

## **“A RAM AND A GOAT PREDICT HISTORY.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Daniel 8:15-27**

### **Seeking to Understand, Daniel 8:15-19.**

Seek understanding. Seek wisdom, seek to grow in wisdom and knowledge. Pray for it. And when you do, God will be faithful to answer.

**James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Daniel seeks understanding and Jesus answers. He is the one with the appearance of a man. He has authority over the archangel and He commands Gabriel to be the interpreter with an interpretation.

It's hard to say which was worse for Daniel, not knowing, or facing the terror of a divine interpreter. We sit here casually reading this story and feel nothing of the fear and trembling of a holy archangel of God radiating the glory of heaven coming into his presence.

We should reflect on how the Word of God affects us or on why it has so little affect. How is it possible to not tremble in the presence of holy things?

Gabriel says the vision is for the time of the end and for the end of the indignation. This is not referring to the second coming of Christ. This is answering the question from vs. 13 about how long would this indignation be visited on God's people, after 2,300 evenings and mornings.

The end refers to what will be made clear in the interpretation.

### **The Meaning of the Ram and the Goat, Daniel 8:20-21.**

**Daniel 8:20-21** As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king.

As we indicated last week, the goat is Alexander the Great, the famous king of Greece who conquered Persia and all of the regions around from Italy to India, all the Middle East and North Africa and all before he died at the age of 30.

### **The Meaning of the Little Horn that Becomes Great, Daniel 8:22-26,**

**Daniel 8:8b-10** There came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. 9 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 It grew great, even to the host of heaven.

Out of the four kingdoms into which Alexander the Great's empire was broken, the one who ruled over Israel is singled out in this prophecy. We know who that is, he is *Antiochus Epiphanes IV*. He began his reign in 175 BC and rose to great power through his ruthlessness.

**Daniel 8:23b-25** a king of bold [stern] face, one who understands riddles [master of intrigue, deceit], shall arise. 24 His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and *destroy* mighty men and the people who are the saints. 25 By his *cunning* he shall make *deceit* prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall *destroy many*. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes.

He called himself Epiphanes which means god manifest or revealed, though history tells us he was absolutely godless and evil, without reasonableness or shame. Destruction was his signature, wherever he went.

He especially focused his attention on Israel.

**Daniel 8:9** Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the *glorious land*.

In 169 BC he entered the temple, even the Holy of Holies and took the gold and silver and then began religious persecution meant to destroy their religion. Jewish history books record he killed 40,000 Jews in three days and carried another 40,000 off in slavery.

A couple years later he returned and started a forced paganization program. He outlawed Sabbath-keeping under penalty of death, stopped the sacrifices and introduced the pagan practices of temple prostitution and sacrifices to heathen gods. He systematically attempted to completely destroy every trace of Israel's faith and worship.

This was described in last week's text in rather cryptic language.

**Daniel 8:11b-12** And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. 12 ... and it will throw truth to the ground.

On December 25, 167 BC he set up a Greek altar in the temple site and sacrificed a pig to Zeus. That was the last straw which led to the famous Maccabean revolt, in which Jews drove out Antiochus' forces and cleansed and rededicated the temple in 164.

All of this lasted from 171 to 165 BC, 2300 evenings and mornings (vs. 14), almost seven years, after which the temple was restored. History confirms this vision came true.

### **Failing to Understand, Daniel 8:27.**

The psychological impact of the vision and interpretation took a toll. We must remember all the prophets were human. They saw things and were told things that rocked their worlds. They could no longer remain superficial and happy go-luck and carry on life as normal. Nothing was normal anymore.

Why was Daniel so affected? What got to him? No doubt the terrible judgment and destruction that was going to come on his people, God's own people. He identifies with his own people. Their suffering was his suffering. Jesus wept over lost Jerusalem.

There are things coming that to know them must trouble our souls. If we were at all wise we would tremble at the things to come and be sobered by spiritual realities.

Do our hearts break over the souls of those we know who are lost, without Christ? Do we feel empathy, compassion, heartache at the prospect of a Christ-less eternity? Or are we too little concerned? We sing "Dare to be a Daniel." We also need a Daniel's heart.

### **Implications and Application.**

I wish to conclude by borrowing and adapting four applications from a pastor in Wales (Geoff Thomas, *Daniel: Servant of God Under Four Kings*, pastor in Aberystwyth, Wales).

**First**, everything in Daniel's vision came true, his prophecy and vision are confirmed. This is not fantasy or just purely symbolic. The ram came and after a while it was destroyed by the goat and after a time the goat died and one of the horns rose up and desecrated Israel.

Everything here happens just as was predicted almost 400 years before it happened. There is no way Daniel could have known or made up this precise of historical detail. Who is this God who knows the end from the beginning and can predict the future with complete accuracy?

By this one prophecy alone the power and authority of God is proved. From this prophecy alone the authority of Scripture is declared. And all who deny these things are without excuse.

