# Kings and Prophets 17-05-11

This is Thursday, the 11th of May, 2017. We continue our study of kings and prophets tonight in the book of Daniel, resuming in chapter eight, hopefully moving into chapter nine. Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer, prepare ourselves for the study of the word of God and our fellowship in that spiritual truth.

Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful for this opportunity to spend time in fellowship and seeking a better understanding of the truth of your word, and most importantly, how it affects the way we think and prioritize and employ our time and our resources. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will minister this portion of your word to each heart this evening. May we all be drawn closer to the example of the Lord Jesus in obedience and faithfulness and in keeping our eyes on our future hope.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. Well, we saw last time that Daniel chapter eight is a bit of a turning point. One of the most notable clues to that is that, as you may recall, Daniel chapter one is in the Hebrew language, and then beginning in chapter two with the vision of Nebuchadnezzar and extending through the end of chapter seven, the book of Daniel is recorded for us in Aramaic.

But beginning in chapter eight, verse one, in other words, the vision that Daniel saw in chapter seven, that was still recorded in Aramaic, but in Daniel eight, when he has the second vision two years later, this picks up again in the Hebrew language. And of course, we would expect this to have some significance. And so I ask myself, well, what is that significance? Because it seems to me that he had a somewhat similar vision in chapter seven.

You go back to chapter two and the vision that Nebuchadnezzar has with the head of gold and the chest and arms and so on, and well, into chapter three, actually, when he makes the image of gold and wants Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to bow down to it, but chapter two has the vision, then chapter seven has another, and chapter eight is a third, and they all revolve around the notion of world empire and the environment in which humanity is going to be functioning and making its decisions in the near term future and extending into such a distance that you cannot really perceive it. So here's my question for myself and for you, possibly. Chapter two, the image, then in chapter seven, Daniel saw the beasts and then the ancient of days, and one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven.

But now in chapter eight, we've returned to the Hebrew language and we have the vision of the ram and the goat that we saw last time. So from a big picture standpoint, I'll give you a few seconds to muse on what the significance of the language change here, as well as the significance of the content of these three visions might be. First two are in Aramaic, this one is in Hebrew.

Time's up. Here's, let me offer you a suggestion. First of all, the second two dreams are Daniel's

and it's bifurcated by the change in language, right? There are some other distinctives between the two visions we'll see in a moment, but we switched to this Aramaic language back with the first vision and whose vision is that? It is Nebuchadnezzar's.

He is the head of gold, right? Just in broad strokes now, here's a second quiz question for you. What is the most fundamental difference between the vision of Nebuchadnezzar and the visions of Daniel? There's something that Daniel's visions have in common that is separate and distinct from Nebuchadnezzar's vision, all of them representing sequence of empires, but what's the biggest difference in the paradigm that you notice? There is conversation, Daniel gets involved toward the end, right? Nebuchadnezzar has no clue and has to appeal to his wise men and then has to go to Daniel to explain it. But just appearance-wise, the content of the vision itself, what's the biggest difference? Everything in Daniel's visions is alive.

It's got the breath of life. Nebuchadnezzar's vision is a dead statue. And the best that Nebuchadnezzar can do in chapter three is replicate the dead statue.

He's the king, the head of gold, and he makes the image all of gold. It's the very best that mankind can produce, but it's a dead thing. It's an inanimate thing.

It is basically a giant idol where Daniel's visions are comprised of living things. Why didn't Nebuchadnezzar have a beast vision? He's going to turn into a beast a little bit later. For what purpose? He's going to eat grass and have claws and all the rest of it, until what? Until he learns that there is a God in heaven, right? The God of Israel is the one true God.

What's his problem? He's a mechanistic, materialist manipulator, if you want three Ms in a row. And that's where Aramaic began. So the times of the Gentiles, and of course, we had a setup.

You can kind of divide the book of Daniel into either chapter one through seven and chapter eight through 12, or you can see chapter one as kind of prologue, and then two through seven, which is the Aramaic section, and eight through 12 as the Hebrew section. Kind of a nice balance there. But we're trying to look at this in broad strokes.

A, we've done the book of Daniel more or less verse by verse in years gone by, and this is our kings and prophets study. And B, we want something we can remember later on. If I think back two or three months from now, six months from now, a year from now, and say, well, I know I've been through that book of Daniel at least once, maybe twice.

What is the big idea? What is it for? And we sort of began to try to answer that question for ourselves last time. Here's what I would suggest to you as kind of a starting point, and by no means are we exhausting its value or its treasure, but the signal, the change into Aramaic, that's the non-Israel language. God's word, God's covenant, the Torah, and the Nevi'im and the Ketuvim, when it is finally assembled, is all in Hebrew with just these rare exceptions.

So this is the language between God and his people. This is the language of life. It is the language of salvation.

It is the language of deliverance. It is the language of heaven communicating to God's people. So even though Aramaic is a cousin language, it's a foreign language.

It's the language of Syria and the Assyrians and those who are far off. So when you switch into that language, you think, well, at a communicating, at a, what am I trying to say? Meta something, at a meta level, at a level above just the text. There's a word I can't think of the last half of that starts with meta, but there's physics and then there's metaphysics.

