult implications for them. We are going to look at this prophecy this morning to determine what it means. We also want to consider the applications that it has for us in regard to our trust in God and in regard to how we ought to live, given that we also live in a world where bad things at times happen to God's people.

I.

Verses 1-8 of #8 speak about THE RAM AND THE GOAT. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE RAM AND THE GOAT) In v. 1 we are told that Daniel has this vision in the third year of Belshazzar the king. This would make the year about 551 BC, still in the time of the Babylonian Empire. It also would be two years after the vision that Daniel had in #7. (ULAI CANAL) In his vision Daniel sees himself beside the Ulai Canal in Susa. Susa, or Shushan, was 200 miles east of Babylon. Later, in the time of Esther and Nehemiah, it would be the capital of the Persian Empire. The Ulai Canal connected two rivers in that city. (PROJECTOR OFF)

In his vision Daniel sees a ram with two horns, one longer than the other. This represents the Medo-Persian Empire, which replaced the Babylonians on the world stage. It was during the night of the handwriting on the wall episode in #5 that the Persians captured the city of Babylon. It was also either the first Persian governor or the emperor who was tricked into putting Daniel in the lion's den.

Whereas the Medo-Persian Empire was pictured as a bear laying on one side in Daniel's earlier vision, here it is symbolized as a ram with two horns. The Persians dominated this confederation and so are represented by the longer horn. One ancient historian even says that when the Persian ruler led his army into battle, he would wear a ram's head. We also know that this kingdom did extend its domain westward, northward and southward, as v. 4 indicates.

The male goat represents Greece--- the third kingdom in Daniel's vision in #7. It comes from the west, becoming the first world power to be based in Europe. (PROJECTOR ON--- ALEXANDER THE GREAT) The conspicuous horn is Alexander the Great. In our discussion of #7 we talked about his speedy conquest of the civilized world. It began in 334 BC with a series of three victorious battles against the Persians.

The Jewish historian Josephus says that when Alexander got to Jerusalem, the high priest showed him the Book of Daniel. Josephus says that because of the words of the book, Alexander was generous toward the Jews and was also spurred on to further conquest.

Verse 8 notes that the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. When he became great, the large horn was broken. We know from history that when Alexander reached as far as India, his troops began to strongly object to further battles and continued campaigning. So he returned to Babylon and died shortly afterward from a sudden onset of what was perhaps malaria. (GREEK EMPIRE DIVIDED)

Verse 8 also says that this broken horn was replaced by four horns. After Alexander died, the Greek Empire was divided up into four separate kingdoms headed by four of his former generals. Greek influence in this large area would continue well into the time of the Roman Empire.

II.

In vv. 9-14 we learn about THE LITTLE HORN. (II. THE LITTLE HORN) This small horn, apparently another king, expands his territory to include "the glorious land." From two references to this glorious land in #11, we know that this refers to the land of Israel. Verse 10 in our passage says that this ruler causes some of the host of heaven and some of the stars to fall to earth and to be trampled. "Host" in Hebrew means "army." The question is: To what army of heaven or to what stars does this refer?

Verse 24 also speaks of the objects of destruction of this same individual. There they are called "mighty men" and "the holy people." The implication seems to be that these are godly Jewish believers who are in some way brought down by this small horn.

Then, according to v. 11, this small horn--- this ruler--- magnifies Himself to be like "the Prince of the host." This Prince of the host is God, who is the leader of His people and who is the proper object of worship in the sanctuary. This small horn halts the sacrifice that goes on in the temple in Jerusalem. Verses 13 & 14 indicate that this ceasing of sacrifice and oppression of the Jews will continue for 2300 evenings and mornings.

Is there anyone in history to whom this description of the small horn applies? The almost unanimous answer of commentators is affirmative. This is a ruler who arises out of one of the Greek kingdoms. This is Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus Epiphanes was a small horn in that he did not have legal right to the throne of his part of the Greek Empire, which is often known as Syria. He killed his brother the king and assumed the throne of the kingdom in 175 BC. Syria, also known as the Seleucid Empire, was one of the four Greek kingdoms that followed in the wake of Alexander's death. It included what we now know as Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel.

