

God's Prophecies Came True!

Daniel 8:1-8, 15-22

For a moment consider all the things you can "see" while traveling in your automobile these days. What comes into your view?

First, take a peek in your rear view mirror and you can see where you've been. Glance out your side windows, and you can see where you are. Then take a long slow look through your windshield, and you can see what's ahead – looking toward your destination, and keeping an eye out for dangers.

But these days, you can see even more from your automobile.

Now at this point, I should pause to say, "Put down your device and keep your eyes on the road!" But if you are not driving at the moment, consider what you could see.

In the first place, you could use your smart phone to get a "helicopter view" instead of a "windshield view." Wouldn't this come in handy during a big traffic jam in a big city? If you could catch the view from news helicopter, you could learn a lot about what lies ahead, and maybe take a detour.

But wait! Now we can go even higher and see even farther away! Perhaps you see a dark cloud to the west, and you want to know more. Now, you can pull up the weather radar on your phone to check the radar towers to see the weather front moving in.

Or, you can go higher still to see what the satellites see. There you can see our continent at a glance. You can study the size of a hurricane in the Atlantic or a typhoon in the Pacific. All of these things are within your view these days.

Biblical prophecy is like that. If you want to take a look in your "rear view mirrors," you can learn a lot about the past. You can be comforted and gain confidence. Romans 15:4 tells us, **"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."**

Those were people just like you and me in the Scriptures. They looked out through their windows and wondered what would happen in the days ahead, just

as King Nebuchadnezzar did (Daniel 2:28-29). That sounds like you and me today. We want to know, "What's going to happen next?" Now the view of life from our side windows and windshield are helpful.

But what we would really like to have is the view from the helicopter, the radar tower, or even the satellite. What if we could see into the future? Can the Bible bless us with that kind of a view?

Yes, it can. God's Word is a trustworthy window. Many of God's prophecies have already come true, and the rest of them will to. Sometimes, the "windshield view" seems pretty discouraging. But today, we are going to study a prophet to whom God gave amazing understanding about the future – "the satellite view" if you will.

Three Visions with Parallels

In a recent message, we noted the parallels between Daniel chapters 2, 7 and 8. In Daniel 2, God gave the vision of a beautiful statue to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. The Lord showed him that his kingdom would be followed by three successive kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar saw these kingdoms as a beautiful statue, but Daniel's vision in chapter 7 described those same kingdoms as savage beasts. Daniel received the visions in chapter 7 and chapter 8 before the first kingdom (Babylon) was defeated.

The Time and Place of Daniel's Vision (8:1-2)

"In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai." (Daniel 8:1-2)

Belshazzar was appointed as king in Babylon by his father, Nabonidus, in about 553 B.C. So God gave this vision to Daniel about 550 B.C., before Babylon fell. Daniel may have been in Shusan (or Susa), but it is more likely that he only saw it in a vision.

In any case, what is remarkable is that within a decade or so, the city of Susa would become very prominent. The Babylonian king Nabonidus had counted on

the fact that the Medes and Persians would remain divided. But when they joined together under Cyrus, the Babylonian knew they were in trouble. When the Media-Persians defeated Babylon, the palace at Shushan or Susa dominated the region. (To note its prominence, see Nehemiah 1:1 and Esther 1:1 and following.¹) The river “Ulai” was a manmade river or canal between two natural rivers. This is the point: before Babylon had fallen, the Lord gave Daniel the vision of Media-Persian being defeated by Greece. And God’s prophecies came true! Now you should trust them too.

The First Beast in Daniel’s Vision: The Media-Persian Empire (8:3-4, 20)

In verses 3-4, Daniel described his vision: “Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had *two* horns: and the *two* horns *were* high; but one *was* higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither *was there any* that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.” In verse 20, the angel Gabriel explained to Daniel, “The ram which thou sawest having *two* horns *are* the kings of Media and Persia.” The two horns (one higher than the other) represented the Medes and the Persians. And indeed, just as predicted, this nation pushed to the west, north and south – but not to the east. At that time, nothing could stand before their mighty armies. Years before it happened, God gave that vision to Daniel. And God’s prophecies came true!