You know what I mean? Well, there's communication at the basic level, but then there is communication on another channel, on a back channel, on a sideband, so to speak, and we watch for these clues in terms of form, in terms of allusion, in terms of parallel to other known things that are not explicitly referenced. This happens a lot in the New Testament with very brief, but pointed allusions to the old. If you know the Old Testament to which you have just been referred, there is a whole nother level of meaning in the episode that has that reference.

That it might be fulfilled, spoken by the prophet so-and-so, or a short, quick quote. Here, this language shift, and Nebuchadnezzar being the recipient of the dream and the non-living nature of it, all speak of the godless world that is going to be given power and going to be given its time. There's nothing else standing on the plain, but this giant statue.

And these empires, no part of that is alive. It is not a godly empire with the head of gold or the shoulders and arms of silver, or the belly and thighs of brass, or the legs of iron, feet of iron mixed with clay. None of that is somehow alive.

So these are secular powers that are going to determine the environment in which God's people are going to live. They're not going to be in their own kingdom. They're not going to have a Davidic king ruling in righteousness.

They're not going to have a priesthood that is sustaining and supporting their spiritual life. They're going to be living in the times of the Gentiles. And that pertains all the way through, even through chapter seven with Daniel's first vision.

Daniel is still writing in Aramaic. He is still in the Babylon kingdom, remember, first year of Belshazzar. And he gets the vision of these four living creatures.

So looking at the difference, the content is the same. There are going to be four great empires that will follow, but the perspective is different. Instead of the material from which they are made, inanimate material, devolving and degrading in quality, this is a completely different view.

This is the, remember, we saw this when we were looking at Kings and Chronicles some months back. And you get the heavenly perspective in one account, and you get the newspaper to the Israelites account in another place, and you get the prophetic view, perhaps, from Isaiah or another one of the prophets. But it's the same event viewed by different eyewitnesses, a different perspective.

We saw this in the Revelation, with the seals being the earthly view, the trumpets being the angelic view, those who are in the air and control the winds and so on. And then the bowls up above everything pouring the vials of God's judgment down. Same events, all culminating in the great earthquake at the end, but the perspective gives you new information in the same way that a 3D model, when you rotate it, gives you information that you can't get from a static two-dimensional picture.

That's what we have going on here. So you would expect, as we look at chapter seven and chapter eight, that this new dimension of these empires, they are alive, they move, they chew, they conquer, they claw, they trample. These are their actions, their activities, where Nebuchadnezzar's view was static.

He didn't have any insight into motivation, into movement, and so on. There is a parallel here that I would suggest in the modern day with secular science and secular materialism, seeking to understand the world around us and trying to find the answers in a purely material and mechanistic way. Having no insight into the life that God has given these things and the movement of the creator God who didn't just create the heavens and the earth, but created life in and on them.

And that insight and perspective that we have as believers, it doesn't change our appreciation and understanding of the statue made of five different materials, I'm including the clay. But we incorporate that as just one level and there are many others. But when it comes to the living things, Nebuchadnezzar would have never understood that.

Daniel had a difficult time grappling with it as we have seen. So that's a little bit of background. We've got a shift here.

And now in chapter eight, as we see the ram and the goat, there is a shift back into Hebrew and there is a zoom in because we're primarily focused on the second and third beasts that were represented in chapter seven. The ram and the goat are the second and third empires. Why would this be? Why back into Hebrew? Well, what did the emissaries from Assyria wanna do when they were speaking in the Hebrew tongue outside the city walls in Hezekiah's day? We wanna talk directly to the people.

We want the people to understand this. So we're not speaking our native Aramaic, we're going to speak Hebrew. And remember the government official said, please don't speak Hebrew.

Let's keep this under our hats and in camera, so to speak. Well, that's the purpose here. This is going to pertain not so much to the Gentile world perspective, which is an overlay in chapters two through seven.

Even when you get Daniel's vision with living creatures, you're still looking at the whole sweep of Gentile domination. And it's the whole sweep. It goes all the way to the end from the Old Testament perspective.

You've got that lacuna, that valley that was not revealed. But as far as anybody knew at that time, this is all the way to the time of the end. Now, in his second vision, two years later, Daniel switches to Hebrew.

He is on a quest to understand and he's back in Hebrew to help the people of Israel understand as well. So he is transported and it says in verse two, I was in Shushan the citadel in the province of Elam. I saw in the vision that I was by the river.

This is actually the canal Ulai. And it was an irrigation ditch, a man-made thing that was dug in kind of a straight line to connect two rivers in Shushan. Shushan is a fair size city at this time, but it's not the capital of anything.

And there is no way of knowing for sure if Daniel actually was in Shushan or if he was transported in Ezekiel fashion in the vision. Scholars have debated it. There's no definitive clue.

My suggestion, my feeling is that he was transported in vision because he says, I saw in vision that I was in Shushan. And if he says in the third year of Belshazzar, I was in Shushan and then I had a vision, that would make me think he was geographically located there. And the reason that makes a difference is if he's in Babylon and he's serving in the third year of Belshazzar and then in vision he is transported to Shushan, that's going to have some significance.

It isn't referred to, again, that there's no geographical feature that's important later in the vision. He doesn't say, you know, the goat and the ram tangled in Shushan. So why is this detail even included? The transport so that the point of view of the vision is Persia is important.

