Kings and Prophets 17-05-04

This is Thursday, May the 4th, 2017. We're in the book of Daniel as a part of our larger study of kings and prophets, taking the history of Israel and then looking at the prophets in the context of that history, so that their message kind of makes sense in the flow of events, all the way from the earliest days of David and Solomon and the prophet Samuel down through the fall of the southern kingdom, the prophets of the captivity, and then those that came back in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and we'll end up at Malachi, which closes out the New Testament. But we find ourselves in Daniel, and we're at chapter 8. This is the vision of the ram and the goat.

We'll take just a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer and ask that God's Spirit will superintend and help us make good use of this time and understand this passage. Shall we pray? Father, thank You for this opportunity to spend time together in fellowship and looking at the truth of Your Word and hoping to gain an understanding of it that will be meaningful to us as we live our lives day by day, seeking to be pleasing in Your sight, to learn what we should know, to cultivate that fruit of faith that reflects Your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus. We pray that You'll be with us as we look at this portion of Your Word tonight and bless it to each one's heart.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, this chapter fills most interpreters with some sober trepidation because it is one of the most difficult chapters in the whole Bible, certainly one of the most difficult sections of prophecy.

How do I know that? Am I just saying that because I had a hard time with it? Well, if you look at the end of this chapter, I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days. Daniel, the greatest prophet, the greatest interpreter of visions and dreams in the entire Old Testament, after the angel Gabriel explained this to him, fainted and was sick for days. So, I can only hope to touch the hem of the garment of what's going on in this chapter.

I don't want to faint and be sick for days. But that's what Daniel got out of this by the time he thought about it. So, how could it be such a shocking chapter that the guy who slept in the lion's den would have this reaction? Let's read it and see what it says.

In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar, a vision appeared to me, to me, Daniel. Now, we saw chapter 7, and you remember the first verse of that, where he had the vision of the four beasts, the bear with the ribs and the strange lion and the wings and all of that. When did that take place? What did 7.1 say? First year of Belshazzar.

Now, here's my question. We looked at that chapter 7, and Daniel had this vision of the beasts, and it was okay, these are empires that are coming up. You're going to have Nebuchadnezzar.

He's the lion with the eagle's wings. Then the next one with the bear and the one shoulder higher, that's going to be the Medes and the Persians. And then he sees a leopard with little bird wings on its back.

It's very fleet and very quick and lots of live attack power. And then he saw a fourth beast that was very dreadful and terrible. And this is in the first year of the guy that sees the handwriting on the wall and is taken out by Darius the Mede.

So, at least three years before all of that takes place, you have Daniel chapter 7. So he gets this vision, and you remember he didn't feel too well after he got this one either. In verse 15 of 7, I was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. So he came near and asked one of these heavenly bystanders, what is going on with this? I wish to know the truth in verse 19 about this.

And in verse 28, this is the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed, and I kept the matter in my heart. So, first year of Belshazzar, he gets that experience, and it troubles him.

Now we're in chapter 8, in the third year. So, two years have gone by, right? What sort of relief, what happened in those two years is my question. In the first year, he has this troubling vision, and then he gets nothing for two years.

Two years is a long time. What is this, 2017? What was going on back in May of 2015? I can't even remember. But two years is a long time.

And for two years, it's like a spiritual drought. Daniel gets nothing. No dream, no vision, no angels coming to, how are you coming along understanding chapter 7? He gets nothing.

So then, in the third year, he gets this vision after the one that appeared to me the first time. See how he's just been in limbo since the first one, for 24 months, two solid years. I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam.

Shushan, of course, this is going to be the capital of the Persian Empire. This is where Esther is going to hang out some years hence. But this is about 150 miles away from where he is, down in Babylon.

The Medes and Persians have not yet become the dominant empire. And so he's transported in place, but you get the idea that he's also being transported in time. He's going to the next capital.

He's been living in Babylon all this time, and he's still in Babylon with Belshazzar. But now he's in Shushan. And he seems to know where he is.

Maybe he went there on a diplomatic mission or something, in his duties with the kingdom of Babylon. I lifted my eyes, verse 3, I saw there standing by the side of the river was a ram, which had two horns. The two horns were high.

