

(Daniel) Antiochus and Antichrist

by David Guzik

God is sovereign in history and uses human leaders to achieve His plan for the world, as seen in the prophecies of Daniel.

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Scripture: Daniel 8:13-19, Daniel 8:27, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Eschatology", "Prophecy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the vision of Daniel in chapter 8 of the Bible. The vision reveals the rise and fall of four world empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The preacher emphasizes the greatness of Alexander the Great and compares the cultural power of his empire to modern-day America. The sermon also highlights the prophetic accuracy of the vision, as the Greek Empire rose quickly and conquered vast territories. Ultimately, the sermon points to the coming of the kingdom of God in the days of the final empire.

Transcript

But tonight in Daniel chapter eight, you're going to find one of the reasons why scholars who don't believe God can know the future say that Daniel could not have written the book of Daniel. Because what we have in front of us in Daniel chapter eight is prophecy so amazing, so specific, so spectacular in its historical fulfillment that doubters of the word of God say, well, Daniel couldn't have written this. It had to be somebody a couple hundred years after Daniel, because you'd have to be God to predict the future like this.

And that's the point. Exactly. Daniel chapter eight, beginning of verse one.

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. Now, we saw that last week, the vision that Daniel saw of the four beasts and the last beast with the ten horns and the one conspicuous horn that raised itself up out of the ten. We saw how it reflected the succession of four world empires, one that was current to Daniel's day, the empire of Babylon.

The next one, the empire that succeeded Babylon, the Medo-Persian empire, the third empire being the Greek empire begun by Alexander the Great and the fourth being the Roman empire. But it would be in the days of that final kingdom that the kingdom of God would come to reign and power and dominion,

majesty on the earth. And again, we talked about how this means there will be some sort of restoration of the Roman empire in the last days.

This is a subsequent vision that Daniel has, and it will zero in on some of the aspects of that first vision. Verse two, 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, 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. And I saw the ram pushing westward, northward and southward so that no beast could withstand him, nor was there any that could deliver him deliver from his hand.

But he did according to his will and became great. Well, it's not hard to figure out what Daniel saw. There he is sitting by the river and he has a vision and in his vision he sees a ram.

It seems to be a strong ram, an impressive ram, and it has two large horns. But a strange characteristic of this ram is that one of the horns is noticeably larger than the other. We also notice that the larger horn came up after the smaller horn and then we see this ram at work conquering, devouring.

It moves to the west, to the north, to the south, but it doesn't move. It says to the east that direction was left out. You and I could spend a lot of time tonight speculating what this ram represents.

And by the way, we know this wasn't like a National Geographic special in advance as if Daniel should be interested in rams and their habitat and their habits and all of that. No, this was a vision, a supernatural vision that God gave to Daniel. It represents some sort of spiritual or prophetic truth that God is attempting to communicate to Daniel.

So what does the ram mean? Well, you might say it represents human ingenuity pushing one way or another. Another person might say it represents the sinfulness of man, always fighting against the things of God. A third person might say, I believe it's a messenger of peace sent to battle on behalf of peace all over the world.

And I would say, why waste our time speculating when verse 20 of the same chapter tells us exactly what the ram is. Verse 20, skip ahead. The ram which you saw having the two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia.

Well, that wasn't hard, was it? You know, let that be just a tiny bit of a lesson to us that it's always best to let the Bible interpret itself. If you want to know what an image or a symbol or a picture in the word of God represents, look to how that image or symbol is used again in the same context and then in other books of the Bible. Now, you can also learn important things from history as well.

We find that it was not an unusual thing to represent the Medo-Persian Empire by a ram. Matter of fact, we find from historical studies and archaeology that that was a popular symbol among the ruling class and the kings of Persia and the Medo-Persian Empire was a ram. Much as the United States is represented by an eagle, Russia is represented by a bear.

Great Britain is represented by a bulldog. Well, by all these different things in that way, sort of the animal mascot or representation of the Persian and the Medo-Persian Empire was this ram. And so this isn't a strange symbol.

This isn't a way out symbol for Daniel, but it is extremely accurate historically, because if you notice, it says specifically for us that the two horns of the ram represented different aspects of this combined empire. One, the Median Empire, the other, the Persian Empire. Now, the Persian aspect of this coalition came up later, but it turned out to be much stronger and much larger.