At this time, they don't even know that that's going to be the capital of the Persian empire. There is no Persian empire. But later on, when people come back to the book of Daniel, they're going to say, this is an authentication.

Daniel was taken to the future and as yet unknown capital of the next empire. So this is taking God's people symbolized by Daniel himself into the future. Where has Daniel been for the last six chapters? In two through seven.

He's been in Babylon and it's the Gentile perspective and it's written in Aramaic. And this is Daniel representing God's people in the hands of the Gentiles from sort of the Gentile perspective. We're going to make them bow down.

They won't bow down. We'll put them in the fiery furnace. We tell them not to pray, they pray.

We're going to throw them in the lion's den. But when we need answers and we're perplexed and struck out of our minds and we really realize that something more is going on than we can contend with, we're going to go to the people of God to get the answer. We're going to call a Daniel and ask him a reason for the hope that is in him, so to speak.

So there's a larger paradigm that communicates some principles to us in this as the content

flows forward. So now in chapter eight, as he is transported now to the capital of the next empire and we're writing in Hebrew, this tells the people of God a couple of things. He isn't transported to Jerusalem the way Ezekiel was.

This is not a look at the sins of the people and the corruption of temple worship and the defilement of the altar and all of that from the people of God standpoint. This is where you have failed. This is transport to, and remember Daniel and Ezekiel are contemporaries and Ezekiel is transported to Jerusalem and to the temple, right? Daniel is transported to the Gentile capital.

And what does he see? He sees the geographical features there. This Ulai that connects the two rivers is going to be referred to both here and in verse 16. I heard a man's voice between the Ulai, between the canal.

This word is a really rare word in Hebrew and there are some who think it actually means gate, the Ulai gate, which would have been a, you know what gates symbolize in the ancient world, and it would have been near this canal. But in any case, it is important because it puts him not just conceptually in the next capital, but physically there. And he sees features that you can only see if you are in that city.

So if somebody says, well, how did he know he was in Shushan? How did he know that he was in the capital of the Persian empire? Well, he says, by the way, I saw the canal. And I lifted up my eyes and standing beside the river was a ram with two horns. Two horns are high, one higher than the other.

The higher one came up last. Notice how so often these beasts come up from the water, come up from the sea or come up from the river. Angels will often stand in or near the water in the river.

And again, the waters were things that people could only control in a very limited fashion. You can make a small canal and that's control. And this Ulay Canal is man dominating the water.

It's a little short canal. My recollection is it's like maybe a mile and a half long, 500 yards wide. This is man's great domination of the water.

But these empires rise up from the sea. The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest and that. So we have very little ability to control these large natural sources and forces.

So this is where the animals come from. And we sketched this out last time with the ram and the two horns and the goat with a notable horn. And we sort of left off here at verse nine out of one of the four notable ones that come up toward the four winds of heaven, out of one of them comes this notable horn, a little horn out of one of the notable horns, which in verse nine came exceedingly great toward the South, toward the East and toward the beautiful.

And he grew up to the host of heaven. And this is where we see Antiochus rising up and yet we

also see another level at which this vision functions. So why the levels and what is the content we're supposed to be getting at these levels? It's one thing to say, wow, I've got cable TV and I've got 210 different channels.

And even if I tune in a channel and say, looky there, there's the nature channel, there's the National Geographic channel. But the ultimate goal is to get the information that is flowing across that channel, right? Or the entertainment, that's the means by which it was delivered soon drops out of your mind and you're focused on what is it saying. So this is my question, in Daniel chapter seven and Daniel chapter eight, as we look at these visions of future kingdoms, what is the content communicated to God's people at that time, to God's people since that time and to God's people at the end time? Because they're all in view.

So us being somewhat in the middle, we're not in Daniel's day and we're not in the end times, what is the value, what is the profitability of this information? Let me offer you some suggestions. As I mentioned last time, and I'll give you the review of the summary points from last week, the course of history is known to God and in its broad strokes, it is fixed. And I say that carefully, broad strokes, national level, it is fixed.

Because there is a tendency toward fatalism related to the sovereignty of God in this area to say, well, I'm basically just gonna kind of float along because everything's been foreordained. It's all been figured out in the decrees of God. And at a personal and individual level, that is not the case.

How do I know that? This right here is the environment which is fixed. There will be a ram with two horns. One horn will be greater than the other.

There will be a goat who comes up with a single horn and this ram rather. Oh, and by the way, the interesting thing about the Medo-Persian Empire is the Persian kings in some of the inscription and pictorial evidence that they have found, they don't wear a gold crown like the King of England or the Queen of England. They wear a ram's head on their head.

It's a ram. You know how the Vikings have those horns coming out of their helmets sometimes? I've heard somewhere that that isn't actually true. They haven't found any Vikings that had horns coming out.

But if you read the comic strips, you are led to believe that they do. But they do have evidence that the kings of the Persians in particular, their crown, so to speak, their symbolic headdress of authority was a ram's head. And so, and of course that would not be known yet because there was no Medo-Persian Empire at the time that Daniel was writing.

But one of the reasons you have a ram here with two horns is anticipating that they will actually employ this in their royal garb. And so then the goat that comes from the West, and if you have ever seen Greek artifacts, when I was in Athens, you could buy ancient Greek artifacts for pennies, a few dollars, because they're everywhere. And most of them are grotesque and

things of a physical relationship nature.