One was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. And I'm going to fill in as we

go, since we're pressed for time here. But this is a picture of that coming Medo-Persian Empire.

The Medes are there first, but the Persians who come last end up being stronger. So the horn that kind of comes second winds up being longer and stronger. So you get the idea right away, especially from our perspective.

This ram represents the Medo-Persian Empire, and these two horns are its two parts, one stronger than the other. Verse 4, I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him. And this is the growth of that empire, military conquest.

Nor was there any that could deliver from his hand. He did according to his will and became great. Now, when he pushes westward, if you think about where Persia is, this is modern-day Iran.

And so if he pushes westward, that's going over toward Asia Minor, right? And if he pushes northward, that's up whatever is north of Iran. I'm real fuzzy on that geography, but it doesn't concern me. It's somebody up north.

But what happens when he pushes southward? What's south of them? Now you're getting into Holy Land territory. You're getting into Palestine where the people are hoping to return, right? This is the pleasant land. This is the land of Israel.

Daniel and the people who have been in captivity, and Daniel's counting the weeks and the years that Jeremiah foretold, 70 years of captivity. Daniel's watching the clock and the calendar. He's hoping to go back.

He's hoping that Israel is restored and renewed. This is the hope and the aspiration of the people of God, right? So when this ram, which is clearly future, pushes to the south and nobody can withstand, what's the bottom line of all this? It doesn't say, and behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah rose up and ripped the neck out of that ram and tore his two horns off and beat him over the head with them. It doesn't say any of that, does it? The people of God are not doing well in this prophetic vision.

Okay, we're not captives, but we're going to be trampled and gored by this ram? He's pushing to the south and nobody can stop him. We're watching for what it is that makes Daniel so troubled that he faints and gets sick. Well, the first thing you notice is, you don't see Israel doing well in this vision up to this point.

As I was considering, just like we stopped and did, we're considering, I don't see my people coming out of this smelling like a rose. As I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west. So this thing has been pushing north, west, and south.

Well, somebody in the west pushes back and now here's this goat. Across the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground. This reminds you of the leopard with the wings.

It's traveling very fast. And this, of course, is, in the immediate expectation, the Greek Empire. Male goat, without touching the ground.

There's never been a conquest that covered as much ground, was as rapid and complete as Alexander the Great. That's why he's the Great. And this is a foretelling, a prophecy of that.

The goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And the notable horn is Alexander himself. He came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing by the river, and ran at him with furious power.

And I saw him confronting the ram. He was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him, and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.

Well, if you want to go back and review the history, and I do not have time, but there are several really significant and well-known battles that took place between the Medo-Persian Empire and Alexander. And this is looking ahead to those. And the Persians were crushed, destroyed in these confrontations.

This is the unexpected and sudden death of Alexander at age 28. Just when you think this horn is at its strength and its height, and he's had these tremendous victories, he's snapped off and he's dead. Well, whose is this tremendous kingdom that he has just assimilated by these rapid and daring and brilliant conquests? Well, he's got four generals, if I can remember them, Ptolemy, Seleucus, Lysimachus, and Cassander.

And these four generals are going to split up the territory, and it's going to basically divide into these four entities. So you have Ptolemy, of course, ends up with Egypt and the southern part of the area. You have Cassander and Lysimachus getting other parts, and then Seleucus is going to get the part that encompasses, eventually, the area of Palestine or the Holy Land.

So that's leading up to what is coming here. These four horns grow up toward the four winds of heaven, and out of one of them, and this is the Seleucus horn, out of one of them comes a little horn, which grows exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious or the beautiful. And this is Israel.

And this little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes. He's Antiochus IV. He's of this Seleucid or Seleucid line.

And what happens is the reason that the Greek Empire continued as long as it did is by dividing it, there was a kind of balance. They kept each other in check. And when the Seleucids, the earlier Antiochus kings, I, II, and III, tried to expand and overtake some of the rest of it, the others would attack them and put them back in line.

And Ptolemy and Seleucus, their lines fought. And the Seleucids had tried to come down into

Egypt. I'm greatly summarizing here.