That's the horn that came up second, but was larger and stronger. We also see that it pushed westward, northward and southward, and that's how the Medo-Persian Empire exerted its power. It's not that it didn't expand territorially to the east as well.

It certainly did, but it didn't have to fight any major battles to take the land to the east. The major battles were, again, northward against the Scythians, westward against the Greeks, and southward against the Egyptians. So God is simply giving Daniel this great picture here of the Medo-Persian Empire in its conquest.

All right, well, let's see what's next here. Chapter eight, verse five. 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. 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. 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.

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 towards the four winds of heaven.

Now, perhaps it's time for us to speculate what the male goat is. Perhaps it is some ancient fertility symbol, and it represents that because of sinful licentiousness and immorality, the Persian Empire would destroy itself. Perhaps it represents disease or pestilence.

And you and I could speculate on that all evening long. Or we could just look at verse 21, where it'll tell us again. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece.

The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power. Now, let's stop right here.

To me, there isn't much remarkable in saying that the empire of the Medes and the Persians would rise to great prominence and strength. Anybody with an eye to see in Daniel's day when he gave this prophecy could look over the political landscape, much as pundits and critics and the talking heads on television do today, and announce their predictions for the coming year. And well, this nation is on the rise, and this one is on its way down.

It wouldn't take much genius, for example, for somebody to say, you know, in another 10 or 20 years, China is going to be a much more significant power in this world and may rival the United States. Because you can look at indicators, right? You can look at population and gross national product and all the rest of it, and you can see the nations that are on the rise and the nations that are in decline. The Medo-Persian coalition of nations was clearly on the rise in Daniel's day.

It didn't take any great prophetic gift to see the ram coming up to strength. But the goat, that's different. You know, the empire of Alexander the Great wouldn't rise for more than 100 years from the time Daniel gave this prophecy.

The empire of Greece certainly existed when Daniel gave this prophecy, but nobody would dream in a moment that it would rise to strength and overcome the Medo-Persian empire. Now, again, we're struck by the fact that a goat represents the Greek empire. And again, this isn't strange, just as much the way that a ram was emblematic of the Medo-Persian empire.

So a goat was a common figure connected with the Greek empire and with Greek rulers some 200 years before the time of Daniel. The Greek people used goat and such as a mascot and so forth. And the way that it describes the conquest of nations by the Greek empire is very striking.

It says that it moved across the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground. And this prophetic description of the male goat proved to be very accurate regarding the Greek empire. The Greek empire rose from the west of the previous empires.

The Greek empire rose with great speed, just as it said, suddenly moving as if it wasn't even touching the ground. The Greek empire had a notable ruler to bring it into prominence, Alexander the Great, who was truly one of the great figures of all of history, a man who conquered the civilized world before he was 30 years old. And doesn't that make us all feel like great failures? Good heavens, what have you done? And here's Alexander the Great conquering the world by 30.

And again, it says that one of it would rise up with a notable horn. And that was Alexander the Great. The Greek empire had a famous war with the Medo-Persian empire, where it says, I saw him, the male goat confronting the ram, the Greek empire and the Medo-Persian empire greatly hated each other.

Did you notice how it described the attack of the male goat upon the ram? It said that it would come with furious power, that it would be moved with rage. Some of the greatest, fiercest battles of ancient history were fought between the Greeks and the Persians. The Greek empire conquered the Medo-Persian empire.

And there we read that no one could deliver the ram from his hand. The reign of the notable leader of the Greek empire, that is Alexander the Great, was suddenly cut short. It says that the large horn was broken.

Alexander didn't fade away after a long and glorious reign. He conquered the earth before he was 30, and he died when he was 32. After the end of Alexander the Great's death, the Greek empire was divided up among four rulers.

And what did we read in the prophecy of Daniel? In place of the single horn, four notable ones came up. And then the four rulers of the Greek empire, after Alexander, they ruled their own dominions, not the entire empire together. They came up towards the four winds of heaven.

In other words, you're not talking about four leaders who together ruled over the entire empire. You're talking about the empire being divided up into fours, each one ruling over their own section. And they ended up fighting amongst each other and such to gain supremacy.