The Second Beast in Daniel’s Vision: The Grecian Empire (8:5-8, 21-22)

“And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had *two* horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the

¹ Mentioned 19 times in the Book of Esther

great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.” This was explained in verses 21-22:

“And the rough goat *is* the king of Grecia: and the great horn that *is* between his eyes *is* the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.”

God gave this precise prophecy to Daniel two hundred years before Alexander the Great conquered the nations – including Media-Persia. Alexander was born in 356 B.C. in Pella, Macedonia, a city northwest of Thessalonica. After his father was assassinated, Alexander took the helm of the Macedonian kingdom. Rapidly, he invaded the surrounding regions – like a goat whose hooves did not touch the ground. Alexander was “the notable horn” in Daniel’s vision.

According to historic records, he invaded the kingdom of the Media-Persians with only 30,000 foot soldiers and 5,000 cavalry. In three successful battles at Granicus (334 B.C.), Issus (333 B.C.) and Arbela (331 B.C.), the Greeks routed the Media-Persian empire. As God had foretold, the “goat grew very great.” Defeating the Persians, Alexander moved against Tyre, Gaza and the land of Palestine, on his way to conquering Egypt (where he founded the city of Alexandria). The historian, Josephus, includes one fascinating historical detail about when Alexander’s forces came near Jerusalem:

“And when the Book of Daniel was showed him wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended. And as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present; but the next day he called them to him, and bid them ask what favors they pleased of him;”²

During his time in Egypt, the soothsayers told Alexander that he was a god, the son of Zeus. Apparently, he believed this flattery, and even commanded his own soldiers to worship him. He pressed on into Afghanistan and down into India. But after years of warfare, his soldiers were on the verge of mutiny.

Back in Susa (Shushan) in 324 B.C., Alexander attempted to consolidate and unify the Persians and Grecians, but his attempts failed. And in spite of this, Alexander continued to insist that he ought to be worshiped as a god. At 33 years of age,

² Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 11.337 translated by William Whiston, accessed at <https://lexundria.com/jaj/11.337/wst>

Alexander became ill and died on June 13, 323 B.C. without appointing a successor. In the words of Daniel's prophecy, "the great horn was broken." (Warning: don't try to replace God!) The horn represented power, and the Scripture records that four notable horns came up in the place of the mighty broken horn. These were the four generals who succeeded Alexander: "Cassander retained his hold on Macedonia and Greece, Lysimachus held Thrace and the western half of Asia Minor as far as Cappadocia and Phrygia, Ptolemy consolidated Palestine, Cilicia, and Cyprus with his Egyptian-Libyan domains, and Seleucus controlled all the way to the Indus Valley."³

God gave Daniel the Understanding of His Vision, (8:15-19)

Now today, you and I can look in the rear view mirror of the past, and say, "God's prophecies came true!" Two hundred years before it happened, the Lord gave Daniel "the satellite view:" that under a great leader, the Greeks would defeat the Media-Persians. And God's prophecies came true! You should trust them too. These predictions were so accurate that critics had to come up with convoluted theories to try to disprove them.⁴

God gave His revelation to the prophet Daniel. A simple definition for revelation would be, "the communication of a truth that was not formerly known." And like so many other Old Testament prophets, Daniel was **"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"** (1 Peter 1:11). Daniel had learned about the glory of the Son of Man who would receive the kingdom from the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13-14). Today, God is giving us illumination about His revelation. Just as Daniel begged God for understanding, so we ought to pray, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law!" (Psalm 119:18)

In Daniel 8, the prophet learned more about the rise and fall of nations to bring about the central event described in Galatians 4:4-5, **"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the**

³ Gleason Archer, Daniel, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985. p.98

⁴ Such as insisting that the Book of Daniel was written after Alexander the Great died.

adoption of sons.” Over the Christmas season, we intend to return to these verses in Galatians 4. But for now, suffice it to say that God’s prophecies came true. He planned all these events throughout the world to pave the way for the coming of His dear Son. Kingdoms won victories by putting others to death, but Jesus won the victory by conquering death itself.