But they got pushed back. And Antiochus IV, who is Antiochus Epiphanes, had tried to go down and take some Egyptian territory, and he got stopped. And the others said, look, you can have a little bit of territory, but you can't have that.

Go home. And not wanting to be ganged up on by the other three lines, he said, well, okay, I'll go. But he was really unhappy and disappointed because he had visions of being the next Alexander.

And, of course, he wouldn't ever be that and could not. So, as he is traveling through the Holy Land, he is in a foul frame of mind. He is bitter and he is ugly and he wants to take it out on somebody.

And as he is retreating back to his homeland, he finds himself in Jerusalem. And this is where you get the hogs slaughtered in the temple and these horrible regulations that were passed. He stationed troops there.

And because they are in his part of the kingdom, he wants to be sure there is no fulfillment of Daniel's hope and of the rest of the Israelites' hope that they once again become an independent nation with power. And so he wants to break them. And one of the ways to break a nation is to break its institutions.

You break down its culture. If it's got a religious foundation, you break down that religion. And so Antiochus not only desecrated the temple, but he passed laws.

I'll just give you one of them as an example. He outlawed circumcision. And how do you do that? Well, he stationed troops and they would spot check.

They would just go raid a village and have all of the babies and boys come out and they would inspect them. And if there was any circumcision going on, they were killed. And he had as his goal to eliminate the religious belief, the Old Testament law observance, that was the foundation of those people.

And he did all kinds of things like unto that. So this is the little horn speaking great things. However, watch what happens here in this vision.

It says in verse 10, this little horn grew up to the host of heaven and cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground and trampled them. Now, Antiochus never went into space. And you know that this stars and the host is talking about the angelic realm.

And right here is where the prophecy leaves the ground and becomes polyvalent. It has more than one meaning. All of this, and let me just say this in general about prophecy.

The things that we see in the Word of God are there not because they are unique and one-time events. It's because by looking at them, we learn patterns. And we learn about things that God

does over and over again.

He is consistent. And so if He judges evil with the flood, any gross overgrowth of evil is going to be judged. He says, I'll never again destroy the earth by a flood.

He puts a rainbow in the sky. But He has wiped out the Canaanites when they got into child sacrifice and bestiality and all kinds of other heinous things. God wiped them out and He used the flood of the incoming Israelites under Joshua to do it.

And this pattern repeats. And even down through history, when evil becomes too concentrated and too great, God will judge it and take it out for the preservation of the human race. It's not time for the race to destroy itself, and so God will take action.

That's a pattern. And there are these patterns that you can observe in the grand sweep, and then they can be applicable even at a personal level. If there are nations that are oppressing Israel and Israel cries out to God and God gives them relief, we expect that in our circumstances, when they press us on every side, we cry out to God, God is going to give us relief.

Prophecy is of that nature. And some of it has a more close overlay than others. This is one of those where, as you look at the immediate future in the next few hundred years for Daniel, it is a stereo vision because it is not only that, but it looks ahead across a valley of time to the time of the end.

How do I know that? Because it says it coming up. But there is a valley that is not in view. This is the valley of the Roman Empire.

Remember in the earlier vision of Nebuchadnezzar, you had the legs of iron and then the feet of iron mixed with clay? Well, we don't see the head, Nebuchadnezzar, and we don't see the legs of Rome in this vision. All we are seeing is the middle. In Nebuchadnezzar, it was the shoulder and arms of silver and then the belly and thighs of brass were the Greeks, Alexander.

Well, now here, that top and bottom are not in view and you are looking right at the center. So, as he starts talking about the hosts of heaven and says in verse 11, he exalted himself as high as the prince of the host. Well, who is the prince of the host? That is something that would be helpful to know.

And by him the daily sacrifices were taken away and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.

Well, this just starts getting really muddy. I think it was muddy for Daniel, certainly muddy for us mortals at this distance. But what can we say about it? As soon as you start talking about this little horn, which everything has kind of made sense in terms of kingdoms and kings up to this point, but when you start getting into the hosts of heaven and things being cast down, now

we're getting into dimensions that we don't have access to.

So, let's just say that much. Something more is going on than simple kingdom versus kingdom and conquest and oppression. Something bigger is going on.

