

The Book of Daniel #5

by: Ronald L. Dart

There's one thing that puzzles me about the book of Daniel, well at least one thing. It's why now? Why did God at this particular juncture in history, layout the prophecies that He did. The visions that he gave to Daniel, the vision he gave to Nebuchadnezzar, span a panorama of prophecy that goes from their day all the way to the very end. And you ask yourself the question as you read along through here, with the incredible spread of revelations of time and empires and places and you ask yourself, why? I'm not sure that I have the answer to that, but sometimes it's important to at least ask the questions and get them out on the table so we know where we're going, or at least maybe so we will know that we're there when we get there.

We have been going through Daniel in this series of articles and we have come to the eighth chapter of Daniel, which is yet another vision of Daniel. It happened "In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar." Daniel had a vision and he said, {2} "I saw where I was, I was in Shushan of the Palace, which is in the province of Elam; I was in vision by the river of Ulai." Now we are well over into the Eastern part of Iraq, perhaps all the way in to what is now Iran at Susa.

A Ram With Two Horns

Daniel said, in verse 3, "I lifted up my eyes and I saw, and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last." Now commentators are pretty universal on this. This is, in fact, explained by an Angel a little later. It is the Kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. They were a kind of a joint Empire. The Persian which came later was the greater of the two, the dominant of the two empires that took over Babylon.

Now he said in verse 4, "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." Now mind you, this is before the fall of Babylon that he sees this. This same Belshazzar was the one who saw the handwriting on the wall, before the fall of Babylon, when the Medes and Persians came through there and finally destroyed Babylon.

He Goat

So Daniel watches all this taking place in vision and it appears that the Persian kingdom is established, {5} "And as I was considering, behold, a he goat came from the west on the face

of the whole earth, he didn't even touch the ground he was coming so fast. He had a notable horn between his eyes." This is Alexander the great. The notable horn was this single leader of that Empire.

And, verse 6, "He came to the ram that had two horns (Medes and the Persians), which I had seen standing before the river and he ran to him in the fury of his power. {7} And I saw him come close to the ram and he was moved with choler against him and smote the ram and broke his two horns, and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram out of his hand." Wow, this is a pretty apt description of the facts that we now know from history of what happened when Alexander the great came through that part of the world. He simply overcame and destroyed the Persian Empire. They might as well have dropped their arms in the first place. Alexander's generalship was just too much for them.

Therefore, verse 8, "the he goat (Alexander) waxed very great and when he was strong, the great horn was broken and before it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven." Now there is a consensus that these represent the four generals of Alexander the great. After his untimely death, I think he was 31, the empire was divided into four kingdoms. The two significant ones were headquartered in Syria and in Egypt.

A Little Horn

Now in verse 9, "out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great toward the South, the East, the pleasant land. {10} And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them."

Now, make a note of this little horn. He is not the same little horn that we saw in Daniel chapter 7. Chapter 7 had four beasts representing four successive great empires. There is a little horn on the fourth beast which does much the same thing, but this is different. This is on the third of these four great creatures. He precedes the one that comes later naturally. Now consider this little horn icon for a man who keeps recurring in history. How can a man appear again and again hundred's of years apart? Well, from a human perspective, he can't, that's not possible, but a certain spirit can appear again and again in different men. This little horn is a prototype of others who will come in the same spirit and with the same power, the power which some people would probably describe as demonic.

Antiochus Epiphanes

Verse 11, "He magnifies 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." Now this happened in history, this little horn was one Antiochus Epiphanes. He is one of the successive rulers of that kingdom of one of Alexander's generals, the one that was headquartered in Syria. Quite a lot is known about him and his family and what he did. He was very intolerant of Judaism and made every effort to virtually stamp out Judaism.

"There was a host," verse 12, "that was given to him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, it cast down the truth to the ground; it practiced and it prospered." He actually in some cases banned the practice of Judaism. He offered swine's flesh on the altar at the Temple in Jerusalem and defiled it. His whole purpose was to put a stop to this practice of Judaism and to Hellenize, that is to make Greeks out of everyone.

"Then I heard one Saint speaking," verse 13, "and another Saint said to that certain saint that spoke." Now what he has here is a couple of angels that are speaking. "And he asks, "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 underfoot?" So we're going to have the daily sacrifice cut off, taken away. How long is this going to go on and how long is this desolation of the sanctuary going to last?

2300 Sacrifices

"He said to me," verse 14, "till 2300 evenings and mornings then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Now this probably refers to the evening and morning sacrifices. 2300 of them would amount to three years and 55 days. Now this three years plus a bit is a recurring period of time in other prophecies all the way to the book of Revelation. I will not attempt to answer what that means or where it fits for you here. Just keep in mind that there's a three-year and a bit period that keeps cropping up.