Now, we read here that the male goat grew very great. And one of the things you need to understand about the greatness of Alexander's empire, it was not only in its vast dominion, but also in its cultural

power. Honestly, the only thing that I can immediately liken it to in history is modern day America.

It's really frightening to travel around in different places in the world and be aware not only of America's status as an economic and a political and a military power, but it's pretty frightening to go into a small village in Bulgaria and see a video shop there and walk into it and see movies produced in Southern California available for rent. Now, I don't know about you, I haven't noticed many Bulgarian videos in Blockbuster lately. And it's just absolutely amazing how American culture dominates the earth.

And I don't say that that's a good thing, necessarily. There are some good things about American culture. There's a lot of bad things about American culture.

I'm just stating the fact that we export our culture in ways that other nations don't or aren't successful in doing. Well, this was very much the mentality of Alexander the Great. He didn't just want to rule over dominions.

He wanted to bring Greek or what's sometimes known as Hellenistic culture all over the span of his dominion. And you might say, well, great, Pastor David, why are you going off on some goofy history lesson? Because actually, it's very important in the plan of God. You see, God engineered and arranged for Alexander the Great not only to go up and conquer vast dominions, but to have a, if you will, a missionary spirit to spread Hellenistic or Greek culture and language all over the dominion of the empire.

So that about the time Jesus was born, there was a common language in almost all the civilized world, Koine Greek, common Greek. It's distinguished from Attic Greek or the Greek that the classics are written in, Homer and the Odyssey and all of that business. Koine Greek was the common language of Jesus' day.

And it was understood universally and God arranged it to where the gospel of Jesus Christ would first emerge in a world that was linked together by a common language. Paul the Apostle could go anywhere in the Roman Empire and preach in Greek. It's really awesome when you think about it.

And friends, that was all due to the cultural influence brought in by Alexander the Great. And so God works the things in history together. He knows what he's doing in any regard.

Let's take a look at what happens to the strong horn. Verse nine. And out of one of them, okay, we were left with the four horns, right? You had the male goat, which represents the Greek empire.

The notable horn, which represents Alexander the Great. That horn was broken off. Four new ones came in its place.

Those are the four generals that the empire of Alexander was divided among. If you're taking notes, it was Cassander ruling over Greece in its regions. Lysimachus ruling over Asia Minor.

Seleucus ruling over Syria and Israel's land. And Ptolemy ruling over Egypt. You'll be quizzed on this after tonight's lesson.

Verse nine. Okay. Out of one of them, out of one of the four came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great towards the south, towards the east and towards the glorious land.

Now, last chapter, we saw a little bit of a little horn. This little horn that we saw last week grew out of the ten horns that were the continuation or the restoration of the Roman Empire. And we identified in some

ways there's a little horn that grew up out of the ten horns last week with the great political and military and cultural and economic leader that the Bible says will rule the earth in the last days, the Antichrist.

Well, here we have another little horn popping up. And you might say, is this the Antichrist? And the answer is no. And yes.

You'll have to hang with me as we grab a hold of this together. Anyway, this little horn comes up and he grows great towards the south, towards the east and toward the glorious land. What's the glorious land? Well, it's the land of Israel.

It's the land of Judea. And by the way, it is a glorious land. I know that recent political troubles have made people hesitant to visit the glorious land.

You know, you should put it as a top of your priority to make it there when you have the opportunity. It's been said that a week in Israel will teach you as much as a year in seminary. And I believe it, having experienced it myself in any regard.

We have here verse 10 and it, in other words, this this little horn, 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. 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 a sanctuary was cast down 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. Now, what we have is growing out of one of the successors of Alexander the Great.

We have a figure who does several things. For example, he he persecutes, he exalts himself, he and sacrifice, he desecrates the sanctuary, all of these things. Well, is there a historical fulfillment of this? Absolutely, there is.

You see, of one of the four successors of Alexander, the great was one of the generals was named Seleucus and Seleucus established a dynasty ruling over Syria and much of today what we would call the area of Israel, Israel's land. Well, Seleucus had his descendants who took the power of his throne after him, and one of his descendants was a fellow named Antiochus the fourth. Now, Antiochus the fourth gained his throne by murdering his brother.