That's about as much as we can safely say right here. Because of transgression, there is a moral component at work here. It didn't say anything moral about the ram and about the goat, did it? It didn't say anything moral about the horns and the notable horn.

There was no morality, no judgment of right and wrong at all. Here, now, it says because of transgression, there is an army given to oppress the daily. And you notice sacrifice is in italic, which means there's no Hebrew equivalent there.

So, it just says to oppose the daily. Well, what is the daily? The most famous daily thing in Israel was the morning and evening sacrifice. There were lambs sacrificed at the temple morning and evening.

This is what they lost when the temple was destroyed under Nebuchadnezzar. And so, some people have said, well, this daily is the daily sacrifice. And they put the word sacrifice in.

That's what you have in your Bible. However, Daniel is in Babylon, right? What did Babylon do to the temple? What did Nebuchadnezzar do to the temple? There's not one stone upon another there. Is there any daily sacrifice going on? No.

So, how is this little horn going to oppose the daily, when in Daniel's day there is no daily? There's no place to have a daily sacrifice. So, what's another thing that daily means? How do we organize our lives? We've got a calendar, Monday through Saturday, Monday through Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Daily is our expectation.

The sun's going to rise, the sun's going to set, we're going to get up in the morning, we're going to work our day, we're going to have an evening. So, if you just take that at face value and say that whatever this is, is going to oppose the daily routine, the daily order of things. All cultures and societies that I know of organize themselves around a day.

This is what we do in the morning, this is what we do through the day, this is what we do in the evening, this is what we do to bed down for the night. There is a daily order and a daily routine. And if you are in a position to disturb the hosts of heaven and bring down some of the stars, then maybe you've got enough juice to disturb sort of the natural order by which everybody reckons their lives.

This is at the very root foundation core, this shakes the foundations almost literally of the earth. And you could imagine in our day this would be something to do with physics, something to do with the grand scheme of things. That's about as much as we can safely say.

I know daily means one day comes after another, right? I don't have a word for sacrifice here.

And I'm not inclined to think that it's sacrifice because there is no such thing in Daniel's day. And this is something that is presented to Daniel for his benefit.

He knows what a ram is and what a goat is, and he knows what horns are, and he knows what kingdoms and empires are. He works for one and will work for several. So notice that in the beginning of verse 12, because of transgression, here is a moral component.

And at the end of the verse, truth is cast to the ground. How do you cast truth to the ground? You know, Pilate's famous question, what is truth? It's a good one. I wish I had the answer right here.

What is truth that is being cast to the ground? Well, this just seems like complete gobbledygook. And here's my ultimate question to you. It's a question I ask myself.

I have to ask myself these questions before I ask you so that I can offer some sort of an answer. Otherwise, we just all go away shrugging our shoulders. But let me ask you this.

We're Christians, we're believers in the Lord Jesus. We're trying to live our lives, please the Lord, looking forward to when He returns, takes us to Himself. We hope to survive the judgment with some portions of a white robe of righteousness or whatever.

So how does this help me? Dusty old prophet back in Babylon, third year, gets this vision. Rams and goats. Seleucids and Alexander the Great and all that.

And I think, well, you know, if I'm a history buff, this can be interesting, and it'd be doubly interesting if Daniel saw all of this before it happened. It can give me some confidence, perhaps, that God actually does speak through His prophets. And if these things are true, then other things God has said is true.

But honestly now, if you wake up tomorrow morning and you say, boy, I've got a bunch of challenges to face today. You know, I think I'll turn over to Daniel chapter 8. That's going to really fire my boilers up and give me some steam to get down the road. This isn't really something you would think of, would you? That would just inspire you? I mean, look at what it did to Daniel.

It didn't pep him up and he says, well, I'm 85 and I feel like I'm 40. It made him sick. And he missed work.

He couldn't do his duties for several days. And after the angel Gabriel, this is the Gabriel that spoke to Mary. This is the Gabriel that was in there telling Zechariah, John the Baptist is on the way.

Gabriel explains this to Daniel. And Daniel says at the end of that explanation, I didn't know what was going on. That's what it says.

