

A Ram, Goat and Little Horn

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Date: 26 April 2015

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[0 : 00] We're in the middle of a series on Daniel and we're in the middle of the toughest part of Daniel, the visions.

And this is a long chapter. It's a lot of verses, but we got to read all of it because it's all important. And so try to stick with it as best you can as we read it right now. Give your attention to the text as much as you can and then we'll work back through it.

This is God's word. In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision after the one that had already appeared to me. In my vision, I saw myself in the citadel of Suza in the province of Elam.

In the vision, I was beside the Ulai canal. I looked up and there before me was a ram with two horns standing beside the canal and the horns were long.

One of the horns was longer than the other, but grew up later. I watched the ram as he charged towards the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him and none could rescue from his power.

[1 : 01] He did as he pleased and became great. As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground.

He came towards the two horn ram I'd seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns.

The ram was powerless to stand against him. The goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him and none could rescue the ram from his power. The goat became very great, but at the height of his power, his large horn was broken off and in his place four prominent horns grew up towards the four winds of heaven.

Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and towards the beautiful land. It grew until it reached the host of the heavens and it threw some of the starry hosts down on the earth and trampled on them.

It set itself up to be as great as the prince of the host. It took away the daily sacrifice from him and the place of his sanctuary was brought low. Because of rebellion, the host of the saints and the daily sacrifice were given over to it.

[2 : 09] It prospered in everything it did and truth was thrown to the ground. Then I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one said to him, how long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled, the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled under foot.

He said to me, it will take 2300 evenings and mornings, then the sanctuary will be reconstructed. When I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man.

And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision. As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate.

Son of man, he said to me, understand that the vision concerns the time of the end. While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet.

He said, I'm going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. The two horned ram that you saw represents the king of media and Persia.

[3 : 14] The shaggy goat is the king of Greece. And the large horn between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that replace the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.

In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue will arise. He will become very strong but not by his own power.

He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper and he will consider himself superior.

When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed but not by human power. The vision of the evening and mornings that has been given to you is true but still up the vision for it concerns the distant future.

I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision. It was beyond understanding. So far this is God's word.

[4 : 22] So we're going to have a look at three things briefly about this text. I want to look at first, the fact that Daniel is marginalized. Secondly, that the vision is about fleeting kingdoms.

And thirdly, I want to look at the man, the man that's mentioned in the second half of the chapter. To do that, we need to take a step back for just a moment and get a little context, really from the start of what's happening in Daniel historically.

This is exile, like other books of the Bible, Esther and others. The people of Israel are in Babylon. They're in exile. And actually there were two exiles that happened in regards to Babylon.

The first happened in 597 BC and the second happened in 587 BC. And in the second, the 587 one, maybe the one that you've heard of, it's the one where Jerusalem gets wiped out, the temple destroyed, ransacked completely.

All the people are pretty much gone, killed, devastated, brought into exile. Israel occurs a lot of it before that. This is the earlier exile.

[5 : 31] And in the earlier exile, what happened is that King Nebuchadnezzar went to Israel, took people to Israel, his troops. And when he went, he ransacked it.

But then all he did was bring back the ruling class, the professional class, the nobles, right? If you're a king and you want to dominate the world and create vassals out of all the people in the land around you, how do you do it?

Well, you go and you take their ruling class out of their land and then teach them to be Babylonian, right? So what you do is you make the professionals into Babylonians and then you send them back, right, to rule.

And all of a sudden, the ruling class of Israel becomes a ruling class of Babylon, right? And that's what we read about in the very first couple of chapters of Daniel. That's what was happening, is that Daniel was getting educated to be a ruling class citizen of Babylon for the sake of ruling Israel.

Daniel is just one of many that were taken back. Now with that in mind, if you look down, our first point is that Daniel was marginalized.

[6 : 42] If you look down at chapter 8, verse 1, you'll see this, the context of our chapter. In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision. So King Belshazzar is on the throne at this point and he is Nebuchadnezzar's successor.

You remember what happened to Nebuchadnezzar? He was very conceited, right? He went crazy, God judged him. He started eating grass, things like that.