His brother was the one who was in line for the dynasty from his father, Seleucus. Now, you know how it works in a royal dynasty. When you have a king and his first born son is next in line for the throne and the next in line after him is his son, not the brother.

I hope I'm not confusing anybody, but you understand what I mean. Well, what Antiochus the fourth did was he murdered the other rightful heirs and he took the throne because he murdered those who were in line for the throne in front of him. He legitimized his rule through flattery and bribery, and he took upon himself a title.

He took upon himself the title Epiphanies. Epiphanies means illustrious. It has an allusion to deity within it.

And so Antiochus Epiphanies is one of these descendants of this fourth horn that grew out of the male goat, which is describing the Greek empire. And he's describing himself as Antiochus, basically the divine

Antiochus Epiphanies. The ancient Jews loved to make puns and word plays, and they couldn't bear to call him Antiochus Epiphanies because it meant he was illustrious.

It had allusions to deity. And so they called him Antiochus Epiphanies, which means the madman. Now, what do we have to demonstrate that this fellow Antiochus Epiphanies is indeed the fulfillment of this? Well, actually, he's an accurate and a dramatic fulfillment of this, so much so that critics insist that the book of Daniel must have been written after his time.

Nobody could get it this right a couple hundred years before it happened. In other words, Antiochus Epiphanies truly did exert his dominion towards the south, towards the east and towards the land of Israel. Just as it says in verse 9, Antiochus Epiphanies murdered other rulers and persecuted the people of Israel.

In other words, he cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and he trampled them, just as it says in verse 10. Antiochus Epiphanies blasphemed God and commanded idolatrous worship directed towards himself. He exalted himself as high as the prince of the host.

That's in verse 11. Antiochus Epiphanies put a stop to temple sacrifices in Jerusalem, where it says by him, the daily sacrifices were taken away. And it says that in verses 11 and 12.

Antiochus Epiphanies desecrated the temple, and it says the place of his sanctuary was cast down and Antiochus Epiphanies opposed God and seemed to prosper. It says he cast truth to the ground. He did all this and prospered.

Friends, Antiochus Epiphanies in history is one of the most infamous persecutors of the Jewish people. Now, remember how I told you that Alexander the Great had a great passion to spread Greek culture all over the world? Well, there's a very interesting occasion when Alexander the Great was passing by Jerusalem, when the high priest of Jerusalem came out to meet him with a delegation of And God had given Alexander a dream the night before that a man in the high priest garments would come and meet him and tell him something very important. And that's exactly what the high priest did.

And the high priest came to Alexander and he showed him the prophecies that were written about him in the book of Daniel and in the book of Isaiah. And Alexander saw that his rise to power was predicted by the God of this priest in front of him. And Alexander the Great spare Jerusalem and gave great liberty to the Jewish people in exercising their religion.

But the successors of Alexander the Great were not as wise and generous. And this man, Alexander, excuse me, Antiochus Epiphanies was so determined to impose Greek culture upon the Jewish people of his day. He was furious at them for the way that they wanted to keep their Jewish culture.

And he determined they would bow their sensibilities to Greek culture. And he was more than willing to use murder and violence to compel them. His suppression of the Jews came to a head in December of one hundred and sixty eight B.C. He was returning in defeat from a battle in Alexandria, Egypt.

And he ordered his generals to seize Jerusalem on a Sabbath day. He erected an idol to Zeus in the temple and he desecrated the offer, the altar, I should say, by slaughtering a pig on it and taking the pig's juices and sprinkling them all throughout the temple. Sacrifice had to cease because the temple was desecrated.

The book of First Maccabees in chapter one describes how Antiochus persecuted the Jews and it describes his terrible blasphemies. And by some estimates, he's responsible for the murder of more than one hundred thousand Jewish people. Friends, that's in a day before gas chambers, before more efficient ways of killing people.

It's really something to murder one hundred thousand people in the ancient world. Now, why? Why did God allow this? Well, the tragic answer is given in verse 12. Did you notice that? Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices.

Whose transgression? Sad to say the transgression of the Jewish people. You see, this idea of because of transgression was fulfilled in the terrors of Antiochus epiphanies. The Jews, especially their leaders, invited God's judgment upon them through Antiochus because of their sin.