**Isaiah 46:8-11** "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors,  
9 ... for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,  
10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'  
11 calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country.

I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.

**Isaiah 44:7** Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. ... Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.

God's mouth and hand are always connected, what He says He will do, He does. God's Word is true and trustworthy. The Christian faith is true, it is grounded in truth. It is not fiction.

The reason we read the Bible and listen to the Bible being preached and taught is because it is true. You can trust it, you can base your life on it, in fact, you should.

**Second**, there is good news in the midst of this great conflict and crisis. "He will be destroyed by a power that is not human" (vs. 25).

**Psalm 68:1-2** God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered;  
and those who hate him shall flee before him!  
2 As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away;  
as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God!

In 164 BC Antiochus Epiphanes was overwhelmed in battle and died.

It is a general principle that evil always destroys itself, it always tends to overreach. They think they are invincible. Sure, the wicked prosper for a time, but then they sow the seeds to their own destruction.

This is certainly the case with Satan. His plot to kill Jesus, recoiled to his own destruction.

This is why we can rejoice in trial, for the fruit it produces.

**James 1:12** Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

**Third**, Gabriel reminds Daniel to seal up this vision, keep it in his heart, confident it will be fulfilled. The days are evil, times of affliction will come, store up God's Word in your heart to comfort and strengthen you.

All of us have a place where we keep important papers, a locked file cabinet, maybe a fire prove safe or even in a safe deposit box at the bank. Deeds, wills, contracts, certificates, savings bonds, insurance papers.

The church is called by Christ to be the guardian of the Word of God:

**I Timothy 3:15** ... the church of the living God, a pillar and foundation of the truth.

**II Timothy 1:14** By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

We need people to jealousy guard the truth. It is being trampled on in our culture and by young people in our community, even some at LCS, even some in our own homes. Pray for Dan as he tried to stand faithful in his work while being criticized and complained to for his efforts.

Our elders recently joined with the elders of some of the other CRC elder boards to stand up to some unbiblical teaching that has crept into a church in our classis. I am proud of them for honor God's Word. So far there are some positive steps being taken because of their actions.

“Jealous regard for the old faith is a good thing, and is especially to be commended when the minimizing of great truths is so much in fashion. The tendency of our age to believe as little as possible, is sapping the strength of faith and depriving the Christian life of its vigor. That strength and that life are nurtured by an unshaken faith in the great truths of the infallible Word of God” (Rev. Joseph J. Lampe).

Where do we keep God's Word, how do we guard and protect His Word? Hide it in your hearts, give it a central place in your heart and home and in your church. Make sure to treat it as authoritative, submit your life and decisions and priorities to it.

Don't let God's Word be dismissed as just someone's interpretation, as just a human book. Don't let God's Word be lowered to the level of other books on history or psychology or New Age spirituality or other inspired writings or good devotional literature.

This is the Word of the one true and living God.

**Isaiah 40:8** The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Who is qualified to handle these things?

**II Corinthians 2:16** Who is sufficient for these things?

Pray for me, I am burdened by my inadequacies and shortcomings, my sin and weaknesses that hinder my understanding and preaching and teaching. The excellency of God's Word is so great, the truth is so holy and powerful. Pray my words will be a demonstration of God's power and wisdom, certainly not my own.

*Fourth*, what did Daniel do after it was over?

Did he get one of those sandwich boards and walk about announcing the end is near and the world is doomed and we are all about to die? He lay sick for some days and then he got up.

He went out and did what he was called to do. He went into the world to live out his faith, even in exile in a pagan land serving a pagan king, he was faithful to do what he was given to do.

He got busy doing the *king's business*. Are we busy about the King's business?

On Monday morning we should go about our business with the Word of God still ringing in our ears and burning in our hearts. We should reflect on these things, meditate on them and apply them as the Spirit gives us wisdom and understanding.

Don't just be hearer of the Word, but hearers and doers of the Word. Man does not live by bread alone but by the Word of God, by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

**Colossians 3:16-17** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, ... 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Colossians 3:23-24** Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

In other words, do what you do on earth as unto the Lord. And if it can't be done as unto the Lord, then change what you are doing.

What God has called you to do, or assigned you to do, it has meaning, so do it, do it well, do it as an act of worship to God. Use the gifts and talents and abilities God has given you.

Be as much earthly good as God enables you to be. Leave this world better than you found it. What we are doing here and now does matter to God, He takes a true interest in it.

Some use what they have to end injustice or poverty or illiteracy or abortion. Some serve others, care for the sick, minister to needs. Some seek peace and reconciliation. Some teach Sunday school or cadets or GEMS or play an instrument or visit a shut in.

How will we live while we wait? How then shall we live while the days are evil? Be about the King's business and whatever you do, do it to His glory.

Wait like Daniel.

Work like Daniel.

Pray like Daniel.