As v. 9 predicts, (ANTIOCHUS CAMPAIGN) Antiochus expanded his territory to the east, and in 170 BC he conquered Egypt to the south. Two years later Antiochus Epiphanes was again in Egypt. This time the Romans forced him out of that area. So he decided that he needed to make Israel a buffer zone. Israel needed to be Hellenized, to adopt Greek culture, as a protection against the Egyptians and Romans to the south. Thus the commander of the army of Antiochus was sent with 20,000 troops to enter Jerusalem on a certain Sabbath day. (PROJECTOR OFF)

The Book of 1 Maccabees, one of the books of the Apocrypha, which is included in Catholic Bibles, has helpful historical information about what happened. It says, "**And after two years time the king sent his chief collector of tribute into the cities of Judah, and he came into Jerusalem with a great multitude. And he spoke words of peace unto them, in deceit; and they gave him credence. And he fell suddenly upon the city, and smote it very sore and destroyed much people of Israel.**"

Forty thousand Jews were killed in three days--- another horrible period for the Jews. Antiochus had an idol to Zeus set up in the temple. In December of 167 BC pigs were offered on the holy altar. Circumcision, Sabbath observance, sacrifice to the God of Israel, and reading of the Bible were forbidden. The penalty was death. The Jews were

then ordered to offer unclean animals to the Greek gods and to eat pork. Antiochus was trying to make the Jews become Greek in culture and in religion.

To the Jews this was an abomination. This was the most direct challenge to their faith imaginable. But it was also a fulfillment of the prediction in v. 11 that the regular sacrifice would be stopped, and the place of the sanctuary would be thrown down.

One day, twenty miles outside of Jerusalem, a man named Mattathias saw a Jew come up to an idol with a Syrian official and worship before it. Mattathias got so angry that he went up to them and killed them both. At that point he and his sons--- the family of the Maccabees--- began a revolt that became known as the Maccabean revolt. For two years they engaged in guerrilla warfare. Finally they expelled the forces of Antiochus Epiphanes, whom they called "Antiochus Epimanes"--- Antiochus the Madman rather than Antiochus the Illustrious One (or Antiochus the Divine Manifestation). A year later Antiochus died.

In December of 165 or 164 BC--- there is disagreement among the scholars about which year it was--- the cleansing of the temple was completed, and a ceremony of dedication took place. Oil was discovered in the temple and was used to relight the lampstand. It was a great day for the Jewish people. The Jews still remember that day. They celebrate Hanukkah, or the Feast of Lights, to commemorate what happened on that day.

There is some disagreement about the exact period of time that is referred to by the mention of 2300 evenings and mornings in v. 14. Probably the reference is to 2300 days, although some think the reference is to a total of 2300 evening and morning sacrifices, which would be 1500 days. The time involved would be either six years and four months or three years and two months. The start of that period may be marked by the murder of the high priest Onias III in 170 BC. If the time intended is 2300 days, the end date would then be the consecration of the temple in December 164 BC, which is the basis for the establishment of the Hanukkah celebration. Almost all scholars agree that the small horn has reference to Antiochus Epiphanes.

### III.

Because these events were in the future from Daniel's perspective, he didn't understand the meaning of these prophetic events. So in vv. 15-27 he is provided with GABRIEL'S INTERPRETATION. (PROJECTOR ON--- III. GABRIEL'S INTERPRETATION) Daniel requests an interpretation for what he has just witnessed. So the Lord sends an angel to explain it. This Gabriel is the angel who will be involved in announcing the birth of Jesus to Mary.

In v. 20 Gabriel confirms that it is the Medo-Persian Empire which will replace the Babylonian Empire. This was a few years before the handwriting on the wall episode in #5, where Belshazzar found out that the city of Babylon was going to be overthrown that

night by the Medes and the Persians. So Daniel knew from this earlier prophecy that this was going to happen in some fashion.

At first the interpretation that Gabriel goes on to make concerning the Greek Empire may seem consistent with the historical events involving Antiochus Epiphanes. But if we look more closely, there are some parts of the interpretation that are puzzling. In v. 17 the angel says that the vision pertains to the time of the end. In v. 19 he says, **“Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end.”**

Could the Maccabean Revolt be considered the time of the end? It wasn't even the end of the Greek Empire. That came over a hundred years later. The term “indignation” in v. 19 reappears in #11. In that chapter there is a much later time in view, a time that concludes the battle between good and evil at the end of human history.

In vv. 23-26 it seems hard to escape the conclusion that the Antichrist is in view, that great world leader who in the end time will lead the forces of evil against the forces of good. Look at the middle of v. 23: **“...a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise.”** It could be Antiochus; it could be Antichrist. Verse 24: **“His power shall be great—but not by his own power...”** Antiochus was a king, but his power was not especially greater than other kings. There have been many rulers more powerful than him. He also did not demonstrate any superhuman power. But with the Antichrist there will be evidence of superhuman power.

