



Daniel 8:1-14
“How Long, O Lord”

NKJ Daniel 8:1 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me -- to me, Daniel -- after the one that appeared to me the first time.

2 I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai

3 Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.

4 I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.

5 And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.

6 Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power.

7 And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.

8 Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.

9 And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land.

10 And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them.

11 He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.

12 Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.

13 Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?"

14 And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

Daniel 8 marks a transition in Daniel, an important one, the language of Daniel switches from Aramaic to Hebrew at this point. And I think that it just may be that the language changes, because while much of the material preceding was God intending to teach the Gentiles, these next few chapters are particularly intended, not for the nations, but for his own people. In particular so that hundreds or even thousands of years later, they would be able to weather the storms that were to come.

This will be the first of two sermons on Daniel 8, and what I want to do in this sermon is look at the big picture so to speak, and then next week we'll discuss some of the more personal applications. This week there is going to be a lot of detail and history, but it's my hope that those details will be profitable to you in understanding what God has been doing and will do in history

Daniel tells us that this vision was given to him in the final year of Belshazzar's reign, the last year of existence for the Babylonian Empire. Already God is raising up Persia and preparing to end the power of the Babylonian empire forever.

That is why in the vision Daniel is transported far to the East to the city of Shushan, or Susa. This fortified Babylonian city, which Daniel recognizes because he's been there before, was to become the capitol of the Persian empire and the seat of the Persian kings after they conquered the Babylonians.

For instance, hundreds of years later Nehemiah, cup bearer to the Persian King was to start his own writings with *"The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel,"* and the book of Esther who was to marry the Persian King starts with *"in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel"*

It's almost like God is saying, I am moving the power to the East now, by moving Daniel, who would remain at the center of government.

Once again we have animals, God keeps changing the signs of the Empires. Before it was Bear and Leopard, now its going to be Ram and Goat.

Daniel sees a Ram, the sign of the Medo-Persian Empire, the Standard of the King that was carried whenever he went into battle. One of its horns is bigger than the other, showing that this empire is composed of the Medes and Persians, and that the Persians, the Johnny Come Latelys in the empire would eventually dominate this empire.

This Persian Ram, pushes in three directions, West, South, and North, but not East – Historically they never took much land to the east. Babylon was to the West of Persia, and of course they are about to be consumed, nothing can stop them, because God is delivering them into their hands.

Then this Goat comes on the scene, a male goat from the West – Greece being to the West of Persia. This Goat has one large notable horn, it is Alexander of Macedon, or as we know him, Alexander the Great. He moves so swiftly he doesn't even appear to be touching the ground. That is because Alexander took down the mighty Persian empire in three years, an unheard of feat. He strikes the Ram with furious power –

At the battle of Granicus River in 334 B.C. Alexanders 35,000 men attacked Darius' 100,000 Footmen and 10,000 Calvary and suffered the loss of only 100 Greek troops, and that with Greeks having to charge through the river to get at their enemies. It was one of the most astounding victories in history.

The power of the Ram is broken, nothing can stop Alexander, he wins two more big victories and it is all over. He was unstoppable, Plutarch records that there was never a general like him giving us anecdotes like this one:

When Dareius sent to him a letter and friends, begging him to accept ten thousand talents as ransom for the captives, to hold all the territory this side of the Euphrates, to take one of his daughters in marriage, and on these terms to be his ally and friend, Alexander imparted the matter

to his companions. "If I were Alexander," said Parmenio, "I would accept these terms." "And so indeed would I," said Alexander, "were I Parmenio."

God raised Alexander up, in the fullness of time, to break the power of the Ram, and then to continue on until he had gobbled up everything all the way to India and modern day Afghanistan. But Alexander grew full of himself, even forcing his men to worship him, and that historically is the point at which God says its over. He reached out and he breaks the horn as easily as men snap a twig. At the height of his power at the age of 32 Alexander suddenly died, leaving no heir.

Eventually his massive empire is split into 4 parts under his Generals – according to the four winds, Macedonia under Cassander, Thrace and Asia Minor under Lysimachus, Syria under Seleucus, and Egypt under Ptolemy – The two dynasties that last the longest are the Seleucid and Ptolemy lines. Both of which will eventually have their power broken by Rome – which is in keeping with Daniel’s other visions. The last of Ptolemies incidently, will be Cleopatra – yep she wasn’t Egyptian, she was Greek.

Now if we were deciding who was going to be the focus of this chapter, it would probably be the BIG HORN - Alexander the Worldbeater, that is because that is what is important to us, but that isn’t what is important to God, it isn’t even the four **notable horns** of his generals. No the focus is going to be the “little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south.” Of verse 9.