Now, the first attack of Antiochus against the Jews before his great desecration in 168 B.C., his first attack against the Jewish people came because he was attempting to settle a rivalry for the high priesthood. There was a very high priest in Jerusalem, a very pious high priest in Jerusalem during the beginning of the reign of Antiochus. His name was Ananias the third.

He was removed from office and replaced by his brother, Jason. Do you know why Antiochus removed Ananias the third and put Jason in place as high priest? Because Jason paid him a big fat bribe. And that's how he ascended to the place of high priest.

Then in the year 172 B.C., another brother in this family, a guy named Menelaus, gave Antiochus an even bigger bribe. So Antiochus said, well, I've got a bigger bribe now. Jason, you're out.

Menelaus, you're in. Well, a year later, Menelaus was so strapped for cash because he was still paying off the loan on the bribe that he had to start selling the gold and precious articles from the temple. He had to hawk him.

He had to pawn him to raise money to pay off the loan that he made for the bribe. Ananias the third, this pious man who was the original high priest, rebuked him and Menelaus had him murdered. Meanwhile, Jason wasn't very happy that he was kicked out of the place of high priest.

So he started gathering around him an army and he started a pitched battle against Menelaus and his guys. And when Antiochus found out that his guy, Menelaus, I mean, his champion briber, was being attacked, Antiochus sent in his armies and there was a big massacre in Jerusalem. You see what it means when it says because of transgression? Again, I'm not saying that necessarily the great transgression was among the Jewish people as a whole, but certainly there was grave corruption and immorality among the leadership of the Jewish people at this time.

Well, going on now, verse 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 underfoot? And he said to me, for 2300 days, then the sanctuary shall be cleansed. So here you have a nameless holy one speaking, Daniel hears him speak and these two, what are probably angelic beings in Daniel's vision, start speaking to one another. And as they speak, one's asking a question, how long is it going to be? And the answer comes back for 2300 days.

Now, this is a very interesting passage where it says in verse 14, and he said to me for 2300 days, then the sanctuary shall be cleansed. We get the picture here, right? The sanctuary was desecrated horribly so. And we know how this worked out in ancient history when Antiochus Epiphanes totally desecrated the temple by setting up an idolatrous image of Zeus, by sacrificing a pig on the altar, by sprinkling the blood and the broth of the boiled pig all over the temple, by murdering priests and such within the temple precincts, all the rest of it.

Well, the sanctuary had to be cleansed. And here it's being told to us that it would happen 2300 days later, except that the text doesn't exactly say 2300 days. Literally, in the ancient Hebrew, it says 2300 mornings and evenings.

Now, here's the tricky interpretive point. Is 2300 mornings and evenings, is that 1150 mornings and 1150 evenings, or is it talking about 2300 days? It's tough to know as it worked out in history. And actually, you can go back.

We know the date that the sanctuary was cleansed. You know why we know the date? Because that's Hanukkah. Now, are you guys aware that this is what Hanukkah was all about? The cleansing of the temple after the desecration of Antiochus Epiphanes.

And they had such a low supply of oil to keep the lamps burning for a sustained time that the oil was miraculously sustained in the temple during the cleansing and purification ceremony of rededicating, re-sanctifying the temple after the desecration of Antiochus Epiphanes. So we know the date that the temple was cleansed. Now, if you count back 2300 days, which is just over six years, it's like six years and three months, you come to the time when Antiochus was beginning to flex his muscle.

If you go back 1150 days, you go back to a time where it seems that Antiochus actually started and may have desecrated the temple. So to be honest, we don't really know. And I don't even know how much it matters whether Daniel is taking us back six years in three months or three years in one month.

I really don't know. And I don't think it really matters all that much. What I do think is important here is to understand that this passage has been a favorite springboard for elaborate and fanciful prophetic interpretations.

You know, a very popular and tragic interpretation of this was the inspiration for one of the sadder movements in Christianity and the birthplace of several cults and strange movements within the Christian world. You see, in the early part of the 19th century, a man named William Miller looked back on this prophecy and he said, well, two thousand three hundred days because, well, let's take a year for a day and start counting back from the time that Antiochus did his thing and go two thousand three hundred years in the future. And he came up with the date 1844.