Let me just put it that way. With disproportionate features and a lot of it, there's, in fact, if you look at the ancient mosaics, you'll see that there are a lot of goats and centaurs and things of this nature in the mythology of that day. Goats were considered to be very virile and very prolific.

And so the goat as a symbol for Greece, trust me on this, research it if you want to, although be careful, you may get more than you bargained for but goat is also very apropos. And I have been there and seen it at firsthand in that they've got trays and buckets of these little figurines and where we have Barbie and Ken and G.I. Joe and things like that. They had these grotesque figures with outsized anatomy and partly animals and mixture of people and animals.

And you just don't even want to go there but it just strikes a chord when you see this vision and you say, goat, Greece? Oh yeah, yeah, I can see that. And this single horn broken off, the four horns that come out and then the little horn that comes up. But again, what does it mean for us? Although the large landscape of history is known to God and is ordained to take its path according to the freewill decisions of the people in it, God has allowed, there are freewill decisions that God will stop.

God will prevent the Canaanites from continuing to boil and burn their children as sacrifices to Molech by sending in the Israelites. If he had not sent them in, those freewill decisions would have continued. God didn't make the Canaanites the debauched people that they were.

He allowed them to be. God allows Pharaoh to enslave Israel up to a point. After that point, God will deliver them and he will overrule the freewill of Pharaoh.

Pharaoh pursues, Pharaoh sends his army to try to wipe them out. And the army is drowned in the sea. God will overrule freewill, but God will also allow freewill to function within bounds.

So the large boundaries, think of the rules of football. You have a field defined. You say, how many men can be on the field? You define the downs and the rules of conduct and misconduct during that game.

And you would say, well, so the game of football is just all foreordained. No, within that, the teams and the coaches and the quarterbacks and the players will make all kinds of decisions within those confines. And if they step outside those confines, there will be a penalty, or in some cases, they'll be removed from the game.

Well, history is similar. The sovereignty of God is such that the playing field has been defined. The rules and how long somebody can stay on the field have all been defined.

The quarter is 15 minutes long. You're gonna have your season in the sun. It is appointed unto man, three score and 10 wants to die.

After that, the judgment. There are these fixed elements. But within that, there is the exercise of freewill.

So what does this tell us? History is not going to be favorable to the people of God. These empires and these governments are not looking out for religious freedom in general or the people of God being able to function in the light of the word of God in an unrestricted and unmolested fashion. It is hostile.

There is violence. There is purpose and there is life and movement. Secular forces bumping against secular forces.

There will be wars and rumors of wars. There is conflict. There is tribulation.

There is trial. God has ordained that. That's the playing field on which the people of God operate.

So it's kind of like, you know, in the New Testament when it says to not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that you occasionally face. Jesus told the disciples in this world, you will have tribulation. Do not think it is unusual when you are tested.

There's no testing that befalls you, but such as is common to man and particularly common to believers. So we are not looking for conquest and empire in the Christian world or in our spiritual life in the sense of I'm going to bind Satan and I'm gonna grab prosperity and I'm gonna succeed and I'm gonna overcome and I'm gonna be better than and farther than and higher than all of the unbelievers in my periphery because God is on my side. That is seemingly an obvious point, but why is it obvious? Because we have passages like this that tell us God is allowing the God of this world to have sway, to try out his proposal.

He says he can run a world without God and without godly principles and without righteousness. He says that he can have everybody go along to get along. I will be like God.

I will be like the most high. I can have great hordes of free will operating under a different set of principles than God's and it will all come out fine. God says, fine, I will turn him loose.

Why is Satan the God of this world? Did he get that by right of conquest? Did he overcome God in some fashion? Did he beat God in some contest? God has ordained it. God has allowed it. And this is a smaller manifestation of the same principle.

They have sway for a time. In our lives, in this life, the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune have sway. We are going to have health problems.

We are going to have people problems. We're going to have job problems. We are going to have weather problems.

We are going to have circumstantial issues that are like the ram and the goat, that are like the bear and the leopard and the lion with wings that comes down and stands like a man and so

on. These things are going to happen. And the hope that we have as believers and as the people of God is not that we will fend off, overcome, rise above and conquer these things.

Our assignment is to endure, to do the best we can with the opportunities that we have. And if we are stopped in one area, find another, to look to God because he is the author of life. And if he has given life to these entities and allowed them, this is the godly perspective that begins in chapter seven in Daniel's visions and extends into chapter eight more personally in the Hebrew language.

God gives these things life and breath. They wouldn't be here. You think about somebody's child that is mauled by a wild animal or a pit bull or hauled off into the woods by a bear and chewed up or in Africa hauled away by lions.

And you think these are God's creatures. They wouldn't even exist if it weren't for God. How could it go in and grab a human? Doesn't God know about this? How could that be allowed? Well, in the broad sweep of history, it's the same principle.

God has ordained that these things have sway for a time. What's going to happen in the millennial kingdom in terms of lions? Lions are going to lay down with the lamb and eat straw like an ox, right? Because God can control the lions. God can change their programming and their digestion and everything else.

But what does the word of God tell us here? He is not doing that now. Don't expect it. Don't ask for it.