Now this little horn and the little horn of chapter 7 that uprooted 3 horns are not the same, this is not the Anti-Christ, although it certainly is *an antichrist*. This is Antiochus IV, the eighth Seleucid King who came to power 148 years after the death of Alexander. This was a man who called himself Theos Antiochus Epiphanes - “God Made Manifest.”

Now why is he so important to God, as opposed to an Alexander. Well Brothers and Sisters it is one thing for it is one thing for those outside of the Kingdom of God to destroy one another as was the case when Greece attacked Persia, but it is a very different thing for the enemies of God to destroy his people, for the Lord our God loves and cherishes those who are called by His name:

Zec. 2:8 For thus says the LORD of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.

To attack them, is to attack him:

Acts 9:4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

We discussed before how anti-Christ’s immediately begin to attack the people of God, and that certainly was the case with Antiochus, as soon as he began to reign he attempted to Hellenize the Jews, that is make them more Greek in their worship and customs, he replaced a godly high Priest Onias III with his scheming younger brother Jason, who forbade circumcision, the owning of the scriptures, and ended the daily sacrifice.

Then in 168 AD he attempted to invade Egypt and include it in his empire, the Romans intervened to stop him, and from this incident we get our phrase, “***line in the sand.***” Laenas the Roman general confronted Antiochus and told him he had to withdraw. Antiochus said he would discuss it with his

council, whereupon the Laenas drew a line round him in the sand, and said, "Think about it here." The implication being if he stepped over the line in the sand without agreeing to withdraw, he would be at war with Rome. He agreed to withdraw, but was furious.

Unfortunately a report came back to Jerusalem that Antiochus had died in Egypt, and this caused celebration in Jerusalem, so Antiochus sent 20,000 of his troops to reduce the city, and he desecrated the temple outright, sacrificing a pig on the altar and erecting a statue of Zeus – this blasphemous statue being the famous Abomination of Desolation. He also cast down the host of heaven and trampled some of the stars underfoot, this being a reference to the people of God, his armies, and the stars a reference to the members of the twelve tribes.

You remember in Genesis the promise given repeatedly that the descendents of Abraham would be as numerous as the stars of heaven Gen. 22:17 "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

And the dream of Joseph Gen. 37:9 Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

And then finally, the difference between unbelievers and believers - Daniel 12:2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

He killed many of these Stars in the firmament, but next week we will speak of the successful Maccabean revolt against Antiochus that eventually freed Jerusalem and lead to the cleansing of the Temple and the origin of Channukkah, but until then two applications.

1) Why tell us these things in advance, well one of the reasons was that men might know for certain that there is a god in heaven ordering the affairs of men, bringing things to pass. That they might believe in Him and worship Him – Flavius Josephus, a Jewish Historian, made that point hundreds of years later as he was writing in the first century for a Roman audience. ***“and that from among them there should arise a certain king that should overcome our nation and their laws, and should take away their political government, and should spoil the temple, and forbid the sacrifices to be offered for three years' time. And indeed it so came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel's vision, and what he wrote many years before they came to pass. In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them. All these things did this man leave in writing, as God had showed them to him, insomuch that such as read his prophecies, and see how they have been fulfilled, would wonder at the honor wherewith God honored Daniel; and may thence discover how the Epicureans are in an error, who cast Providence out of human life, and do not believe that God takes care of the affairs of the world, nor that the universe is governed and continued in being by that blessed and immortal nature, but say that the world is carried along of its own accord, without a ruler and a curator; which, were it destitute of a guide to conduct it, as they imagine, it would be like ships without pilots, which we see drowned by the winds, or like chariots without drivers, which are overturned; so would the world be dashed to pieces by its being carried without a Providence, and so***

perish, and come to nought. So that, by the forementioned predictions of Daniel, those men seem to me very much to err from the truth, who determine that God exercises no providence over human affairs; for if that were the case, that the world went on by mechanical necessity, we should not see that all things would come to pass according to his prophecy.” - Josephus

2) During this time when Antiochus was exalting himself, and defiling the temple, and casting down the stars, things looked pretty grim for God’s people. Was this the end of the visible church in the world? How long a Lord would this state of affairs last, 70 years as in the exile? Longer?

Well the Lord did not leave them in the dark, he told them precisely – “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

In the Bible, a year is 360 Days, 6 Years four months, which is the time period for what eventually transpired. From 171 to 165 BC Antiochus persecuted the Jews, for the last three and a half years the temple was used for Heathen sacrifices to Zeus. The Maccabean revolt ended all that.

They might endure armed with this knowledge, and continue to persevere instead of giving in, just as Daniel, armed with the knowledge from the prophets that the exile would only last for 70 years, was able to endure. And just the same way, Christians will be able to endure the terrible reign of the Antichrist because they know that it will end after a short while, and that when it does Christ will come back.