

The Vision by the River of Ulai

by Sir Robert Anderson

The sermon explores the significance of Daniel's prophecies, particularly the vision of the ram and the he-goat, and its relevance to the times of the Gentiles.

Scripture: Daniel 8:19

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "End Time Prophecy"

Description

Sir Robert Anderson delves into the era of Gentile supremacy, emphasizing how earthly rulers hold power through divine delegation, as 'the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.' The visions in the book of Daniel, particularly the eighth chapter, depict the rise and fall of empires like the Medo-Persian and Grecian Empires, foreshadowing future events and the 'time of trouble' in the last days. The prophecies of Daniel, including the tenfold division of the Roman Empire, span centuries, with a deliberate blank in the prophecies for the Christian era, leading to the anticipation of the promised kingdom.

Transcript

"THE times of the Gentiles"; thus it was that Christ Himself described the era of Gentile supremacy. Men have come to regard the earth as their own domain, and to resent the thought of Divine interference in their affairs. But though monarchs seem to owe their thrones to dynastic claims, the sword or the ballot-box, - and in their individual capacity their title may rest solely upon these, - the power they wield is divinely delegated, for "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." (Daniel 4:25)

In the exercise of this high prerogative He took back the scepter He had entrusted to the house of David, and transferred it to Gentile hands; and the history of that scepter during the entire period, from the epoch to the close of the times of the Gentiles, is the subject of the prophet's earlier visions.

The vision of the eighth chapter of Daniel has a narrower range. It deals only with the two kingdoms which were represented by the middle portion, or arms and body, of the image of the second chapter. The Medo-Persian Empire, and the relative superiority of the younger nation, are represented by a ram with two horns, one of which was higher than the other, though the last to grow. And the rise of the Grecian Empire under Alexander, followed by its division among his four successors, is typified by a goat with a single horn between its eyes, which horn was broken and gave place to four horns that came up instead of it. Out of one of these horns came forth a little horn, representing a king who should become infamous as a blasphemer of God and a persecutor of His people.

That the career of Antiochus Epiphanes was in a special way within the scope and meaning of this prophecy is unquestioned. That its ultimate fulfillment belongs to a future time, though not so generally admitted, is nevertheless sufficiently clear. The proof of it is twofold. First, it cannot but be recognized that its most striking details remain wholly unfulfilled.[1] And secondly, the events described are expressly stated to be "in the last end of the indignation," (Daniel 8:19) which is "the great tribulation" of the last days, (Matthew 24:21) "the time of trouble" which is immediately to precede the complete deliverance of Judah.[2]

1. I allude to the 2, 300 days of verse 14, and to the statement of verse 25, "He shall also stand up against the Prince of Princes, but he shall be broken without hand."

2. "And there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered," - i. e., the Jews (Daniel 12:1).

It is unnecessary, however, further to embarrass the special subject of these pages by any such discussion. So far as the present inquiry is immediately concerned, this vision of the ram and the he-goat is important mainly as explanatory of the visions which precede it.[3]

3. The following is the vision of the eighth chapter:

"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. 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.

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 great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones, toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.

And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered. Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake. How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man; for at the time of the end shall be the vision. Now, as he was speaking with me I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.

And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 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. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.

And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many; he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true; wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days."

One point of contrast with the prophecy of the fourth Gentile kingdom demands a very emphatic notice. The vision of Alexander's reign, followed by the fourfold division of his empire, suggests a rapid sequence of events, and the history of the three-and-thirty years that intervened between the battles of Issus and of Ipsus[4] comprises the full realization of the prophecy. But the rise of the ten horns upon the fourth beast in the vision of the seventh chapter, appears to lie within as brief a period as was the rise of the four horns upon the goat in the eighth chapter; whereas it is plain upon the pages of history that this tenfold division of the Roman empire has never yet taken place.

A definite date may be assigned to the advent of the first three kingdoms of prophecy; and if the date of the battle of Actium be taken as the epoch of the hybrid monster which filled the closing scenes of the prophet's vision - and no later date will be assigned to it - it follows that in interpreting the prophecy, we may eliminate the history of the world from the time of Augustus to the present hour, without losing the sequence of the vision.[5] Or in other words, the prophet's glance into the future entirely overlooked these nineteen centuries of our era.