Don't get disappointed when it doesn't happen. Don't create a false expectation. Don't put God to the test.

I dare you to take this lion and make him eat straw like an ox and lay down with a lamb. God can do that when he chooses. What is it that Daniel was facing when he refused to stop praying in his open window? Lions, and did the lions eat him? No.

Did Daniel count on that? That was God's choice, right? So in broad strokes, that's what we have going on here. But in verse 15, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision, and oh, by the way, let me just go back up to verse 14. You remember the conversation between the two angels? And for Daniel's benefit, the one that has been asked the question turns to him and says to him, 2,300 days.

Oh my gosh, I have sailed the seas of dead ink that have been spilled over the 2,300 days this past week. It is like water world. There's no continents left.

It's nothing but ink. Nobody can agree. There's no solid ground anywhere on the 2,300 days.

I have read everybody from Adams to Wolvard and Zuck, A to Z, and I'm here to tell you, nobody has a clue on the 2,300 days except me. I do have one glimmer of a thought. It doesn't

line up with anything.

You try to fit it into the days of Antiochus. Daniel wouldn't care about the days of Antiochus anyway, and it's too important. It's like the 70 weeks.

Would the 70 weeks only be a short term? We realize that the Daniel 70 weeks coming up in Daniel chapter nine is hugely important and spans all the rest of human history, right? It's huge. Well, this is like unto that, and there's such an emphasis. He doesn't just say, and I heard someone say it would last 2,300 days.

No, we have an angel speaking, and another angel comes up to him and interrupts him and asks him the question, and then he turns to Daniel. This is the prosody here, the form, the literary structure here tells you what this guy says when he says 2,300 evenings and mornings is really important. It's not a detail, not a nice to know for a few people hundreds of years ago.

This is at the end of the vision where it spans, and because a heavenly entity, he doesn't say, and I saw the ram with the broken horn and the four replacements walk around for 2,300 days. Somebody in heaven says this, it's a heavenly perspective, long-term, big deal pronouncement. This is why people have worked on it so hard and why it's so frustrating to not arrive at any sort of consensus.

I will tell you what I think, and it's gonna be a huge letdown and disappointment, perhaps, but here's what I think. Evenings and mornings is the way it is specifically couched. Lilas and bokers, right? Haven't seen that since Genesis 1. What happens in Genesis 1 in the lilas and the bokers? Everything is created.

What would I expect at the end of the evenings and the mornings if I am sensitive to a chiastic structure of history? If it was created in the beginning lilas and bokers, it's probably gonna get destroyed in the ending lilas and bokers if we've got sort of a chiasm here or perhaps renewed after them, right? So I would say if the first six evenings and mornings are the time of beginnings, this 2,300 takes you all the way to the time of the ending of that whole paradigm, the way things have been. That's my first suggestion. All of this is suggestion.

Nobody agrees with what I am about to tell you, so you can give it all the weight that it deserves. Secondly, what is the rest of the verse? Everybody's trying to figure out what the 2,300 evenings and mornings are, but what does the rest of the verse say? Then the sanctuary will be cleansed. So at the beginning of this 2,300 evenings and mornings clock, what happened? Antiochus Epiphanes defiled and destroyed the temple precincts, tore down the altar and replaced it.

In fact, the Maccabees, it was so defiled that when the Maccabees finally came in, they had to tear down the altar and rebuild it. They had to scrape the walls out of the inside of the second temple and reconstruct them, the rebuilt temple under Nehemiah and those guys. It was so defiled, they couldn't even just clean it.

They had to tear it off and rebuild a lot of it. Well, that desecration began with Antiochus, and we know when Antiochus did this. We know the year.

We know the day. So if that is the beginning of the clock, then 2,300 is gonna be the end of the clock. So in Antiochus' day, which is circa 167 BC, he comes in and does this awful destruction.

And it's recorded in 1 Maccabees 1, verses 44 through 49. The king sent letters by messengers. I gave you a little bit about the no circumcision anymore.

He directed them to follow customs strange to the land, forbid bird offering and sacrifice and drink offerings in the sanctuary, profaned sabbaths and feasts, defiled the sanctuary and the priests, built altars in sacred precincts and shrines for idols, sacrificed swine and unclean animals, and leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so they should forget the law and change all the ordinances. That has ever been Satan's goal strategically is to get the people of God to forget who they are and why they're here.

And Antiochus has the little horn reflecting, foreshadowing the Antichrist who is going to break off the sacrifice and offering in the middle of the covenant week at the end, right? Anybody who doesn't obey the command of the king shall die. It's as much as your life is worth to stay obedient. This all takes place in the 160s BC.

The 164 is when Antiochus died, and that was three years after he defiled the temple. If you take the 2,300 days as literal and say it was six point something years and go back, that's too far. It takes you to 171 BC.

And if you say, well, it's the time of Antiochus. It's from the time he does something until he's no longer the power. Well, he's no longer the power when he dies.

In 164, you go back six years and it's 171. The only thing that happened that year is Oneus III, the last legitimate Levitical high priest, was killed in that year. But the desecration did not happen until 167.

Specifically, December the 25th, 167 BC. Christmas Day, 167 BC is the beginning of the 2,300 days. People have said, well, I can't get anything to match 2,300 days going back to 171 or going forward.