He said in verse 15, "And it came to pass, that I even Daniel had seen this vision, and I looked for the meaning, then behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. {16} And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called and said, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." Now between the banks of the Ulai, there was a canal across there and there were two branches of the canal. I presume that whoever this is, is standing between the two canals that were there.

Names of Three Angels

He speaks out to the one man and says, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." Now we have a surprise that drops on us here. There is an Angel here and he has a name. His name is Gabriel. There are only three Angels that are named anywhere in the Bible. This one's name comes from two Hebrew words, one of which means warrior and 'el', which means God. 'Gabri' and 'el'. The other two Angels are named Michael (Jude 9) and Helel (Isaiah 14:12). You probably know Helel by his other name Lucifer. Michael's name means 'Who is like God'. They are the only three named. The presumption is that they were the three Cherubim closest to God's throne. Helel, Lucifer, is the one that fell, and is now Satan that is an adversary to God. Beyond this, there is a lot we would like to know but don't.

The Time of the End

Let's continue in verse 17 of Daniel 8, "So he came near to me and I stood and when Gabriel came, I was afraid and fell on my face. He said, "Understand, O Son of Man: for at the time

of the end shall be the vision. {18} Now as he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground, but he touched me, and set me upright. {19} And he said, "Behold,. I'm going to help you understand what shall be in the last end of the indignation, for at the time appointed the end shall be." Now what is this Angel going to tell us about the meaning of this vision?

The first thing Gabriel has to tell Daniel about is that it is at the time of the end, when the vision comes to pass. Now there are people who believe that the entirety of all Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in history and therefore has no end time application. I suppose they have a way they go about explaining this particular passage, maybe it's the time of the end of the Empire, or what have you, but I'm inclined to read this and think, especially based upon other things in Daniel, and the connection to other New Testament prophecies, that no, when he says at the time of the end, he means the extremity, that is the very end of man's misrule of this earth. So we ask the end of what? Well, the return of Christ probably and that is what I believe.

Let's resume in Daniel 8 and verse 20, "The ram which you saw having two horns are the kings of Media and the kings of Persia. {21} The rough goat is the King of Grecia, the great horn between his eyes is the first king." That's Alexander. {22} "Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation but not with his (Alexander's) kind of power. {23} And the latter time of their kingdom, when transgressors are come to the full, a King of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.{24} And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and destroy the mighty and the holy people."

Now there are some interesting questions involved in this. For one thing, why on earth would we think of something being fulfilled at the end of time or at the time of the end, that has to do with Alexander the Great's Empire? Because it was long gone, long before the time of the end. What is he talking about? Well, one key may be found in this 'King of fierce countenance who understands dark sentences and is powerful, but not by his own power.' I take it that the phrase 'not by his own power' suggests something supernatural about this man. He has a higher power, but that power is not God. It is something entirely different. His understanding of 'dark sentences' is also suggestive of this. It has overtones of demonic influence, the spirit world.

By Peace He Shall Destroy Many

"Through his policy also," verse 25, "he will cause craft to prosper in his hand. 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 should be broken without hand." Historically, this is all talking about one Antiochus Epiphanes, but I want you to think for just a moment about this expression 'By peace he shall destroy many.' If you want an example of how this works, look at the Oslo Peace Accords. Look at the Camp David peace agreements, look at all the peace agreements that have been made between Israel and the Palestinians.

If there is one thing that should become clear to people by now, but seems to be beyond other people's understanding, it is that the Palestinians have been using peace as an instrument of war. They actually cut deals, where they talk about peace, and they use the peace to destroy.

This man, this king of fierce countenance, will do something like this. He will make treaties and he will break them. He will talk about peace while he is undercutting the very people he was making peace with.

This Vision Disturbed Daniel

"The vision," verse 26, "of the evening in the morning, which was told is true. So shut up the vision for it shall be for many days." This thing Daniel is way off in your future. {27} "I Daniel fainted, and was sick for certain days, afterward I rose up and did the King's business, and I was astonished at the vision, but no one understood it." You know it is interesting, we have the benefit of hindsight in thinking about this vision. We can read what the angel told him and we can say, "I see that, that's this, that's the other thing, that's Alexander, that's Alexander's generals." We know what their names were. We have this benefit but Daniel did not. He went to his grave not understanding where this vision was going, but there's more.

Babylonian Captivity Would Last 70 Years

Daniel nine and verse one, "In the first year of Darius, the son of a Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made King over all the realm of the Chaldeans, {2} In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Now this appears to be the first time that Daniel realized he would not be going home. He had Jeremiah the prophet's work in hand and he studied it and prayed about it. He thought about it and finally he came to realize what it meant. He knew the captivity would end. Jeremiah and the other prophets had said so, but he had hoped against hope that he would be alive to see the end of it and that he would go back home. Now he knows that is not to be. It is a crushing experience for him to know that he is going to grow old and die in Babylon.