As when mountain peaks stand out together on the horizon, seeming almost to touch, albeit a wide expanse of river and field and hill may lie between, so there loomed upon the prophet's vision these events of times now long gone by, and times still future. 4. It was the battle of Issus in B. C. 333, not the victory of Granicus in the preceding year, which made Alexander master of Palestine. The decisive battle which brought the Persian empire to an end, was at Arbela in B. C. 331.

Alexander died B. C. 323, and the definite distribution of his territories among his four chief generals, followed the battle of Ipsus B. C. 301. In this partition Seleucus's share included Syria ("the king of the north"), and Ptolemy held the Holy Land with Egypt ("the king of the south"); but Palestine afterwards was conquered and held by the Seleucidae. Cassander had Macedon and Greece; and Lysimachus had Thrace, part of Bithynia, and the territories intervening between these and the Meander.

5. The same remark applies to the vision of the second chapter, the rise of the Roman empire, its future division, and its final doom, being presented at a single view.

And with the New Testament in our hands, it would betray strange and willful ignorance if we doubted the deliberate design which has left this long interval of our Christian era a blank in Daniel's prophecies. The more explicit revelation of the ninth chapter, measures out the years before the first advent of Messiah. But if these nineteen centuries had been added to the chronology of the period to intervene before the promised kingdom could be ushered in, how could the Lord have taken up the testimony to the near fulfillment of these very prophecies, and have proclaimed that the kingdom was at hand?[6] He who knows all hearts, knew well the issue; but the thought is impious that the proclamation was not genuine and true in the strictest sense; and it would have been deceptive and untrue had prophecy foretold a long interval of Israel's rejection before the promise could be realized.

6. i. e., the kingdom as Daniel had prophesied of it. On this see Pusey, Daniel, p. 84.

Therefore it is that the two advents of Christ are brought seemingly together in Old Testament Scriptures. The surface currents of human responsibility and human guilt are unaffected by the changeless and deep-lying tide of the fore-knowledge and sovereignty of God. Their responsibility was real, and their guilt was without excuse, who rejected their long-promised King and Savior. They were not the victims of an inexorable fate which dragged them to their doom, but free agents who used their freedom to crucify the Lord of Glory. "His blood be on us and on our children," was their terrible, impious cry before the judgment-seat of Pilate, and for eighteen centuries their judgment has been meted out to them, to reach its appalling climax on the advent of the "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." [7]

7. Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21. To discuss what would have been the course of events had the Jews accepted Christ is mere levity. But it is legitimate to inquire how the believing Jew, intelligent in the prophecies, could have expected the kingdom, seeing that the tenfold division of the Roman empire and the rise of the "little horn" had to take place first. The difficulty will disappear if we notice how suddenly the Grecian empire was dismembered on Alexander's death. In like manner, the death of Tiberius might have led to the immediate disruption of the territories of Rome, and the rise of the predicted persecutor. In a word, all that remained unfulfilled of Daniel's prophecy might have been fulfilled in the years which had still to run of the seventy weeks.

These visions were full of mystery to Daniel, and filled the old prophet's mind with troubled thoughts. (Daniel 7:28; 8:27) A long vista of events seemed thus to intervene before the realization of the promised blessings to his nation, and yet these very revelations made those blessings still more sure. Ere long he witnessed the crash of the Babylonian power, and saw a stranger enthroned within the broad-walled city. But the change brought no hope to Judah. Daniel was restored, indeed, to the place of power and dignity which he had held so long under Nebuchadnezzar, (Daniel 2:48; 6:2) but he was none the less an exile; his people were in captivity, their city lay in ruins, and their land was a wilderness. And the mystery was only deepened when he turned to Jeremiah's prophecy, which fixed at seventy years the destined era of "the desolations of Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:2) So "by prayer and supplications, with fastings, and sackcloth and ashes," he cast himself on God; as a prince among his people, confessing their national apostasy, and pleading for their restoration and forgiveness. And who can read that prayer unmoved?

"O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers,

Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy Sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline Thine ear, and hear; open Thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name: for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God; for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name" (Daniel 9:26-29.)

While Daniel was thus "speaking in prayer" Gabriel once more appeared to him, (Daniel 9:21, See chap. 8:16.) that same angel messenger who heralded in after times the Savior's birth in Bethlehem, - and in answer to his supplication, delivered to the prophet the great prediction of the seventy weeks.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/sir-robert-anderson/the-vision-by-the-river-of-ulai/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net