

New Year's Eve—Daniel 8:1-27—How Long, O Lord?

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I. Introduction

- A. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve did not trust that the Lord created them to live in the goodness of his creation but rather disobeyed God when they were deceived by the serpent. They gave up their dominion on the earth and their sin gave Satan some level of dominion in world which he won by cunning.
- B. God was reestablishing dominion to man through his chosen nation, Israel but they too did not trust God's good design of the promised land and they were exiled from the Land which represented the new Eden.
- C. The story of Daniel picks up while they are in exile and God gives Daniel several visions so that they will return to the Lord and wait for his salvation through the coming Messiah/King. For now they must know that he is sovereign over his creation and he knows and governs the events of the future.

II. Main Point

- A. The kings and nations of this earth will rise and they will fall. Therefore, do you put your trust in them but may we continue trusting the Lord as we wait for his return and the end to come.

III. Outline

- A. The Vision of the Ram and the Goat—All Evil will Fall
- B. The Interpretation of Vision—how long will it last
- C. Be Alert and Trust the Lord to the End

IV. Exposition

- A. Let's prepare for the new year—to be alert and faithful—by seeing the obvious pattern of the rise and fall of power hungry, evil men. They seek allegiance by violence or by cunning but Jesus was given all authority in heaven and on earth by love and righteousness. The fall of evil is certain but it will be painful as we await Christ returns. This chapter gives you good reason to trust the Lord.
 - 1. As we begin chapter 8, we see that there's a 2 year gap since the dream of chapter 7. There are three parts of this vision in 1-14. The rest of the chapter is the interpretation.
 - a) The setting is the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar. We are still backing up because chapter 6 ended with the reign of Darius the Mede and the lions' den.
 - b) We also recall the death of King Belshazzar after the handwriting on the wall—the fall of one of the kings of Babylon.
 - c) This is a new vision but it is certainly connected to the previous one as it is stated there in verse one—after that which appeared to me at the first.
 - (1) There are plenty of differences but it seems clear this is further explanation of the previous dream 2 years earlier.
 - d) The place of the vision is in Susa the citadel at the U-lai canal.
 - 2. Now the vision he sees.
 - a) The vision begins with a ram standing on the bank of the canal.
 - (1) It is described as having two horns that were high but one of them was higher than the other.
 - (2) The higher one came up last.
 - b) Daniel sees this ram charging (literally goring) in three directions.
 - (1) His power was great. No beast could stand before him and there was no one who could rescue from his power.
 - (2) The ram's rise to power became great and he did as he pleased.
 - 3. As we move to the next scene we have a powerful ram for which no one can stand before nor rescue from him. As Daniel was considering the ram's power, a male goat from the west appears.
 - a) This male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth and he's not standing but rather is coming without touching the ground.
 - b) Another difference shows up in their horns. The ram has two with one higher than the other. This goat has one prominent horn which is a little unusual.