Daniel's Prayer for His People

"And I set my face," verse 3, "unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes, {4} And I prayed to the Lord my God, and I made my confession, and I said, "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments. {5} We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly, we have rebelled, even by departing from your precepts and from your judgments. {6} We haven't listen to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and to all the people of the land."

Now Daniel was a good man. He was a righteous man. Ezekiel lists him with Noah and Job (Ezekiel 14:14) as one of the three most righteous men in all of history, but notice how

Daniel makes no attempt to distance himself from the sins of his people. It is not , O Lord, they have sinned. O Lord, look at what rotten people they are. It is "O Lord, we have sinned."

"O Lord," verse 7, "righteousness belongs to you, but unto us shame faces us this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, that are near, and they that are far off, through all the countries where you have driven them because of their trespass at the trespassed against you." There is an allusion here to the northern tribes, who had taken captive a hundred years earlier.

"O Lord," verse 8, "to us belongs shame of face, to our Kings, to our princes, to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. {9} To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him, {10} Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which He set before us by his servants the prophets, {11} Yes, all Israel have transgressed your law, even by departing that they might not obey your voice, therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him." Daniel is saying we can't say we weren't warned. We can't say we didn't know. It was written back in Moses' day what would happen, if we forgot God, and look, that's exactly where we are.

"He has," verse 12, "confirmed his words, which he spoke against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil, for under the whole heaven has not been done as is been done up on Jerusalem. {13} As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil has come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand your truth." All these things happened and we still wouldn't turn around. We still wouldn't make our prayers. We wouldn't come to you God and say, "O show us where we are wrong. Plant our feet in the right way. We just went on in the way we were going.

"Therefore," verse 14, "has the LORD watched upon the evil and brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all His works which he does, for we wouldn't obey His voice. {15} Now, O Lord God, you have brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, you have gotten your renown, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. {16} O Lord, according to all your righteousness, I beseech you, let your anger and your fury be turned away from the city of Jerusalem, from your holy mountain, because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a reproach to everyone around us. {17} Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of your servant, and his supplication, cause your face to shine upon your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. {18} O my God, incline your ear, and hear, open your eyes, look at our desolations, look at the city that's called by your name, for we do not present our supplications before you for our righteousness, but for your great mercies. {19} O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, listen and do, defer not, for your own sake, O my God, for your city and your people are called by your name."

You can almost feel the pain of those successive cries, "O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, listen and do. O my God."

What we have here is really just a summary of the prayer because I don't think this was all there was to it. Daniel probably had prayed for some time.

Gabriel's Revelation to Daniel

He says in Daniel 9 and verse 20, "And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God, for the holy mountain of my God." Now there is interesting thing about this, that while he himself was in Babylon, he was praying for Jerusalem. He was praying because he was concerned about what was there and a realization that more people were probably going to be going into the captivity, based upon what he was hearing of what Jeremiah was saying.

He said in verse 21, "While I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." It's almost as though he was there kneeling and praying with the window open towards Jerusalem and he got a tap on the shoulder, and it was Gabriel.

"He informed me," verse 22, "and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have been sent to give you skill and understanding. {23} At the beginning of your supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show you, for you are greatly beloved, therefore understand the matter and consider the vision." What a wonderful thing to say. "You are greatly beloved." Do you know what it would mean to have an Angel come and sit down in your room with you and say "You know, you are really greatly beloved by God."

Travel Is Not Instantaneous

Also, interesting here, we tend to think, well at least I certainly do tend to think, that God is God and He can do things instantaneously. In other words, I'm praying, He hears my prayer, He snaps His fingers and presto it's done, but there seems to be a time element involved and some element of travel. Travel apparently is not instantaneous. We will find out more about that later, but in this case he says, "At the beginning of your supplication and the commandment came forth and I was sent immediately. So here I am." The implication is it took him a little while to get there.

Seventy Weeks

Let's continue in Daniel 9 and verse 24, "Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and

prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Seventy weeks? Daniel had just seen 70 years and he was concerned about this. Apparently, the angel tells him that there's more to it than this.

Seventy weeks and most commentators who look at this and consider that this is 70 weeks of years. In other words, 70×7 years which equals 490 years from the time that this took place until the work of the Messiah, until Jesus the Christ, his ministry and what He was to do.

Continuing in verse 24, "To make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. {25} Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, (under Cyrus,) unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks, (69 weeks of years) the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." This is described in some detail in the book of Nehemiah.

"And after," verse 26, "threescore and two weeks the Messiah shall be cut off, but not because of himself, and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with the flood, and in the end of the war desolations are determined." Wow, that's really something to try to consider what all that means and it seems at least look forward to a time when the Messiah would be here, He would do His work, He would be cut off as Jesus was indeed and a Prince came that did destroy the city and the sanctuary in the end. This happened some years later in 70 A.D.

Continuing in verse 27, "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even to the consummation and that determined shall be poured out upon the desolate."

These incredible prophecies seem to have some historical reference, but even more they look down to the Messiah and beyond Him to the time of the end.

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