

## The Lord's Message: The Future is Revealed – The Ram and the Goat

Date: August 25, 2024

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Readings: Daniel 8

We are continuing our study of Daniel. God gave Daniel the ability to interpret dreams. He was able to interpret dreams for several kings. Daniel also had dreams like we all do, but Daniel wrote his dreams down. These dreams are very important to us today because God told Daniel what was going to happen in the future. These are prophetic dreams.

Let us pray.

Before we get started, we need to understand about Biblical prophecies. Biblical prophecies are not about just one event in time but are about events occurring in different times. For instance, in **Malachi 4:5-6**, God says that He will send the prophet Elijah before the Lord returns to the earth to prepare the hearts of the fathers and children for the Lord. If we remember that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the people's hearts to receive Jesus. In **Luke 1:13-17**, an angel of the Lord appears to Zechariah and tells him that his wife, Elizabeth, is going to have a son. You are to name him, John. He will prepare people's hearts to receive the Lord in the same way that Elijah did. In Malachai, the prediction was that Elijah would be sent by God to prepare people's hearts for His coming. In Luke, an angel of the Lord tells Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth will have a son, named John, who will go in the power and spirit of Elijah to prepare people's hearts for the Lord's coming. So, one prophecy is fulfilled in one later instance of history. But later in **Revelation 11:3-6**, we have two prophets that will appear on the Earth in the last days to prepare people's heart for the coming of the Lord. I believe that these two prophets are Elijah and Moses. Elijah prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain for three and half years. Moses, through the hand of God, brought ten plagues on the Egyptians. Elijah and Moses were with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. For these reasons I believe that the prophets in Revelation are Elijah and Moses. This would fulfill the prophecies found in Malachi. This is known as the Law of Double Reference.

Now, if we had the original writing, chapter 1 to chapter 2 verse 2 was written in Hebrew. Up to chapter 8, the writing is in Aramaic. Chapter 8 returns back to Hebrew writing. The events in chapter 2 through chapter 7 would be important to Chaldeans or people of Babylon. The events starting in chapter 8 are about Israel and the end times. In chapter 8, it starts with King Belshazzar's reign coming to an end. The writing is on the wall.

In verse 3 Daniel, in his vision, sees a ram with two horns. The ram represents the Medo-Persian empire. One of the horns was longer than the other and grew up later. The Median empire the first horn was conquered by the Persians in 550 BC. In 539 BC the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon. We have historical writings that confirm this. The Medo-Persian empire ruled all of the area from the Aegean Sea (west) to Egypt (south), and India (north), this included Judea. For two centuries, they were the greatest empire on the face of the earth. King Cyrus, and later King Darius, allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem to live. They were allowed to rebuild the temple and the walls around the city. You can find this by reading the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The kingdom existed until they were defeated in 330 BC by Alexander the Great, represented by the goat in verse 5.

Alexander the Great, the goat with a large horn, conquered Persia in verses 6 & 7. In verse 8, the goat became great. As a matter of fact, Alexander the Great in six years had conquered whole empire of Persia, a great part of Asia and master Syria, Egypt, India, and other nations. Alexander the Great lamented the fact “that there were no nations to conquer.” In one year’s time he died from overeating and being drunk of wine. He literally pickled himself to death. After his death the kingdom was divided up between his four captains.

In verse 9, out of one of those kingdoms, came the other horn or Antiochus Epiphanes IV. He ruled over Syria during the time of the Seleucid dynasty. The word, “Epiphanes” means illustrious or godlike. The Israelites called him Epimenes, meaning crazy man or mad man. He was a great guy. He either bribed his way or murdered those who opposed him, including murdering his own brother to get the throne. He took especially great pleasure in destroying the Israelites, the people of the “Beautiful Land.” He is remembered in history as the cruelest and bloodiest ruler.

In verse 10, it says that “it grew until it reached the host of heavens, and it threw many starry hosts down to earth and trampled on them.” The “starry hosts” can refer to angels, or kings, here it refers to God’s people, the Jews. Antiochus Epiphanes hated the Jews. He hated their worship of God. He hated their religious laws. He hated them. He poured out his hate on them.

Verse 11 describes some of his actions. We know from history that Antiochus Epiphanes stopped the daily sacrifice. He set up an altar to Zeus in the temple and even sacrificed a pig on the altar of the Lord and sprinkled the pig's blood around the temple. He forced them to eat the meat from the pig, which the Jewish people are not allowed to do according to law. If they did not worship at the altar of Zeus or eat the pig, he simply had them executed. It is reported that one day he executed 40,000 Jews. He did this for three days straight. This is all explained to Daniel by the angel Gabriel in verses 24 to 25a. In verse 25b, it says that "Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human powers." When his army was defeated in Judea by the Maccabees, he fled in a boat to the coastal cities. The people rebelled against him. He went mad and drowned himself in the sea. People did not kill him. God killed him. The madman was driven mad by God and killed himself.

Why would God allow all this to happen to His chosen people, the Jews? The answer is found in verse 12. The starry host (the same people the Jews) are completely wicked, or in rebellion against God. Sometime after the Jewish people return from exile they picked up worshiping idols. The priest received their positions by murder and deceit, not by that Aaronic succession. They have fallen and are not worshiping God, so God is punishing them by allowing Antiochus Epiphanes to grow in power. God is doing this to bring them to repentance. Thank God we live in an age of grace. Thank God that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Thank God that we can be forgiven of our sin. We are not different than these Jews. We are simply sinners saved by the grace of God.

The question in verse 13 asked God how long will this go on? In verse 14 we are told it is 2,300 evenings and mornings. On December 25, 165 BC, Antiochus Epiphanes is gone, the idol of Zeus was removed, the temple was cleansed, and worship began again. This is celebrated by the festival of Hanukkah.

Now, I told you earlier that Biblical prophecy can refer to different events occurring in time. In verse 17, Daniel is told by the angel Gabriel that the vision Daniel has seen is for "the time of the end." So, this vision is not just for Antiochus Epiphanes, but well past his time. What is the best book of the times of the end? Revelation, the revealing book of the Bible. So, who is this in reference to? The Antichrist. Let us turn in our Bibles to **Revelation 13: 11-18**. In the end times, a man will come to power during the times of the tribulation. He will be given power by the devil to deceive many people. He will set up an image for all to bow down to. Anyone refusing to worship the image will be killed. Anyone refusing to be marked with man's number of 666 will not be able to buy food and necessities.

Paul tells about this Antichrist in **2 Thessalonians 2:1-12**. This person, the Antichrist, is a political leader with tremendous ability. He is a magician or a sorcerer. He will fool many people. He will deceive many into believing that he is God. The world will be in awe of him. He will solve the world's problems. Peace in the Middle East will happen during his reign. He will be a military genius. He will stabilize the economy, no one will go hungry unless they refuse to bear his mark. When he speaks, people will be amazed at the knowledge of his many languages and will be well-versed in them. The world will buy into him hook, line and sinker.

God gave Daniel this vision, so that we would not be deceived by the Antichrist. God has pointed this person out to us. We will face trials and tribulations in this life, but we need to keep our faith and persevere to the end. Paul says in **2 Thessalonians 2:13-17**.

Bible prophecy may scare us. The ram and the goat are just one of many prophecies found in the Bible. We need to read to understand them. If we have not accepted Jesus Christ into our hearts and our life, then we should be scared of what is going happen in the future. If we have accepted Jesus, then we should tell others the Good News that Jesus came to save them.

God continues to reveal every day His love for us. We should be prepared for the Lord to return one day to this earth. That day is one day closer than it was yesterday. Amen.