Then he came back and repented but he was replaced on the throne by Belshazzar. And we saw that in chapter 5 but the interesting thing is that this chapter, chapter 8, is actually before chapter 5 chronologically.

So we've already seen a vision in relation to Belshazzar. Where Belshazzar ends up being killed. But now we have him here again in chapter 8.

Well, that's because chapter 8 is chronologically before chapter 5. And so we're entering a part right here where Daniel is in between being one of the main rulers, the third guy in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar.

[7 : 49] And now he's in Belshazzar's kingdom. And he's in Suza. He's not, he's out in the Ulai Canal which is actually separated from where the castle and the palace would have been.

He's been marginalized. He had made his way up in the ranks of Babylon with Nebuchadnezzar. But no longer is that the case anymore.

We know that especially in chapter 5 which we've already looked at when Belshazzar has a dream or he sees a hand writing on the wall and they don't know who to call. And somebody at the court remembers, well there's this guy Daniel that used to do this kind of thing, right?

They used to give prophecies. Let's go see if we can find him. So he's been expelled. He's out of the court. He's no longer in the ruling class of Babylon like he once was.

So here's the interesting thing, that big picture context. How do you as the noble ruling class of Israel respond when you're taken out of your land brought to Babylon and educated in everything Babylonian?

[9 : 03] How do you respond? This society, Babylon is pluralistic, right? You can believe many different things.

There's no singular truth. It's also polytheistic. You remember that Nebuchadnezzar made them bow down and worship many gods represented by the statue that he built.

So it's pluralistic and polytheistic. What do you do? What do you do? Well we get a glimpse at what they did and what they were told to do in Jeremiah which is a contemporary to Daniel.

Jeremiah is a prophet who remained in Israel even after the exile. So Jeremiah is ministering in Israel while Daniel is in Babylon.

And there was this false prophet in Israel named Hananiah who was basically telling everyone how should the Babylonian exiles live in Babylon?

[9 : 59] And Hananiah said they need to separate themselves. Don't go into the city of Babylon. Make your camp outside of the city, under the trees.

Don't integrate. Don't be a part of the Babylonian people like Nebuchadnezzar wants. Separate yourself. Well, God comes and speaks to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 28 and 29 and he tells them that this is wrong what Hananiah is saying, right?

Now intuitively that's what we would have said, isn't it? Nebuchadnezzar wants to convert you into a polytheistic Babylonian. Don't go into the city.

Make your camp outside the city. But Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29 writes a letter to the exiles and says here's God's command to you. Actually, if you have a Bible, let's flip there because it's so important to see.

It's a passage that really structures much of what we understand the exile to be about. In my chapter 29 read briefly.

[11 : 07] Verse four, verse four, if you don't want to flip there, just listen. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Build houses and settle down. Settle down guys. You're not going anywhere. Set gardens and eat what they produce.

Marry and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters and marriage so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there. Do not decrease. Also, and here it is, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exiles, into exile.

If it prospers, you will prosper. So what God does is says, look, they're trying to make you fully assimilate and become polytheistic.

Don't stay outside the city. I want you to go into the city and make the city prosper. Pursue peace. When the city prospers, you will prosper.

[12 : 15] Daniel did exactly that, didn't he? The first six chapters that we studied already were about Daniel doing that mission. Look, he took, Balthashezar was his name that he took onto himself.

You know what that means? It means servant of Baal. That's what he went by. He was educated by in the enchanting and magic practices of that kingdom.

He immersed himself. But at the same time, while he didn't separate himself, he didn't assimilate either, did he?

He never succumbed to polytheism. He never accepted the pluralistic atmosphere that he was in. He always stood up for truth as an objective value and never sacrificed himself to ever say that there is any God but Yahweh, the one true God of Israel.

He never did any of those things. So what we learned from him is that we live in a society very similar to the one we're reading about here.

[13 : 22] Britain, Scotland is so immersed in Christian culture, even in a post-Christian age that we live in that we don't even realize it most of the time.