Look at the end of the chapter. Daniel fainted and was sick for days afterward. I arose and went

about the king's business.

I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it. In other words, no one explained it. Even after it was explained to me, I didn't know any more at the end than I did at the beginning.

So my question is, why did God give Daniel this? We would assume the vision came from God, right? This is a revelation from God to Daniel, but Daniel doesn't seem to benefit from it. It doesn't strengthen him or sustain him. Or he doesn't go out and proclaim a new word to his fellow captives or send something back to the ones that are starting to return.

So what is this for? Why is it in the Bible? Watch this. I'm going to pull a rabbit out of the hat and tell you what the next four empires are going to look like or the next two. And in particular, as you keep reading... So just hold that question because I'm going to suggest an answer to it here in a minute.

But what you do know is there are these great conflicts of forces that are way beyond any of the Israelites' control, certainly beyond Daniel's control. Things are moving in an epic way and there is death and destruction. There is power and there is oppression.

There is transgression and truth is cast to the ground. Not happy days, not happy times. And so Daniel is trying to get a grip on this.

And in verse 13, I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, How long will the vision be concerning the daily sacrifice and the transgression of desolation, the giving of the sanctuary, and the host to be trampled underfoot? Now this is even more puzzling because, first of all, Daniel says, I heard a holy one speaking, but he doesn't say what he was talking about. I heard this guy talking. Then I heard another one come up to the one that was talking and evidently interrupted him.

This one is saying, well, look at that ram, look at that goat, look at those horns, look at this, look at truth going down to the ground. And this other one comes up and sort of interrupts him or at least waits for a pause and then addresses the one who is speaking and asks this question. How long will the vision be concerning, in your English here, the daily sacrifice, transgression of desolation, giving of the sanctuary, and the host to be trampled underfoot? And he said to me, we talked about this, I think, back when we did the book of Daniel some years ago.

But here's a holy one, we'll say he's an angel for convenience, he's talking. Another angel walks up and says, excuse me, how long is all this going to go on? And the guy that he asked, the angel that he asked doesn't answer the angel, he turns to Daniel and says, Daniel says, he said to me. So Daniel is trying to be an onlooker and listen to these two angels talk, but the first angel that has been talking turns to Daniel and says, for 2,300 days, then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.

And it's a form of tzedek, or tzedek, which is righteous or righteousness, until it is made righteous. Remember, because of transgression, truth is cast to the ground, and the sanctuary

is going to be trampled until it is made righteous. And it's going to be 2,300 days.

But it doesn't say days either. It says, 2,300 evenings and mornings. Why didn't he just say days? Perfectly good word yom for day, but instead he uses lila and boker, he uses evening and morning.

So this thing just piles, what was that used to say about an enigma wrapped in a mystery inside a conundrum or some such thing? That's what this seems to be. And I keep asking myself, God put this in my Bible, and all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, and righteousness, so how am I going to get righteous and corrected and instructed and make myself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, out of this? Because, honestly, I was terrible at history. The one history elective I took, I got a C-.

So, Greeks and Romans and Seleucids, I can barely remember the four empires. How does this do me any good? Well, keep reading. He gives him the time.

And you get the idea that Daniel isn't any smarter after that than he was beforehand. So it happened when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning. Isn't that what we're doing? We're seeking the meaning? So, I feel somewhat relieved that even somebody as high a horsepower as Daniel felt just like me.

I don't think he was doing any better than we are. Seeking the meaning, suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man, and I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, which is a river there by Shushan, who called and said, Gabriel, make this man understand the vision. So he came near where I stood, he Gabriel, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face, but he said to me, Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end.

All right. Again, there's this real odd feeling of being a bystander in a larger conversation. There's not just a voice that says, Oh, Daniel, here's what the vision means.

There's a man's voice that speaks out of the river and says, Gabriel, I mean, if the voice is speaking out of the river, why doesn't that voice explain it? But the voice says, Gabriel, you go explain it. In the same way that somebody goes and asks the angel who is speaking, give an answer to this question, and he turns to Daniel and gives it. And one thing you can say about this is that God uses intermediaries to communicate.

On very rare occasions, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, that happened twice. Outside of that, God sends a prophet. He will send a communicator.