**“...and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints.”** Antiochus was certainly destructive, but the Antichrist will be destructive to an extraordinary degree.

Verse 25: **“By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many.”** These things could describe both Antiochus and the Antichrist.

The angel Gabriel continues, **“And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes...”** Antiochus opposed the true God, but it is doubtful that he had any concept of the Trinity or of the Prince of princes as the Son of God. The Antichrist will be very aware that his fight is against the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 25 continues: **“...and he shall be broken—but by no human hand.”** Antiochus did die as a result of disease. But this was a year after his Greek army had been expelled from Judea. How much more applicable this description will be of the Antichrist, whose demise will be the result of the Second Coming of Christ.

Chapter 8 appears to be presenting us with Antiochus Epiphanes as a type, or a foreshadowing, of the Antichrist. Antiochus seems to adequately fulfill the description of the little horn described in Daniel's vision. But the angel Gabriel's interpretation seems

to go beyond Antiochus to describe someone who will fulfill this description in vv. 23-25 in an even fuller way, someone about whom we will learn more in coming chapters.

We have a number of examples of this kind of double fulfillment in the Bible. Isaiah #14 and Ezekiel #28 both seem to contain descriptions of Satan. But both passages begin by describing evil earthly rulers. Ezekiel #28 describes the king of Tyre and Isaiah #14 describes the king of Babylon. In both instances the inspired prophet seems to go beyond the description of evil rulers who are human beings to describe Satan himself. The earthly rulers appear to be types, or foreshadowings, of the devil.

There are also a number of foreshadowings of Christ in the Old Testament. Consider, for example, Psalm 2. Acts #4 v. 25 tells us that David is the author of this psalm. In the first three verses David describes the stand that the Gentile nations have taken against the Lord and His Anointed. (PROJECTOR ON--- PSALM 2:4-5) Beginning in v. 4 we read, **“He who sits in the heavens laughs;**

**the Lord holds them in derision.**

**5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying, (PSALM 2:6-7)**

**6 ‘As for me, I have set my King  
on Zion, my holy hill.’”**

**7 I will tell of the decree:**

**The Lord said to me, “You are my Son;  
today I have begotten you. (PSALM 2:8-9)**

**8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.**

**9 You shall break them with a rod of iron  
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”””**

It would seem that this psalm is an accurate description of what happened to David. God raised him up and made him king over Israel. David was His Anointed. In a sense he was God's son. He faced opposition from the surrounding Gentile nations.

But in Hebrews #1 and #5 the author of this New Testament book takes the phrase from v. 7--- **“You are My Son,/ Today I have begotten You.”**--- and says that this describes Jesus Christ. King David was a type, or a foreshadowing, of Jesus Christ. What Daniel #8 seems to teach us is that Antiochus was a type of the Antichrist who is yet to come.

IV.

(IV. THE APPLICATIONS) Consider then THE APPLICATIONS out of all of this. What practical benefit is there here for us?

A.

One question that we have found that the Book of Daniel answers is this: **IS GOD WORTHY OF OUR TRUST?** (IV. THE APPLICATIONS A. IS GOD WORTHY...) As the

story of my sister-in-law illustrates, bad things sometimes happen to us, or to people who are near to us. Daniel foresaw that bad things were going to happen to His people.

Sometimes these bad things are the results of the actions of evil people. Daniel foresaw someone in the future who would be the embodiment of evil. He would be called the Antichrist. This Antichrist would persecute His people.

The church is not specifically in view in the Book of Daniel. (1 JOHN 2:18) But in 1 John 2:18 the Apostle John tells us Christians, **“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.”**

In other words, there will be other people in life whom we Christians will encounter who will have characteristics of the final Antichrist. They will try to do us harm. Sometimes it may even be other Christians. The question is: Why should we trust God, knowing that bad things sometimes happen to us and that He may allow us to be hurt by evil people? (PROJECTOR OFF)

The first part of the answer is that bad things sometimes happen to us because of our own sinfulness. Look at v. 12 in our passage: **“And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper.”**

Whose transgression? My interpretation is that it is Israel's. Even after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon, they eventually fell into apostasy. While they did not return to idol worship, they did fall into a superficial form of worship. God punished them because they fell away from true worship of the true God.