I can't get any 6.3 years or 6.7 years, whatever it is. It just doesn't fit anything. What if we take the evenings and mornings as meaning that it's only half that time? It's 2,300 evenings and mornings, meaning it's 1,150 days.

You're adding all the mornings and all the evenings together, divide by two, you get days. Well, that doesn't work either. Every other ingenious scheme, it kind of reminds me of trying to get the 69 weeks of Daniel to time out right into the career of Jesus, where, well, if you take the 69 weeks and multiply by seven, and then 360 days, and then divide by 365, and you remember

that whole math drill? I'm utterly unpersuaded by that.

Here's what I think. When you see days in Scripture, they can stand for almost any period of time, any reasonably rational period of time. So in Genesis, they could be literal 24-hour days, and many people believe that they are, and they well could be.

They could also be like the day of the Lord, which spans over, one day of the Lord is 1,000 years. The day of the Lord is the Millennial Kingdom. The day of the Lord is the last 3 1⁄2 years of the Tribulation, it's 3 1⁄2 years.

Day means a fixed and known time period. When you look at the 70 weeks coming up in the next chapter, those weeks are weeks of days, right? A week is seven days. But we say, well, those are years.

Those are weeks of years. So the days are years in Daniel 9, by almost everybody's reckoning, right? Okay, so stick with me on this, and prepare yourself for a pouty lower lip. If days are years in Daniel 9, I on my own recognizance say days are years in Daniel 8. If days are years in Daniel 8, then this time of desecration between the time, I think Antiochus Epiphanes put the stake through the heart, whatever hope Israel ever had of resuming worship that was pleasing in God's sight, died when Antiochus showed what it was.

There was no ark in the Holy of Holies. He defiled the whole rest of the place. If there'd been an ark, he would have carried it off, but it was already gone.

It left in the days of Jeremiah. But from the time of that defilement that is future, and based on what Daniel sees in Shushan, that starts the clock in 167. What is, so 2,300 years, what is 2,300 years minus 167? I get 2,133 by my mental math, right? You lose a year going across the zero boundary because we have no year zero.

So that's 2,132, right? If I was forced at gunpoint to pick a time when the millennial kingdom is going to begin, it's about 115 years off from now. That would be my educated estimate based on this passage, because there has not been a sanctified, God-recognized sacrifice in Jerusalem since Antiochus, not a one. That's why Jesus was so adamantly opposed to the Pharisees and the Sadducees making much over all of the stuff they were doing in the temple.

You notice Jesus talked about the offering that the lady brought, the mites, the widow's mites. Did Jesus ever say anything about the sacrifice in Jerusalem? Did he ever point out and say, see that Passover that they're sacrificing this year? Well, next year, that's gonna be me. Jesus never refers at any time to any of the sacrifices going on at the temple that I remember, why? It is invisible to God.

There has not been a God-recognized altar in Israel since actually before Antiochus, but this clock of 2,300 days, how long is this gonna last from this defilement that you see here in the vision? 2,300 days, 2,300 years. So if there is legitimate sacrifice and offering in the, you've still got some play there at the end, does that mean 2,300 years until the beginning of Daniel's 70th

week? And I think that's a possibility. Could be at the end when there's millennial offering and sacrifice in Ezekiel's temple, but you don't have more than a seven-year slippage there in my mind.

So while the rapture can certainly happen anytime God wants it to, if I had to guess why this 2,300 years is here, that would be my thought. In the next chapter, everybody leans on the 69 weeks and the 70th week of Daniel. It's huge.

No attention is given to this, and yet God's word spends three verses building up to it. So is it important? I think so. Would it be something more than just, well, something obscure that we can't find the beginning and end of during the days of Antiochus? I don't think so.

I think it's something everybody can see, and it is here for the people then, for us people now, and for the people in the future as it gets close. So if you ask me, I'm a little bit less persuaded by the 4,000 years and 2,000 years paradigm because I'm not real convinced about the 4,000 years anymore, so that makes me less convinced about the 2,000 years. That, by the way, has always been sort of an understanding.

It hasn't been suggested in Scripture, really. The closest you can get is the four days that the Passover lamb was kept up. But that's kind of a different thing.

So FWIW, another competing explanation for the 2,300 days, maybe not even competitive, but that's what I would put down in my blue book if God handed it to me and said, what do you think the 2,300 days are? I see days and years equal in Daniel nine, so all I do is just use that same formula in Daniel eight, and that tells me we're a little over a century away from the end of this age. God's people have been waiting for the end of this age for many, many centuries, and it would certainly be special if we were actually in the last generation, and we could be. I'm still gonna be paying real close attention if I make it all the way to 2033 and so on.

But I think maybe the 2133, 2132 is the hotspot, just saying. Well, beyond that, Daniel goes seeking the meaning of the vision, and one having the appearance of a man speaking between the ulai says, Gabriel, make the man understand the vision. Again, big picture-wise, what does this tell us? Is Gabriel gonna come and explain the 2,300 days to me? I don't think so.

Why is this here? What good does this do you and me? Notice that there is a chain of responsibility. There's a chain of communication, almost a chain of command that is in view here. There is observation that Daniel is there, that Daniel needs an answer, and a messenger is detailed to give it to him.