He will send a man of God in the Old Testament. He will send an apostle or somebody, and in this age, there are those who have been given communication gifts, and God speaks through them. Many times I think we want an answer to a prayer, we have a concern, and we want, you know, we have an instinct for, well, God, give me a sign that you hear me, that you're going to

do something.

Speak in my heart. Let me hear your voice speaking or whatever. Even Daniel, who himself is a prophet, who himself has dreams and visions, gets a communicating guy detailed to go speak to him and explain to him what the revelation of God means.

And it is, I think, a significant point that when we want illumination about God and His will for us, we should look to those He has designated to communicate. And that, of course, is a process in itself. Who's faithful? Who's right? Who's goofing it up? And that can be a process of finding the right one.

But God obviously wants intermediaries to speak and communicate and explain revelations that are given to His people. And when Daniel asks, God sends somebody to explain. By the way, remember Saul of Tarsus when he struck down on the Damascus Road? Who does he see? Whose voice does he hear? It's the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks. Right? And so here's the future Apostle Paul face-to-face with the Lord Jesus Christ going blind in the process. And what does Jesus say? Go into town, there's a guy there who's going to explain to you.

God details a communicator in the street called Straight to explain to Paul, you tell him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. Jesus doesn't tell him. Jesus doesn't have to sit down for three or four hours.

There is a communicator who is given. Remember when the centurion was praying? And God sends Peter to the centurion to go down there and speak. The house of Simon the Tanner.

There are communicators who are detailed by God to bring this information. So you have to hope that along with the request for elimination, for guidance, for wisdom, we ask that God will help us to identify those sources that he has provided. We look to his word.

We look to those who communicate the word. We look to fellow believers who can speak the truth in love. Godly counsel is a wonderful thing.

But there are provisions made of this nature. So Daniel hears this voice and he comes near. Gabriel comes near in verse 17.

And in verse 18 he says, As he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground, but he touched me and stood me upright. So, what does this verse mean? In the third year of Belshazzar, Daniel had this vision and he had it while he was asleep. And he was face-planted on the ground.

In that vision, he sees the ram and the goat. He sees and hears these angelic personages talking 2,300 days. Then he hears this voice coming from the banks of the Ulai.

Again, this is, you know, things coming out of rivers and coming out of the sea. You see this in

Revelation a lot. But the voice says, Gabriel, go make this man understand what he just saw.

Well, Gabriel comes in real life. Gabriel is God's messenger who comes and stands on planet Earth and communicates. So, this is Daniel waking up.

He's been on the ground. He's been asleep. And Gabriel wakes him up and says, look, I'm here to explain what you just saw.

Interestingly, Daniel here is God's people. He's put for them. He's a prophet.

They don't have a king anymore. But he is as much a leader as Israel has got at this point. And you know how God does with kings.

King Herod stands in for the people in his treatment of John the Baptist and what he ultimately decides. Here, Daniel, if you see him as symbolic of the people in captivity, waiting for the deliverance of God and so on, Daniel is asleep. But for these events that are about to be explained to him, he is awakened.

What is going to happen to the nation of Israel at the time of the end? The nation that has been gone now for nearly 2,000 years, it's been asleep with its face on the ground. And it is going to be awakened. There is going to be a nation of Israel in the tribulation period.

And so this is sort of a symbolic reference to the fact that the nation is going to be gone and be asleep. And there's going to be a lot of other empires rising and falling in their absence. And you think, well, has God cast off his people? Question in Romans.

Paul asks it. Has God cast off his people? Let me foreknow. Has he broken off the branches and they're never going to be crafted back in? Gabriel comes and says, Daniel, look, even as I wake you up and get you up off the ground, that's what's going to happen with the people of God.

That's about as far as we can go tonight with this before we get into what it means in terms of the future, because it not only had a fulfillment with Antiochus, but it has a fulfillment with the Antichrist in the tribulation. And you're probably familiar enough with that to kind of sketch it out. But back to my question, so what? Why do I care about all of this? What is the big pattern here? There's always something that speaks at our personal level, just as it does in the wider context.