- (1) Which is better? Two horns or one?
- (2) My first thought was the single horn may pass between the two horns and make contact with the ram instead of being entangled together like most animals do with matching horns.
- c) There in verse 6 it says that this goat came to the ram who has two horns.
 - (1) He runs at him in his powerful wrath and he strikes the ram and breaks off his two horns.
 - (a) The power of the ram has been taken down.
 - (b) However, another has risen in its place. The goat tramples on him and he could not stand before him.
 - i) This was previously true of the ram. No one could be rescued from him but now no one can rescue the ram from the goat.
 - ii) Because of this, the goat becomes exceedingly great.
 - iii) His rise to power was swift but it was short lived.
 - iv) His great horn was broken but we do not know how this happened.
 - v) Instead, the four new prominent horns come up toward the four winds of heaven.
- 4. I'd like to point out this very simple but important point—kingdoms and nations along with their rulers rise with great power but eventually fall. Unrighteousness will not stand.
 - a) The ram ruled for a period of time but fell. The goat took the power from the ram and now is ruling.
 - b) Yet, even within his powerful reign that started with the single horn has now be destroyed and four new rulers reign.
- 5. Now the third scene in the vision of Daniel begins there in verse 9.
 - a) And it says—Out of one of the four horns came a little horn which grew exceedingly great.
 - (1) The power of this horn grew so great even to the host of heaven.
 - (a) Again, this is similar language to the Tower of Babel.
 - (b) I think it's worth refreshing our memory of this event—Genesis 11:4–6 ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." ⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶ And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.
 - (c) I think it was necessary to hear this as we try to understand what happens next.
 - (2) What makes this scene unique is the extent of power even against the hosts of heaven—angelic armies.
 - (a) Notice there in verse 10—Daniel 8:10–11 ¹⁰ It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. ¹¹ It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host.
 - (b) This power is extremely troubling.
 - (c) I believe this heavenly war here is describe in Revelation 12. We will return to that later.
 - (3) We must move on. This little horn didn't stop his rampage there, notice there in the middle of verse 11.
 - (a) He takes away the regular burnt offering and the sanctuary was thrown down. The host will be given over to the little horn with the burnt offering because of transgression.
 - i) It throws down the truth to the ground.
 - ii) The little horn will acts and prosper.
 - (1) The wicked aren't supposed to prosper are they?
- 6. I'm not hear to incite fear in you but an awareness of the power of the enemy.
 - a) This is a serious and troubling scene in the vision. Notice there in verse 13 where Daniel overhears two holy ones speaking about what happened.
 - (1) The question they raise is this—how long will this be?
 - (2) The answer is—2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.

- (3) We end the vision with an apparent limit to the evil and the restoration of God's sanctuary on earth.

B. Now let's move one to see the interpretation given to Daniel.

1. Like the holy ones which we should believe to be angels, Daniel wants to know more. Anyone who has ever read these chapters and the book of Revelation will have lots of questions. Some are answered and some are not.
2. As Daniel sought to understand the vision, there stood before him one having the appearance of man and he heard a man's voice calling out to Gabriel—make this man understand the vision.
 - a) As Gabriel approached him, Daniel was very frightened and fell on his face.
 - (1) I think this one is intended to represent God and he instructed the angel, Gabriel to make him understand.
 - (2) We often think we want to understand something until we are faced with the reality of finding out. The seeking is not so troubling. It's the understanding that's scary.
 - (3) Gabriel commands Daniel to understand there in verse 17. He states that this vision is for the time of the end.
3. Verse 18 begins the process of explaining what's going on and Daniel seems to pass out under the weight of that reality.
 - a) But Gabriel touched him and made him stand up.
4. Now the Explanation
 - a) The ram he saw with two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia.
 - (1) The higher horn represented Persia who was more powerful.
 - (2) Daniel has personally watched the rulers of Babylon fall. This vision happened while Belshazzar was king. The next king is Darius, the Mede. Chapter one ended by saying Cyrus the Persian king was in power.
 - (3) In these 70 years of exile, many kings came to power and they all eventually fell.
 - (4) There's no reason for him to think the same will not be true of whoever else follows him.
 - b) The goat is the king of Greece.
 - (1) The great horn on the goat was the first king.
 - (a) I know some of you are ready to tell everyone who this was but I'd like to first point out that Daniel didn't know who it was because it had not happened yet.
 - (b) All he knows is that Greece will come to power over Media and Persia.
 - (c) However, most people likely understand this to be Alexander the Great which seems pretty clear looking back.
 - i) The extent of his rule was unbelievable and violent but he suddenly died at the age of 33.
 - ii) Another one of the most powerful men in history is nothing more than a footnote in the vision of Daniel.
 - (2) When that horn is destroyed, four more arise in its place.
 - (a) We know that four of Alexander's generals took over his reign.
 - (b) Yet there's one more to arise from among them and he's a monster.
 - c) He is the one who is described as taking the burnt offering away to which the angelic being were asking—how long will this be so?
 - (1) He is a king of bold face, one who understands riddles.
 - (2) His power shall be great—but not by his own power.
 - (a) He shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in destroying mighty men and the people who are the saints.
 - (b) He doesn't do this my might but by cunning. He sounds just like the serpent in the Garden.
 - (c) He shall make deceit prosper under his hand and we hear this and rightfully say—deceit is not supposed to prosper. Oh God, may justice reign down. Rescue us from this evil.
 - (3) Again, we have lots of history between us and Daniel's visions. This one is historically labeled as Antiochus IV.