A communicator is sent. The principle I would suggest is illustrated here is if you are seeking the meaning of life, if you are seeking the meaning of scripture, if you are seeking the meaning of circumstances that present themselves before our eyes, express that and then expect communication to follow. Some communicator somewhere is not speaking out of his own mind, but he is going to convey truth from heaven, but he is an intermediary.

It's not gonna come to you in a flash in the night. It's not gonna come as a sudden, still small voice. If anybody was gonna get a voice and a sudden flash of insight, it would be the prophet Daniel who has the gift of interpretation of dreams and visions.

God still sends him a messenger. And as I mentioned last week, the paradigm throughout scripture is that God communicates to his people through messengers. He sends it with a talking head of some kind.

It can be an angelic messenger. That's what angel means. Angelus and malik both mean messenger.

Maliki, my messenger. Angelus, messenger. So in this age, what is the setup? What has God provided? It is church.

It is pastors and teachers. Pastors and teachers. I am not a proponent of right pastor, right congregation as a parallel to right man, right woman.

That has been in the history that a lot of us share going back in the teaching tradition. I don't see that in scripture. Paul said, I've taught you all and now I'm sending you Timothy, or I'm sending you Titus, or I'm sending you Epaphras.

Or there were a number of communicators, all of whom Paul, Apollos, Peter were able to share. Gabriel hasn't been the only messenger all down through history. God has detailed a number of angels and the angel fits the mission and fits the people to whom he's speaking.

So there is a messenger for an occasion, for an audience, for a particular message. And that won't always be the same messenger or the same occasion or the same message. We are looking to God to determine how, when and with whom he communicates to us.

But it is always God who is the focus. There is a voice in heaven that says, Gabriel, go tell this guy what he needs to know. You wanna pay attention to the heavenly authority by which the message comes.

And that there is some reason to think that this is a valid message from a qualified messenger. And that's our responsibility to sort the wheat from the chaff. So I see that in the latter part of the center of chapter eight here.

He says in verse 19, look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation. Again, the indignation is the dispersal of the people of God. And while they had a kinda, sorta, a little bit of a return to the land, there has not been a kingdom of Israel since the head of gold first rose in the plain.

And there won't be until the time of the end. So the time of Israel's embarrassment, the time of Israel's indignation, the time from the destruction of the first temple, forward, that's what this spans. Then he talks about this center portion.

And this is of particular interest because the near-term fulfillment, we're back in Hebrew now, is going to affect these people and their children and their children's children. We're not very far from the times of Esther and Mordecai and people who are going to be given the freedom to return. And the decree goes forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

And this is also a reflection of the Antichrist and the spirit of Antichrist. And remember John, in his epistle, says the spirit of Antichrist is already in the world. What does that tell us? If you study the Antichrist and his policies and his priorities and his powers, that spirit is already at work in the world.

And those of us who live in the times before his actual manifestation are still fighting the spirit and the strategies and the priorities and the goals that Satan, who is the driving force behind the Antichrist, has had from the beginning. That's just the culmination. That's when the iceberg really comes out of the ocean to sink the ship.

Afterward, in verse 27, Daniel fainted and was sick for days. Afterward arose and went about the king's business. What should we do as we are maybe disappointed to think that perhaps we're another in a long line of generations of God's people who will not be alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, that we'll spin out our string and shuffle off our mortal coil and die, that we're not necessarily going to see victory and closure and a reason for some of the strange and painful things that happened to us? It's kind of like John the Baptist's disciples.

But Lord, he was your man. Jesus even said he was the greatest prophet since Old Testament times. And he's humiliated.

He's locked up and rendered ineffectual. And then his head's cut off. What did that do? What purpose did that serve? Why couldn't he have gotten into a chariot and ridden to heaven like Elijah? If he was such a great prophet, seems very ignominious and very unspectacular.

And the disciples of John were still confused all the way down into Paul's day, if you read into Acts, where they only had the baptism of John and they didn't really know what to do at that point. Well, this chapter, this section of Daniel reminds us, there is a God in heaven who is fully apprised, who knows every detail of the big picture. We're immersed in it.

We're down in the middle. God can illustrate for Daniel a couple of the beasts in greater detail. And I asked you last time as sort of a homework assignment, if you were to look at this, what is the difference between the two visions? Well, in chapter seven, what does Daniel see? There is equal emphasis given to each of the four beasts in chapter seven.

In chapter eight, it's just the two middle empires that are the focus. You don't even get a reference to the lion with eagle's wings. And there's a lot of attention paid in chapter seven to the fourth kingdom, which corresponds to the little horn in a way in this next vision.

But the little horn actually comes up out of the third kingdom, not the fourth. And it doesn't correspond. And this is another clue that tells us that that little horn coming out of the Greek

kingdom is representing Antichrist in the end time in the same way that the little horn of the latter part of chapter seven that comes up, there are 10 horns and then three of them are displaced by the single horn.

Well, that horn and the 10 horns, that's the whole revive Roman empire thing. Well, there's a little horn that speaks great swelling words and he's a picture of the Antichrist. But here there's another picture of the Antichrist.

And by having the two different pictures from two different empires, it tells you that this pattern iterates down through history. Hitler could be an adumbration of this same idea. What does he do to the people of God? What was their hope or justification or finding a God's purpose in the Holocaust? There's so many Jews who don't even believe in God anymore because of the Holocaust.