And he said Jesus is going to return in 1844. And he preached it and he preached it with tremendous effectiveness. People really bought into this.

There were farmers who sold their farms. There are people gathered together on house, excuse me, on hilltops in certain days, so certain that Jesus was going to return in 1844. And when he didn't, it was known as the Great Disappointment.

And this Great Disappointment gave birth to what gave birth to the Seventh-day Adventist. It gave birth to very strange and cultic groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses. And so it was a very, I would say, ignorant

thing that William Miller did.

This idea of when you find a prophecy in the Bible and where it says X number of days that you can just plug in years instead of days, that's a completely fallacious understanding of prophecy. I'm not aware of any place in Scripture where you can just remove days and start plugging in years. I just don't get it.

When it said two thousand three hundred days, it meant two thousand three hundred days, not weeks, not months, not years, days. And I don't know, I don't get it sometimes how people just take carte blanche and say that they can do such things. Yet when you just take it for what it is, a prophecy about Antiochus Epiphanes, his great rise, the circumstances around it, what he would do against the Jewish people and that the temple would be cleansed two thousand three hundred mornings and evenings, whether that means days or half that number, you know, you can decide for yourself.

But we know that it all worked out just as God predicted. Again, this amazingly specific prophecy shows that God not only knows the future, but he guides it. Now, let's go on here.

Verse 15. Now, it happened when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man and I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai who called and said, Gabriel, make this man understand the vision. You know, give a little wisdom to this dummy over here.

Verse 17. So he came near where I stood and when he came, I was afraid and fell on my face. Isn't that interesting? Daniel was a very godly man, wasn't afraid in a den of lions, wasn't afraid to stand up to Nebuchadnezzar, a man of tremendous godliness.

And he saw an angel just in angelic glory, not even seeing God in divine glory. And when Daniel saw an angel in angelic glory, he fell down on his face. It's just something to that, isn't it? Can you imagine the glory of God in any regard? Verse 17.

I was afraid and fell on my face. But he said to me, understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end. Oh, now stop right there.

We scratch our heads at that. But what are you talking about? We thought we had this figured out. We thought you were talking about Antiochus Epiphanes.

And whatever that was, that wasn't the end. That was fulfilled even before the coming of Jesus, even before the day of Pentecost, even before Peter got up and gave that great sermon on the day of Pentecost. It happened 2,000 years, more than I should say 2,000 years ago.

Well, how could he say that it has to do with the time of the end? Well, hold with me. Verse 18. Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground.

I've seen that sometimes, preaching. But he touched me and stood me upright. And he said, look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation for at the appointed time, the end shall be again.

It's emphasized to us, right? This has to do with the end. Now, again, this is a problem because we see that this prophecy in its initial aspect, verses one through 14, it was fulfilled in the days of the Medo-Persian and Greek empires, especially in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. But but yet the terms

time of the end and latter time of indignation, they commonly refer to what we consider the end times.

And so what's the answer? Well, the answer is, though, even that this prophecy was fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes, it also has a later fulfillment in the person that we commonly called the Antichrist. Referring to the time of the end. This is why Antiochus Epiphanes is sometimes called the Antichrist of the Old Testament.

He prefigures the career of the Antichrist before it ever happens. Now, if you're very familiar with the Bible, you're familiar with the idea that there are examples and patterns and portraits of Jesus in the Old Testament before Jesus ever came to this earth. You see the work in the ministry of Jesus, for example, in the person of Joshua, who led the people of God into the promised land.

You see types and figures of the work of Jesus in Isaac when he submitted to being sacrificed by Abraham and he was willing to be sacrificed. You see a picture and a type of Jesus in the person of Joseph in his great career and all the rest of it. And so it doesn't strike us that there should be figures who prefigure Jesus before Jesus came.

Well, in a much more limited sense, this is true also of the Antichrist and Antiochus Epiphanes is like a prefiguring of the Antichrist. So does this great prophecy refer to Antiochus? Yes, it does. Does it refer to the Antichrist? It does also.

Now, just like Antiochus Epiphanes rose to power with force and intrigue, so will the Antichrist as Antiochus persecuted the Jews. So will the Antichrist as Antiochus stopped sacrifice and desecrated the temple. So will the Antichrist.