- (a) For about 3 1/2 years (2,300 mornings and evenings 1,150 days) he destroyed the temple worship and wreaked havoc of the people of God.
 - (b) Eventually, the people revolted against him and took Jerusalem back in the Maccabean revolt.
 - (c) Again, none of the details were given to Daniel.
- 5. Upon hearing this interpretation, Daniel was overcome and lay sick for some days.
 - a) Then he arose and went about the king's business.
 - b) The news was heavy and grim but he trusted in the Lord and pressed on to the end.
 - c) I hear a lot of people talk about the end times but never do I see them look like this. These discussions are not academic or fun. They are dreadful.
- C. So what? What does all this mean for us now and how are we to live in light of this?
 - 1. This is a simple point I've mentioned several times but I don't want us to miss it.
 - a) All evil will fall...eventually. Whether it is Alexander the Great or Antiochus their bodies are in grave and their soul is bound in hell awaiting judgment day.
 - b) All evil will be punished justly and eternally.
 - c) Evil will not win. God does.
 - 2. Let's circle back to the cosmic battle that went on in heaven where some of the hosts of heaven were thrown down.
 - a) Revelation 12 described that scene again with additional information.
 - (1) I'm here to tell you or remind you that Satan no longer has a seat at the table in heaven.
 - i) Ever since the fall, Satan has used cunning, lying, deceiving ways to wreak havoc on mankind.
 - ii) Because Adam sinned, a payment was due. Through guilt and shame, Satan has leveraged his attacks in a blackmail like way against people out of fear of death.
 - (1) He is the accuser of the brethren and at this point in the storyline of history, he has a seat at the table. Indeed, one of those thrones back in chapter 7 was his.
 - (2) Because of the fall, he is right to demand from God just payment and he holds God to the consequences of sin—death. He was thrown down according to John—Revelation 12:7–9 ⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.
 - (2) How did this happen? Was it merely by might?
 - (a) No. His defeat happened when God the Son became a man.
 - (b) Revelation 12:10–11 ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.
 - (c) The accuser of the brethren who demanded just payment—their blood...their life—sees one like a Son of Man die in their place.
 - i) God himself who took on human flesh came to pay the just payment that was due.
 - ii) And now those who trust in him conquer the accuser who attempted to destroy them through guilt and fear of death BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.
 - iii) The death and resurrection of the God-Man defeated the serpent and he has been thrown down. He no longer stands in God's presence to accuse the people of God demanding just payment.
 - iv) Jesus Paid it All.
 - v) If you are joined to Christ through repentance and faith, you are safe in him forever no matter who comes to power.

- b) But just know, he was thrown out of heaven but he still roams the earth.
 - (1) He is still deceiving and lying and using his cunning ways to destroy us.
 - (a) DO NOT LISTEN TO HIS LIES AND DO NOT BE DECEIVED.
 - (b) I will leave you with the words of Jesus on how you ought to live as you await his return.
 - i) Matthew 24:4–14 ⁴“See that no one leads you astray. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹²And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
 - (2) Are you believing the gospel? Are you trusting in Lord’s grace to rescue us from all evil?
 - (3) Or are you part of the evil world? If you are, your end will be the eternal fire and unceasing anguish.
 - (a) Some people would rather have 85 years of heaven on earth instead of eternal heaven later.
 - (b) He is coming for those who are longing for his appearing. Christ will win. That is certain.
 - (c) How long will it be?
 - (d) Revelation 22:12–15 ¹²“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” ¹⁴Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.
 - (e) Have you washed your robes in the blood of the Lamb?