They say, you know, if there was a God, he wouldn't let that happen to us. They haven't read Daniel. We don't wanna go down the Bart Ehrman road.

Well, I know what God would do and God would never do this. Therefore there is no God. God tells us what he's going to do.

And he tells us he is giving free reign to these evil, destructive, trampling, breaking, crushing powers. And it's a part of his purpose and plan. Beyond it is the peaceable kingdom.

Beyond it is the king of glory. Beyond it is our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ, triumphing over all, king of kings and Lord of lords. But that's the vindication.

That's the justification. That is when it will be worth it all. Great song, it will be worth it all when we see Christ.

When we see his dear face, all sorrow will erase. Words to that effect. So we reconcile ourselves and we steal ourselves and we toughen up and we dedicate ourselves to enduring unto the end.

By faith and patience, we will inherit the promises. Not by faith and patience we enjoy the promises now. By faith and patience, we're in a happy land of clover and roses.

This is our time of testing. This is our time of tribulation. We say, oh, I sure don't wanna go through the great tribulation.

I've got news for you. Your life now is the great tribulation. The same spirit of antichrist is at work now as will be at work then.

The same dangers to faith and to persistence and to obedience exist now. Why do you think we have the book of Daniel? Why do we have the book of Revelation? God could have had somebody unearth those out of a jar in Palestine at the time that they were needed at the end. They have been here for all of God's people in every generation because every generation faces

the tribulation.

Every generation faces the antichrist. Every generation needs to heed the guidance to be faithful, to be watchful, to watch for the communication from heaven that will explain that we are in the time of the God, lowercase g, of this world. And we have a purpose.

And that purpose is not having seen vindication, not having seen justification, not having seen ultimate salvation, we still by faith lay hold of righteousness. We trust God. We trust the Lord Jesus.

And we avail ourselves of opportunities to win tactical victories in our lives even though the strategic course has already been set. Strategically, the United States is gonna go the way the U.S. is gonna go. Individually, we determine how our lives are gonna go.

And we can be rising while the rest of the country is falling. It is our individual lives where we have authority, where we have decision-making, where we have opportunity. And God will grant us inside what he will eventually give us outside.

God will give us in our souls what we will eventually enjoy in our bodies. God will give us in our inner environment what we will ultimately enjoy in our outer environment. That's what these chapters tell us.

Why was Daniel sick? It's a tough pill to swallow when you have been living on the expectation, well, after 70 years, we'll be back in the land. I've been reading Jeremiah. After 70 years, we can restore and renew and rejuvenate and rebuild.

And God says, no, Daniel, this is gonna be a time of testing for the people of God for 2300 evenings and mornings, a long time no matter how you reckon it. So we reflect on it. But notice, after he absorbed the shock, what did he do? He got up and did his job.

He went about the king's business. This is King Belshazzar, by the way. And it doesn't say he got up in Shushan.

He's back in Babylon. By the way, just as a chronological note, from the Babylonian Chronicle, which is something that has only relatively recently been unearthed, that's how we found out that Belshazzar was a real guy and that he was the regent for Nabonidus. But we now know that, because some people thought, well, maybe Belshazzar was only the king for three years and then the Persians came in.

Daniel has the first vision in the first year of Belshazzar, has this one in the third year. It is 12 more years before Babylon falls, if you work out the math and the dates and look at the Babylonian Chronicle. Belshazzar served as regent in Nabonidus' absence.

He may have even been regent before that, but in Nabonidus' absence for about 15 years. And so from Daniel's third year until the handwriting on the wall, 12 years. So it's our day-to-day

responsibilities that we focus on.

We see that these larger events are gonna move relatively slowly, and we can't pin our hopes on big things in the near term. We hang our hopes on the ultimate resolution that is all in God's hands. He throws Satan in the pit for a thousand years and God releases him.

One of the biggest, strangest things in the Bible is that God lets Satan out of the pit after a thousand years, at the end of the millennial kingdom. When you understand the answer to that question, you understand Daniel chapter two, chapter seven, and chapter eight. God gives these things sway for a reason.

He's going to let Satan out for Gog Magog for a reason. And when you understand that reason, this all becomes much more clear. And it gives us purpose and focus in our lives now.

So it is applicable. It is something to chew on and think about. Okay, all right, there's rams and goats running around here.

I'm the people of God. I'm not looking for domination and success in every field. I'm in survival mode.

I'm in obedience mode. I'm in faithfulness mode. I need to be heeding the counsel of God as it comes to me through God's communicator and stay the course.

Be faithful unto death, Jesus told the Smyrnans, and I will give you the crown of life. It's ironic. You're faithful unto death, you get the crown of life.

If you didn't face death, where's your chance for the crown of life? If we don't face difficulty, where is our chance to exhibit great faith? That's what's going on here. Well, let's close here in a word of prayer. We'll pick up and look at Daniel chapter nine next time.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for its sustaining power, for the heavenly perspective that it grants to us as earthbound creatures. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will cause these truths to flame and live in our souls, to motivate us and encourage us, to strengthen us for the tasks at hand, to teach us patience and faithfulness so that we can inherit and reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus.

We pray these things in his name, amen.