And as Antiochus seemed to be a complete success, so will the Antichrist. One great Bible commentator, a man I love his commentary on Daniel, his name is Wood. It says, from what Antiochus did to the Jews in his day, therefore, one may know the general pattern of what the Antichrist will do to them in the future.

And let me just pause for a moment before we move on to verse 20. What's incredible to think about this is that the culture that Antiochus came from and the culture that he wanted to advance was a high and refined culture. The Greeks were not barbarians.

The Greeks had their art. They had their drama. They had their literature.

They had their music. They had all these wonderful, glorious things of culture. You know, sometimes we tell us we tell ourselves, I should say, that culture and education make people more civilized and less brutal.

Not necessarily at all. All you have to do is picture in your mind beautiful classical music, the operas of Wagner being played in the background as the Jews are marched into concentration camps and gas chambers. It's striking that some of the most refined cultures in the 20th century, such as the German culture, very highly educated and refined, produce some of the greatest horrors.

I think this will be one of the qualities of the Antichrist's reign, too. Don't look for a monster, my friends. Look for a highly refined and cultured man.

In any regard, verse 20. The ram which you saw having the two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia, and the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first

king.

As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power. Again, we spoke on this already. Verse 23.

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise having fierce features who understand sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power. He shall destroy fearfully and shall prosper and thrive.

He shall destroy the mighty and also the holy people through his cunning. He shall cause to seek to prosper under his rule, and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity.

He shall even rise against the prince of princes, but he shall be broken without human means. And the vision of the evenings and mornings, which was told is true, therefore seal up the vision for it refers to many days in the future. Now, again, this prophecy reads equally true both of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Antichrist.

This is an example of a prophetic passage that has both a near and a far fulfillment. For example, it says that this little horn will have fierce features. Well, Antiochus Epiphanes was known for his cruel brutality, and the book of Revelation tells us about the cruel brutality of the Antichrist.

He says that he understands sinister schemes, and it's through his cunning that he'll come to power. Antiochus was known for his flattery and smooth tongue, and the coming Antichrist will come to power through making a great covenant with Israel. Again, all of these features, we could go through them one by one and talk about them.

For example, it says in verse 25 that he shall cause deceit to prosper. You see, both the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes in the past and the Antichrist in the future are marked by deceit. Remember what it says in second Thessalonians chapter two about the career of the Antichrist.

It says that the coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs and lying wonders and all with unrighteous deception. The coming of the Antichrist shall be one where he glorifies himself. That's why it says in verse 25 that he shall magnify himself in his heart.

Antiochus called himself Epiphanes, the illustrious one, a title that has the intimations of deity. He issued coins with his picture on it inscribed with the title Theos Epiphanes, which means God manifest. That's something to put next to your name or next to your picture.

God manifest. Here I am. Man was a blasphemer who magnified himself.

Well, the coming Antichrist will also exalt himself. Second Thessalonians 2, 4 says that he will sit as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Now, I especially like what it says at the end of verse 25.

It says that he will be broken without human hand. History tells us that Antiochus Epiphanes did not die by the hand of an assassin. He did not die in battle.

He died during a time of battle, apparently, but it was not due to the battle. He died of a disease. And so he was struck down, but not with human hand.

And, you know, the same is going to be true of the Antichrist. Nobody's going to murder the Antichrist. Nobody's going to knock him off.

He's not going to be killed in battle. He won't die a natural death. He'll be conquered by the returning armies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He'll tolerate the rule of man on this earth no longer and come in glory as faithful and true seated on a white horse. The Bible says that the Antichrist and his chief lieutenant, someone that the book of Revelation calls the false prophet, will have the distinct honor of being the first two occupants of the lake of fire to which they will be cast into alive. Well, Daniel was told to seal up the vision in verse 26.

Therefore, seal up the vision for it refers to many days in the future. Again, it had a closer fulfillment within a couple hundred years of Daniel's day in Antiochus Epiphanes, but it will have a ultimate fulfillment in the very last days under the time of the Antichrist. Let's look at verse 27 to wrap up with.

And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days. Afterward, I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

Well, let's deal with the idea first that no one understood it. It wasn't because God likes to spin out things in his word that nobody can understand. Let's recognize that.