The laws, the healthcare, the education, all of these things are built by historic Christianity. But we all recognize now that we largely live in a culture that is post-Christian in many ways.

It's pluralistic, right? So if you go out and work in your workplace, people are not too upset that you're a Christian, but they'll be really upset if you ever say that Christianity is the actual soul truth, right?

If Jesus Christ really is the way to get to God, right? They'll be upset with that because our society preaches pluralism, and our society is also in that sense polytheistic in many ways.

Anybody can have the religion of their choosing on all these things. We live in a very similar society to the one Daniel was immersed in. Daniel was told by God, don't separate yourself.

[14 : 31] Don't leave the city. Don't huddle yourself down into a little Christian monastic community. What he told him is that integrate into the city and seek its welfare.

When you seek its welfare, you'll find your welfare. It's interesting, we see this in the early church all over the place.

There's a famous letter to a guy named Dionytus in the early church from a Christian disciple. It's one of the earliest piece of writings I think we have. Maybe Zach will tell me different afterwards.

In this letter, he's writing to this guy and this disciple is, and he says, look, he's basically saying, you're persecuting Christians, but you don't have a right to.

Here's why. That Christians are the best citizens in Rome. They don't give their wives to other people, nor do they take other people's wives.

[15 : 29] That's one of the things he says. They follow all the laws of the city and they even transcend the laws of the city. They pay their taxes, he says. He says, we have no right to persecute Christians because they're the best citizens.

The early church understood what it means to be a Christian in a city like Edinburgh, in a city like London, New York, any of these places is not to assimilate, never to bow down to the idolatries of this culture, never to compromise that there is an objective truth out there and that it is Jesus Christ himself, never to compromise that Jesus Christ died and rose again in history, never to compromise on any of those things, but also never to separate, never to be monastic, never to inculcate yourselves into a small Christian huddle, but to go into your workplace and into the little cultures that are microcosms of this big culture and to seek peace and prosperity, to do your jobs as best as you can, right?

To avoid gossip, to dissuade conflict, to create a culture that sets it up to be pre-evangelism.

What I mean by that is when you go into your own little sphere of influence, the microcosm that is the whole of the city, whether it be the workplace or the university classroom or whatever, and you make friends with non-Christians and you show them what it is to be a person who displays virtue and you seek, whether it's school or work or whatever, being the absolute best, not for your own sake, not for the sake of prideful ambition, but for the welfare of the city, for the welfare of the people around you, to do the best job you possibly can, to be honest in your work and all these things, what you're doing is you're creating a culture that establishes itself as an opportunity for pre-evangelism.

Cultures create evangelism. You see, you want to talk to people about Jesus, set up a culture around you amongst your non-Christian friends that is about peace, prosperity, welfare, love, avoiding gossip, integrating yourselves into their lives, eating meals with them, all these things, and it sets you up for the ability to talk to them about the gospel.

[17 : 56] James Eglinton and I were in America just this past week and we got to hear from this one young woman who was a doctor in New York and she was talking about what it looks like for her to be a Christian in her workplace, and one of the things she said is, look, I can't walk around and talk about Jesus all the time.

I'll get fired. Right? That's just the truth. And so what she said she does, and she's primarily a doctor that does transplant surgeries. So many times she would have a transplant, a person who needs a transplant and a person who's giving a transplant, they're together.

Right? And she would sit down on the bed beside them and talk to them and say, look, what we're going to do, it's going to be hard. But I'm going to take life from you to give life to him.

And she would talk to them about how it's always the truth built into the order, the created order of this world that death has to happen for life to begin.

She's got to take life to give it. And that would be a pre-evangelistic way of her to getting at talking to them eventually about faith, about what that looks like, about the fact that spring always follows winter, about the fact that the resurrection of Christ could only be accomplished if he died.

[19 : 18] Right? So that's one small microcosmic example of how this works out in individual cultures. But it works out differently for every one of you.

And one of the ways that I was convicted as I was thinking about this was that I don't have any non-Christian friends anymore. I failed at this. I'm a monastic.

I've left the city because all I know is this and a little bubble that studies theology across the street. I don't have any non-Christian friends.