My former sister-in-law met with tragedy at least partly because she was not maintaining a good relationship with God. She ran away from her responsibilities as a wife and mother. She refused earlier offers to receive Christian counseling. She later chose to hang out with the wrong kind of guy. She could have restored her proper relationship with God if she had come to Him in repentance, but she ignored the opportunities that she had.

So it is important to make sure that we have begun a relationship with God by trusting in Jesus Christ as our Savior. It is also important that we cultivate and maintain that relationship by continuing to follow Him.

There is a second part of the answer as to why bad things happen at times to God's people. (PROJECTOR ON--- JAMES 1:2-3) In James #1 vv. 2 & 3 the Bible says, **“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.”** Hard times have the potential to strengthen our faith and produce maturity.

My brother Brian came out of his difficult experiences as a stronger person. He started reading and studying the Bible on his own and sharing his faith with others. He moved from a theologically liberal church to one that was more focused on the Bible. He later was blessed with an excellent Christian wife. They added two more children to their brood.

A third part of the answer has to do with the world of spiritual conflict in which we live. (2 TIMOTHY 3:12) Second Timothy #3 v. 12 says, **“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”** In the midst of the cosmic conflict between good and evil we are sometimes going to be hurt. But as this chapter tells us, in the end the good guys win. (PROJECTOR OFF)

We are reminded of that in v. 25 of our passage. After describing the destruction that the Antichrist will cause, the angel assures Daniel, **“But he will be broken without human agency.”** The bad guys lose in the end. We ought to trust God because we are on the winning side. We have been told ahead of time by the Lord that at times things will be rough for God’s people. But in the end we win.

Donovan Campbell led a Marine infantry platoon in Ramadi, Iraq, during some of the heaviest fighting in the Iraq war. Half of the Marines who fought in that city became casualties. He says, **“After war, I began to realize just how limited my own ability and understanding truly were. .... I have chosen a world with God, which to me means a world of hope, ultimate meaning, and ultimate purpose, over a world without God in which our lives have no ultimate reason for being. If I have to accept that there are some horrors and tragedies that I will never fully understand on this earth, then so be it. That is an acceptable, and reasonable, tradeoff to make for a world that has a just and loving God. And I’m more willing to make it now that I’ve been humbled through warfare.”** (*World* magazine, May 23, 2009) God is worthy of our trust.

B.

The second question that the Book of Daniel answers for us is “How should we live in an often godless society?” We could very well be living in the last days before the Second Coming of Christ. But how should we live in light of that possibility and in the midst of a society that is often tainted with evil?

In the 1830s a New England farmer by the name of William Miller became convinced that the return of Christ was imminent. In fact he predicted that it would happen between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. He began a movement that grew to include thousands of people. As end time grew closer, most of his more committed followers gave up their occupations. Stores and businesses were abandoned. Fields went unplanted. They were disappointed when March 21, 1844, came and went without any sign of Christ’s return.

Notice by way of contrast Daniel’s response to the vision that he saw in v. 27: **“And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the**



**king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it..."**

Daniel was deeply affected by what he saw. It left a mark upon his life. But in the end he returned to his job and carried on with the king's business.

We also ought to be about the King's business. The Lord doesn't want most of us to quit our jobs or change our basic responsibilities. Rather He wants us to keep in focus our service to Him. He wants us to stay in His Word and to keep being obedient, having a hope and expectation that our Lord might return very soon.

In doing that we will at times encounter tribulations, and we may run into people who are truly evil. But there is also a hint in the last line of v. 25 about how we ought to handle that. Speaking of the Antichrist the angel told Daniel, **"...he shall be broken—but by no human hand."**

In an often godless society we desperately need to remember that the really big challenges in our lives and the seeming personifications of evil that we encounter can be conquered only with help from above. We can't do it in our own strength. We have to pray and trust in God's grace.

There was no way that Daniel on his own could figure out what the dream was that Nebuchadnezzar had in #2. Daniel had no power in himself to escape from the lion's den in #6. It was only the grace and mercy of God that could save him. That is what we likewise need to remember and rely upon in the midst of the difficult trials of life that God allows to come across our paths.

God has told all of us who are committed Christians that we will experience tribulations. Some of them are the natural result of the human condition, but some of them are the result of our participation in a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil. We should not let those times catch us by surprise. When we are caught up in them, we need to hang in there. Pray like Daniel prayed. Trust in God's grace like Daniel did. Remember that we are on the winning side. The route to success ultimately lies in trusting the One who has promised us final victory.