That God has a purpose in Revelation in revealing things to us. He's not just playing. Let me blow your mind.

Let me give you impossible riddles that you could never figure out. I'm not trying to say that we can understand every last aspect of what the scripture tells us. But in large part, it's given to us to be understood.

The reason why no one understood this was because the vision was sealed up because the time of its ultimate fulfillment was so far distant. Now, it's important for us to understand that the time is not distant for us. You know, in light of Revelation, chapter one, verse three, it says that the time is near and Jesus is coming soon.

And at the end of the book of Revelation, the apostle John was specifically told not to seal the words of this prophecy. In Daniel's day, it was appropriate to say, you know what, this is a long way off. Let's put it on the shelf.

In our day, it is not appropriate. The time is near and the book is not sealed. So that's why we're even studying this together.

Secondly, I want you to notice how greatly affected Daniel was by this. Did you notice it? It says he fainted and was sick for days. Come on, Daniel.

What's the big deal? Listen, when in his vision he saw the terrible persecution of his people and desecration of the temple that would happen, it literally made Daniel sick. He couldn't bear it. It was too much for him.

He was puzzled as to why God's plan would include such terrible things for the Jewish people. But Daniel, I'm sure, was able to understand that God knew what was best in this and that God would always be fair and always just and always merciful. But I want you to notice, we'll conclude with this.

In verse 27, there's a very interesting line there. It says, afterward, I arose and went about the king's business. Now, isn't that interesting? That Daniel didn't let spiritual mysteries or physical weakness keep him from doing his duty.

This shows me a couple of things. First of all, it shows me that our interest in prophecy should make us more about our king's business, not less about it. I'm always suspicious of people who have great zeal about prophecy, but very little zeal about reaching a world for Jesus Christ.

I don't think they have the spirit of Daniel because Daniel had great prophetic mysteries revealed to him, but he would still be about the king's business. Now, here, the king he's talking about is his Babylonian king. You can apply spiritually to your king, King Jesus.

Yes, we thank God for prophetic truth and mysteries, but it shouldn't distract us. It should make us more focused on being about the king's business. The second thing to notice is that Daniel wasn't even going to let his physical weakness keep him from the king's business.

F.B. Meyer says that Daniel would have counted it a great slur on his religious life if it could have been said that his visions and exercises interfered with his service to the king. In other words, Daniel had a job to do and he was going to do it. He was not going to neglect the work of the Lord, even though he was less able because of physical malady to perform it.

You know, it got me thinking. What does it take to make us stop serving God? Now, I guess for some of us, the question needs to be, what will it take to get us to start serving God? But let's say you're already rolling along on that path. Well, what's it going to take for you to stop? Now, I mean, you just go ahead and think about it right now.

What will it take for you to stop? Well, if I get sick, I'll stop. Well, if this area of my life gets out, I'll stop. Well, if this happens, I'll stop.

You think, no, no, I'm going to be about the king's business like Daniel, no matter what. Now, I'll let the king guide me into how and when and all what to do. But I always want to have a passion for being about my king's business, just like Daniel.

Can we do that? Can we leave here tonight very blessed, very confident that God knows the future? He knows both about Antiochus and Antichrist. And it should make us more focused and more inspired than ever to be about our father's business. That's our prayer tonight, Lord.

We ask that you would. Give us a genuine trust and anticipation in your great work in the future. But, Lord, at the same time.

We don't want to be distracted by prophecy. Lord, we want it to make us more focused on being about your business. We trust that as your spirit works within us and as we decidedly move everything in our life that would hinder the work of your spirit in us.

Lord, as we move that out, we pray that you'd work in us even more closely. And, Lord, I feel particularly led tonight to conclude in prayer for everyone who's seeking to walk after you in a whole commitment to wholly follow you, as we saw a couple of weeks ago. Father, I pray that you would give us even a new sense of dedication and purpose in that.

That you would strengthen discouraged or flagging or tired or weak hearts. And that you would encourage us in all of our strength. Lord, to trust in you and to wholly follow you.

We don't want a Christian life marked by half-heartedness and excuses and all the other sort of things that we find ourselves so prone to do. We want to follow you and love you. In Jesus' name, amen.

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