In this life, Jesus said, you will have victory and glory and prosperity. Is that what he said? In this world, you shall have what? Tribulation. What is this going to be a prophecy of? The tribulation, the great, the athlipsis, it's heathlipsis, he megalay in Greek.

It's a megathlipsis, it's a mega-tribulation. Jesus said, in this world you'll have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. While you're in the world, you're going to have tribulation.

When does Jesus overcome the world? In the time of the end. So as long as you're in the world,

and as long as the world is rams and goats and breaking horns and dividing of kingdoms, he says, don't expect the kingdom to come back. Don't expect David and Solomon.

Don't expect the land flowed with milk and honey. If that's true nationally, it can also be true individually. So you think, well, this whole Christianity thing is kind of a bust.

If I'm going to suffer tribulation and have slings and arrows of outrageous fortune just like everybody else, what's the point? There is vindication at the time of the end. These things are necessary. Let me give you five quick points of observation here.

They're general points, but as you look at this, and you say, what's it here for? Number one, you can definitely say, without any fear of contradiction, that the course of history, as far as nations rising and falling, powers coming and going, that is foreknown by God, and it is fixed. When God tells Daniel, the Medes and Persians are going to persist for a while and prevail for a while, and then they're going to get crushed by the Greeks. Well, it hasn't happened yet, but it is a certainty.

Is it ever not going to happen? Can enough people get down on their knees and pray for Alexander and his horn won't be snapped off, or can they pray for the Medes and Persians and they won't be trampled by the goat? No way. It's fixed. These things are fixed in the foreknowledge and the providence of God, these big events.

Many of the circumstances in our lives and the environment in which we live are fixed. They're not going to unfill the landfills. They're not going to take the mercury out of the oceans.

They're not going to rebuild the ozone layer. These things have happened and it was foreknown by God, and we live in this environment. Things large and small are known ahead of time by God and allowed.

Some would even say ordained. If God says the ram is going to come and trample, and the goat is going to trample, is it not going to happen? It's fixed. So, if these things are fixed and foreknown by God, then railing against the machine is kind of a waste of time.

Praying that the nation, you know, there's people who want to get together and pray that the nation will be restored to its former glory as a Judeo-Christian, ethical, founded nation. Forget it. This nation is going to go up or down based on things other than whether or not we try to change the course of history that is ordained.

You see that here. It's foreknown all the way to the end, who's going to rise and who's going to fall. Secondly, people of God are not in a position of blessing and prosperity in this picture.

They're not immune. They're not exempt. Many of them will be bereft.

Many of them will be in poverty. Many of them are going to be scattered. They're going to have to survive in these circumstances.

God is not going to exempt them or put them in a germ-free bubble while these big events take place. They are enmeshed in it. And by the way, this is God's will.

Could God exempt them? Could God remove them? Could God rapture Daniel and all the people out before all of these things happen? He could, but He does not. Thirdly, there is a purpose in what I just said. There is a purpose in the rise and fall of power, be it at the national level or be it in our immediate periphery.

We get a job. We lose a job. We're hired.

We're fired. We're healthy. We're not healthy.

We're next to our kinfolks. We're scattered from our kinfolks. We're in circumstances we consider to be a fulfillment of a dream.

We're in circumstances we consider to be a nightmare. God does not exempt us from these things. It is His will that we go through them.

And there is a purpose in us going through it. And it is a purpose that like Daniel, in many ways, we probably cannot understand, can't grasp. We're like a child being taken down to the doctor for shots.

Doesn't make any sense to me, but there is a purpose at a level above me that makes sense to somebody who knows a whole lot more than I do and I have to operate in faith. If I can't trust what's going on in the circumstances, I have to trust those who are ordaining the circumstances. I may not trust the doctors, but I'll trust my parents who take me to them.

And if my parents think this is a good idea, I love them. I trust them. They must know something I don't and I've just got to repose confidence in things where I can't understand it.

Fourthly, God's servants in heaven know the plan. These holy ones that are standing around, talking, asking questions, the reason the second one asked the first one, say again how long this is going to last. It's for Daniel's benefit because Daniel does not know.

These holy ones know. Gabriel knows. That's why he's detailed to come down and try to explain it.