And so that's one of the ways that I was convicted. Now this is all really important for understanding the vision. So we come to point to the vision itself and we'll have to be brief.

This is all the history of Daniel. The point of what Daniel was trying to do in Babylon. And this is what makes the vision understandable. The good thing is we don't have to guess at what the vision means because God gave us the interpretation of it already.

[20 : 20] It's in the text. So this man and this angel come to him. He's in a deep sleep. And in verse 19 the angel says, I'm going to tell you what this is about.

What's going to happen in the end? So there's a ram. It's got two horns. It represents the kings of media and Persia. So what would shortly happen only less than 12 years after this text would have occurred is that a king of media named Darius, it's in chapter 9, it's in the very next verse of chapter 9, he would take Babylon.

He would conquer Babylon. Then shortly after that another king called Cyrus would take Darius place and he would join media and Persia together. So that's the ram.

It's just a kingdom. So the whole vision that we're being presented here is about kingdoms. Kingdoms that come and kingdoms that go. And if you go through the vision, the next thing that comes in is a goat.

And this goat represents the kingdom of Greece. You've heard this before, right? Because this is exactly what the vision in chapter 2 was about. The kingdom of Greece, Alexander the Great, the youngest conqueror in history, the man who at the age of 32 wept because there were no worlds left for him to conquer.

[21 : 36] He will come in about 175 years after this and he will take Babylon. And he will take, capture the whole land of the ancient Near East. And then after that the climax of the vision is based on the little horn.

The little horn. What's this little horn coming in that's growing up out? This guy that the angel says is a man of intrigue and cunning and deceit. Well the clue to who this is is that the text says that he will come and he will go into the beautiful land.

The beautiful land. The beautiful land is just Old Testament code word for Palestine, for Israel, specifically for Jerusalem. So it's amazing how God fulfilled these prophecies.

In the year 170 AD a guy named, I just forgot his name, Antiochus, yes right. Epiphanes would come in, he would come out of a low birth, which is what the text says.

First he will be small, then he will become big. He would come out of low birth and he would rise up through bribery and deceit and for six and a half years he would rule this kingdom.

[22 : 47] And the reason it's so important and the reference to the beautiful land is that he went into Jerusalem and he killed tens of thousands of Jews in about a scope of three years.

He absolutely hated the Jewish people, he hated Yahweh, he hated their God and he went into the temple and he would sacrifice pigs as a daily offering. And if you know anything about Old Testament law you know that that's an abomination to God according to Old Testament law and he replaced all the ornamentation in the temple with ornamentation of idols.

So all of this prophecy came true within about 400 years of it being given here. Here's the point, Daniel had risen up through inserting himself into the kingdom of Babylon.

God had given him grace and he had become a great ruler. Then when Belchazar came onto the scene he was marginalized. Belchazar rejected God, rejected Yahweh, he was a polytheistic man.

What God is telling Daniel in this vision is not only giving us a glimpse of how he knows all of history, what will happen, what will come to end. What he's telling Daniel is look kingdoms will come and kingdoms will go.

[24 : 02] Nebuchadnezzar loved you and Belshazzar hates you. Stick to your mission. Create a culture of peace and prosperity.

Seek the welfare of the city. Don't give up. Preach the gospel of the Old Testament which is the Messiah is coming.

Don't give up on your mission. Kingdoms will come and kings will go. Prime ministers will come, prime ministers will go. Presidents of the U.S. will come and go. Politics is not our hope but insert yourself into it because you're seeking the peace and prosperity of the city but know that God is the one who's putting people into office and who's taking them down.

God is the one who's by his sovereign hand is seeing things get worse in our culture or get better. It is all according to his plan.

Your mission is to seek peace and prosperity by creating a Christian culture for the sake of the gospel.

[25 : 05] That's what this vision is getting at. Now the last thing we'll do very briefly, third is we'll look at the question why and how.

Why and how? Yes, God controls history. Yes, the kingdom of God is marginalized in every kingdom. There has never been a golden age.

The 17th century was not it. There has never been a golden age. The kingdom of God has always been marginalized on this earth. Why? How's it going to end?