In the fullness of time, our God sent forth His Son

To fulfill His predictions of His Promised One

That in living and dying and rising again

He redeemed us to show His great work unto men

God’s prophecies about the coming of His Son were fulfilled physically and literally in the miracle at Bethlehem. With equal certainty we can say that God’s prophecies about the Second Coming of His dear Son will be fulfilled physically and literally on the Mount of Olives. God’s prophecies came true and the rest of them will too.

As we come to the Christmas season, we are looking at much of 2020 in the rear view mirror. What a year! Who would have ever dreamed that pandemics and politics would have come together in such an ugly mix? How should we apply Daniel 8 to our current situation?

Applications:

- Place your faith in the Most High God who has exercised complete control over the destinies of nations, and He is still ruling the nations today.

This is illustrated in his sovereign predictions about the great general of Greece, whom we know as Alexander the Great. The Lord had given the prophet Isaiah the same kind of prediction – naming the leader (Cyrus) who would end the exile (Isaiah 22:48, 45:1). This is what gives us the comfort and hope explained in Romans 15:4. Daniel 4:17 predicted that humbled Nebuchadnezzar would come to know that the Most High God reigns over the kingdoms of men. Let us pray that our leaders today would come to know Him who holds their very breath in His hands.

- Instead of focusing on our nation’s greatness, it’s time to focus on our nation’s godliness.

To be great in God's eyes: this is the greatest aspiration for any nation. You've all heard the very important principle in 2 Chronicles 7:14, **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."** Many observers have rightly pointed out that this was a promise to Israel.⁵ But many of those observers have missed how this principle was amplified in Jeremiah 18. That chapter describes how the prophet was instructed to go down to the potter's house to study his methods. And the Lord's message was that all the nations are like clay in His hands (Jeremiah 18:5-7). Let that sink in for a moment. As you read this, you reside in a body of clay which contains the living soul that God has given you. Now think of your fellow citizens as they go about their day in bodies of clay. And all the nations are clay in the hands of God. Jeremiah was instructed to use the potter as an object lesson for Judah and Jerusalem. But the point was that this is the way He responds to every nation:

"At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent [or relent] of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jeremiah 18:7-9)

If we know that we are clay in the Potter's hands, how should we respond? As nations rise and fall, shouldn't we pay close attention to His Words?⁶ Shouldn't we turn from our arrogance and our evil? Shouldn't we beg God not to destroy our nation as He has destroyed so many others? Isn't the story of Nineveh in the Book of Jonah an important illustration for us today? When our children and our grandchildren look us in the eye, and ask us, "What did you do when you saw this coming?" what will you say? Today's text of Scripture shows us that God's prophecies came true. Which prophecy in Jeremiah 18 do you want to see come

⁵ In their agricultural setting, "healing their land" referred to God's blessings on their harvests, which were absolutely essential for them to go on living.

⁶ Even when nations rage, God still reigns, according to Psalm 2 (three messages here).

true? Shall we not fall on our faces before God as Daniel did (in chapter 9) and cry for the mercies of the Most High God?

- **What about the recent elections and the lawsuits about fraudulent vote counting?**

We are grateful for our checks and balances system in the United States. Every legal vote should be counted, and every fraudulent vote should be exposed. But what if all the investigations never get to the bottom of what has happened in this Covid-crazy year? Here's our answer: the Most High God rules in the kingdoms of men. God's prophecies came true, and his other predictions will too. Let's take "the satellite view" because we know that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.

For the Most High God reigns over kingdoms of men

He ordains all its rulers for just where and when

They have served His best purpose, fulfilling His will

And today all the nations are serving Him still

And today, as we see nations in upheaval, we are like the saints of all the ages. We want to know; we long to see what is ahead. And that's the way it will be until we echo the words of C.S. Lewis in his Narnia Chronicles, "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now...Come further up, come further in!"⁷

Pastor Gordon Dickson, Calvary Baptist Church, Findlay, Ohio www.cbcfindlay.org

⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*