God's servants, not just God knows the plan in his inscrutable omniscience, but God's servants know the plan. Now, I'm back to why do I care about all these empires. At the point that this lifts off the ground and starts flying into the future beyond Antiochus Epiphanes, this is in the 70th week of Daniel.

This is yet future. Where are we going to be? Where are you going to be when the little horn of the Antichrist pokes up his little ugly face and starts speaking great words? Where are you personally going to be? Do you know? You're going to be standing where these holy ones are standing. So, how handy would it be to know what's going on as a servant of God? Because the

servants of God that he uses know the plan.

Well, the end time, during the tribulation, during the 70th week of Daniel, when Israel as a nation has waked up, taken its face off the ground, and is supposed to understand, just like Gabriel is explaining here, we are going to be God's servants. We're going to be doing what the angels are doing here. So, it is important for us to know the course of the seals and the trumpets and the bowls and the movement of events and the timing of events and not to be shocked when there are martyrs who's crying out from under the altar, How long, O Lord? Are we going to be crushed under the foot of this evil? Why do you let this evil persist? There is a purpose in it.

There is a reason for it. It is God's greater glory. It is our education.

It is our preparation for eternal service in the future. Why do you go to boot camp and suffer? So that you can be a much better marine or trooper or airman or sailor or whatever you are. You go through basic training that is tough and hard and sometimes seemingly senseless.

But, people more experienced and wiser have orchestrated this training with an end in view. God has orchestrated this time where the people of God do not prevail personally, nationally with a greater end in view. Finally, there is ultimate vindication.

There is, it's just like it says over in, what is it? Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you. What are the last three words? Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time. In due time.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. God's got a mighty hand. He's got control of it.

He's not going to let the goat go where the goat is not supposed to go or the ram. He's not going to let the horns grow too long or too great. He's going to let the little horn come up.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Humility says, I accept what I do not understand because I know in whom I have believed and I've persuaded that He is able to keep what I've committed to Him which is what I don't understand against that day. Due time.

2,300 days. Whatever the 2,300 evenings and mornings are, it is time. It's time in some measure.

And it is after that time that God is going to reconcile all things. He's going to restore all things. The Lord Jesus Christ is going to rule.

We will rule and reign with Him if we have been faithful. What is the upshot of it? Do I understand Daniel chapter 8? No, I do not. Do you understand Daniel chapter 8? I'm guessing not.

Did Daniel understand chapter 8? Probably not. What does that tell me? We don't have to understand it. We have to trust the one who tells us there's going to be a lot that doesn't make

sense to you.

But trust me, I know what I'm doing. Right? Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and in due time, you're raised up out of the mud. Your face is lifted off from this scary makes-me-sick vision and there is opportunity for service.

There is understanding. There is a purpose in it and it will come clear to us at that point. Well, we'll look at Gabriel's words.

And one thing, if you want to read this before next time, here's my suggestion. By way of observation, we observe, we interpret, we apply. Well, in observation, look at the space that is spent in the vision on the ram and the goat and their horns and their interaction and their trampling and all the rest of it versus the little horn.

And then look at Gabriel's explanation. How much time does he spend explaining what took up most of the first part of the chapter? He dispenses with that and then he spends most of his time on what was a very small part of the description of the vision. Why is that? He got a big part here and a little part here and then in the explanation there's a little explanation for the big part and there's a big explanation for the little part.

So I've already told you what to observe. But look at that and see if you can figure out why. My question is, why? It's one thing to see it but there's a reason why it's that way and I want to know what that is.

So I'm going to ask you and you can tell me next week. But we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the obscure passages that challenge us and that are difficult that remind us that we are made of dust. We are temporal and temporary but you have granted to us eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ and our time here is one of preparation and one of seeking to grow in grace and in knowledge so that when we do enter into those higher and greater realms we will be useful servants. We will be able to find a place in your plan and purpose of service and of opportunity to reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus.

We thank you for him and his work on the cross on our behalf to give us these opportunities and these potentials. And we pray that your Holy Spirit will sustain us as we go through our circumstances great and small and that we'll be ever mindful of your grace and your purpose for us in this life and in the ages to come. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.