What's our hope? What's our hope to go out into the workplace in a place where people don't like the fact that you're a believer? What's the hope? It's to look at the man. To look at the man.

So if you look at verse 16, and this is the last thing we'll look at, Daniel hears a man's voice from the Uli calling and he tells an angel Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision.

[26 : 06] Who is this man? Now it's interesting all the visions of Daniel are about the same thing. So if you're going through each vision of Daniel, maybe you're reading this book in addition to the fact that we're working through it on Sundays and you're like what is happening?

What is happening here? This is weird stuff. The four beasts last week, the goats and the rams and all these things, there's more weird stuff coming. They're all about the same thing.

They're all about kingdoms that will rise up after Babylon. And every one of them is answering the question where will Israel be? Where will the people of God be in relation to all of these kingdoms?

And the answer is that they will be marginalized until the end, until the end. These prophecies are for the end of days, the end of days.

Another interesting thing that comes up all over these prophecies is this man that we're seeing here. It comes up in chapter 11 and chapter 12 and in chapter 2 that there's a man that Daniel keeps seeing.

[27 : 08] In chapter 11 and 12, this man reaches down and cleanses Daniel's lips with hot coals. Isaiah chapter 6, right?

This man is the pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God. This is Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, coming and meeting with Daniel in these instances.

And one of the ways we see that is because in all these visions, the height of it is always the end and it's always about this one man. And in chapter 2, it tells us that that one man will finally in the end bring a kingdom that's not made from gold or iron or bronze like Nebuchadnezzar's kingdoms were made from.

He will bring a kingdom made out of a mountain and a rock that is immovable. And so this end, this end that Daniel is prophesying to us, it's got a two-fold dimension to it.

And this is the last thing we'll say. It's got a now and a not yet dimension to it. All these prophecies, the end is referencing largely the coming of Jesus.

[28 : 19] The fact that many kingdoms will come and the people of God will be marginalized, but in the end, a true king will come. And he will set the world a right.

He will be the true temple. He will be one like a son of man, like a son of the gods as Nebuchadnezzar identified him in the fiery furnace. He is the man in the canal.

Now the Hebrew word for man that's used in Daniel is not the normal Hebrew word for man. The normal Hebrew word for man, you know it, it's Adam.

It's just the word from Genesis. It's Adam. That just means man. This word is a different word and it means something like the mighty appearance of a being who appears mightily.

It's a very different thing. He appears like a man, but he's God. And he's coming to give the now that is the kingdom we live in now through his death and resurrection.

[29 : 16] But still there's a not yet. And that not yet is his second coming when the kingdom will finally be restored. So here's the thing. Here's what you take away.

How do you have hope in a world that marginalizes the people of God, but we're called to go in in the middle of that king in the middle of those other kingdoms and seek their peace and prosperity.

How do you have hope? Here's how you have hope. The end has already come. You can be absolutely certain that Jesus Christ has accomplished salvation for you and that you're fighting for something that will come to fruition.

It's absolutely certain. But it's also not yet certain because it hasn't completely happened yet. So there's a certainty about it. You've been resurrected with Christ. You're justified by faith.

Your spirit has been made new, but there's a not yet. You have not yet had a resurrected body. The kingdom is not fully realized, so you live with hope, but you also live with flexibility that you go into your workplace, into your communities, into your little microcosmic culture amongst your friends.

[30 : 32] And you pursue the peace and prosperity of God's kingdom in those places that aren't God's kingdom because you're certain that his kingdom will come and you have the ability to move and to change and to see what works best and to make friend groups and to do all these things.

There's no one way about it. There's flexibility before the coming of the kingdom, but there's certainty that the kingdom is coming. And so our call today is to go into the city and to minister, to integrate, to get non-Christian friends, to do all these things and to pursue peace, to pursue their peace and prosperity for the certain hope of the coming kingdom of God.

Let's pray. Father, we ask that you would make this vision fruitful for us. We ask that you would bless us with a gift to see. We ask that you would bless us with a gift to have hope in a coming kingdom that will never end, that will never leave.

And we ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen.