

Daniel 8: The Ram and the Goat

Standing Firm with God series

by Chris Famisaran

All right, how's everybody doing? We're more than halfway through our Daniel series. I know some of you are wondering pastor, what are you gonna say today? All right, well, as is our custom the last couple of weeks we've been doing, I got some questions for you all. All right, if you agree, wave your hand openly. If you disagree, act like you're shaking your fist in anger. Okay, and if you're unsure, eh. Okay, like you're waving at the rose parade, you've heard me say that, right?

Number one, most of the people in this room could explain the basics of biblical prophecy. Oh. Okay, all right.

Number two, all right, everybody should know this, okay? This is really a yes or no sometimes. My prayers typically take longer to get answered than other people's prayers. Just a handful of you are brave enough. Okay, all right, thank you. Maybe.

All right, I agree with all of my church's interpretations of biblical prophecy. Pastor, where are you going with this?

All right, here's an interesting thought. Even God's prophets don't really understand the visions that they're given. Hmm, okay.

All right, lastly, God corrects his truly connect... Sorry, wait. That's not the right question. I'm sorry, I accidentally deleted it. I'm sorry, I'll ask it next week. All right, have you ever had bad news before?

You ever been shared some information that you just did not like?

Oh, Bill, you're really going out for it. Okay. Oh. My bad. I was wondering why you were so emphatic. It just goes to show you pastors are human everybody. I'm sorry, I just, it's a habit. You know, I didn't have this set up before and I appreciate it. I always had to hold a mic. Sorry, Bill.

Today we're gonna discover that Daniel's given another vision, okay? Now, John Piper shares a story. that he wrote many, many years ago. And suppose you were on, you were exploring an unknown glacier in the north of Greenland. Y'all know where Greenland is? Okay, up near Canada, Arctic Circle. In the dead of winter, and just as you reach a sheer cliff with a spectacular dropout, views of miles and miles of jagged ice and snow, a huge, terrible storm breaks out, and the wind is so strong, and fear arises within your heart and within your soul. that you might be blown off the edge to oblivion. But in the midst of this, you discover a small little crack, which leads to a little mini cave that you can go inside and weather the storm. Fortunately enough, maybe you have a little extra spare sleeping bag just in case, and maybe even a bivy sack. And it's there that while the storm is raging outside, It could easily take your life. Here you find refuge and you find hope because you feel safe and protected, amen? But not everything in the feeling we call fear has vanished because only the life-threatening part so far, there's still outside this storm that's going and it can be odd, wonderful. And not maybe not wonderful, but ah, there's odd wonder and the feeling that maybe you never ever wanna go against such a strong adversary. The beauty of this is God's power is beyond the unendurable cold of Arctic storms. And yet he's able to cup his hand around and say, take refuge in my love and let the terrors of my power become the awesome fireworks of your happy night sky.

The reason I share this is because sometimes we are sometimes surprised by life. Maybe we're surprised by scripture. Maybe we're surprised by information we were not expecting. And sometimes we don't know what to do with it. But I wanna encourage you that in spite of what we may experience physically, or what's shared with us and might cause us fear, panic, we can have confidence in our God. So as we go forth, we're gonna continue through Daniel eight. I'll try to do my best. I know some of you are excited. I wanna lay some ground rules. Some things that I know we've shared before, but just as a reminder, because Daniel eight is one of the most, if not probably the most explored and researched and studied passage, especially within Adventism. But here are some things. Remember, prophecy is what? It's not a crystal ball. It gives us ideas, but can we know exactly, for instance, when God is going to return? To the day and the second? No. We use prophecy to look back and to see where

we're at, but to try to claim things in the future. I've seen way too many times where people try to claim something and they have egg all over their face and they're greatly disappointed.

Now, a thing that I also mentioned, I think was at the week before last, is that when we look at scripture, we have to look through trifocal lenses. Anybody have trifocals here? You know what trifocals mean? Three different types of lenses within, okay? I only have single focal lenses. But there's some who have double and trifocal. And what does that mean? When we look at scripture, we have to look at what did the information mean to the author? When Daniel receives, for instance, as we're going to learn here, what did the information mean to Daniel? Have you ever actually thought about that? Or do you just automatically assume, what is God trying to tell me today? Because we have to understand what does it mean to the author that can give us better perspective?

Secondly, what did the information mean to the audience that the author shared with? What did the information mean to the audience? the authors shared with and finally. What lessons translate to today? Okay, what lessons translate to today?

Let's go to Daniel chapter eight, verse one. Okay, Daniel eight, verse one. Here's some pages still flipping through. All right. By the way, some of you are wondering, why are the words not on the screen? That's just too easy. We make you work here. I'm kidding. No, the honest reason is because we want you to be able to bring your Bibles and go through for yourselves so that when you open it later today or later this week, you will actually have remembered. And we actually want people to be people of the word in the book. We don't want it to be... we want you to search. And also it's good to be able to know where to find Daniel. All right, okay. So, and if you're still looking, Daniel's in the book of the Old Testament, okay? It's near Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Isaiah.

Verse one, in the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision after the one that had already appeared to me. In my vision, I saw myself in the citadel of Susa, in the province of Elam, in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal. Where does this take us? when and where does this take place? in the

third year of King Belshazzar's reign. Did we talk about Belshazzar already? Yes, if we go back to chapter five where Bill talked about, did a wonderful job by the way, he talks and after reading this, hey, based on what he's gonna hear, do you think Daniel was surprised when he got called in at that point then? No, because he already had a preview of what was to come. But also, He was in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam by this canal called Ulai. Anybody know where this is? Eventually it's to be, I think eventually, or it was the capital of Persia. Okay, let's continue. Verse three, I looked up and there before me was a ram with two horns standing beside the canal and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other. but grew up later. I watched the ram as it charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against it and none could rescue from its power. It did as it pleased and became great. As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west, discussing the, crossing the whole earth without what? [touching the ground]. Okay, that's a super goat, all right? Just flies through, okay? and it charged in great, what? Rage. I saw it attack the ram furiously, striking the ram, shattering its two horns, and the ram was powerless to stand against it. The goat knocked it to the ground and trampled on it, and none could rescue the ram from its power. The goat became very great, but at the height of its power, the large horn was broken off, and in its place, four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven.

Now, there's a lot of symbolism here in Daniel, right? Okay, can we take everything literally in Daniel? Obviously not, okay? So we have to look at symbolically. Now let's go through some of the visions that we've discussed already. In chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of a statue made up of gold, silver, bronze, iron, clay and everything. Okay, and we know that eventually signifies what? kingdoms or and then the mixed kingdom. And then we also had another vision. In chapter seven, right? What's different about chapter eight than there is between two and seven? The numbers, how many animals are in here? There's only two, okay? Let's keep that in mind.

Now, verse nine, out of one of them came another horn which started small, but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the beautiful land. It grew until it reached the host out of the heavens and threw some of the starry

hosts down to the earth and trampled on them. Set itself up as great as the commander of the army of the Lord. It took away... the daily sacrifices from the Lord and his sanctuary was thrown down. Because of rebellion, the Lord's people and daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did and the truth was thrown to the ground.

Now, verse 13. Then I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one said to him, how long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled? The vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, the surrender of the sanctuary, and the trampling underfoot of the Lord's people. And he said to me, it will take 2300 evenings and mornings, and then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated. And it's here that we see, Daniel, what does Daniel want? Daniel wants to know what does this mean? So let's continue, verse 15. While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand, there before me stood one who looked like what? A man. And I heard a man's voice from the Ulay calling, Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of this vision. And as he came near the place, where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. Son of man, he said to me, understand that the vision concerns the time of the end. And in verse 18, he says, while he was speaking, I was in a deep what? Okay, he was zonked out, okay? With my face to the ground, and then he touched me and raised me to my feet.

Now here, there's some new characters that pop up. Who are these new characters? Gabriel. But who also tells Gabriel to explain this vision? Is it God? Okay, also known as the son of man that we recently read yesterday. But God tells Gabriel to explain. Now I'm just gonna go through the whole passage, okay?

Let's continue, verse 19. He said, I'm going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. So. Is this going to impact Daniel? In a way, yes, but it also impacts the future. So the two horned ram that you saw represents the kings of what? Media and Persia. And the shaggy goat is the king of where? Greece. And the large horn between its eyes is the first king. And then the four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from this nation, but will not have the same what? It's not going to have the same

power. Now, those of you who are historians, who went out and conquered for Greece? Who was great? Alexander, right? But did Alexander die in battle? He didn't. He actually died pretty young, roughly around 30, right? And after he died, what happened next? How did Greece reorganize? Four kings. prop up, right? And then eventually another one. Okay, we'll get, and so let's continue.

Verse, I think we're at verse 23. In the latter part of their reign, when rebels will become completely wicked, a fierce looking king, a master of intrigue will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation. and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper and he will consider himself superior. And when they feel secure, he will destroy many and take a stand against the prince of princes, yet he will be destroyed, but not by what? Human power. What does that imply? Is God able to remove kings that God wants to?

Now. Many have studied, researched, debated, argued, tried to figure out what is being told to Daniel. So over the years, there's a couple of scenarios. The first big one is that of scholars, they believe that the big horn, the one that really stands out at the end, represents, sorry, at the beginning, it starts with Alexander the Great, and then the four subsequent horns are the four kings that replace him. And then eventually there's another horn that pops up that is of Antiochus the fourth of Epiphanes. And Antiochus believed he was actually a descendant, he was a god. There again, we talked about this guy thought he was a god. Now it's also interesting too that what did he do to the Jewish believers? He went and he removed the scrolls and he turned their places of worship into a Greek or Canaanite worship. and basically outlawed any kind of worship. The Jewish believers could not hold Sabbath, they couldn't worship, circumcision was outlawed. They were essentially forbidden to worship Yahweh. And eventually, as well, Antiochus also orders officials to set up an altar to Zeus in the Jerusalem temple. You think they took kindly to that? They did it, and this is all happening in the second, second century of before Christ. And so eventually there's a revolt. Judas Maccabeus, he rebels and he cleans and rededicates the temple on December 14, 164 BC. This is where you get the feast of Hanukkah. It's a dedication where it recognizes this event. So that's number one. Number two. Some will argue that it talks about where the

Roman Empire goes and executes its plan to destroy the temple in 70 AD. Others will argue that it's the fulfillment of when Jesus returns. But what do we as Adventists believe?

Now, Daniel 8:14, at this point, we've understood it to be that The date is about 457 AD and they apply 2300 years later. So 457 plus 2300 finds us at 1844. Was anything happening significantly in 1844? We as a church, now our forefathers believed, there was a man by the name of William Miller who he believed God told him to share to the world that Jesus is coming. And for many years, and actually it wasn't just the first time in October 22 of 1844, there were times where they had thought that Jesus was literally gonna come because the sanctuary was here on earth and Jesus would come and rededicate and everything, right? But that was not the case because did Jesus ever come? No, some people thought, well, maybe he literally came in spirit. In 1844, October 22 is recognized as what we call the great disappointment. They were right that something happened. Symbolically, we believe that Jesus then also goes into the ministry in the sanctuary. Jesus is the great high priest working on behalf of us. Amen? And so...

We see, and unfortunately I know I'm rushing this. So I know some of you are gonna have questions. I will let you know, just a reminder. Wednesday at 7 p.m., either see me or Bill to get the login info. We're gonna go over this in Zoom if you have questions or if you wanna go deeper.

That was a genesis, kind of the genesis of our church. After that, there were four groups that came out of that and one of them being the Adventist Church. I believe it was Hiram Edison and there was somebody else. They were in a field in. and they've realized that, oh, we got it wrong. Jesus was entering the sanctuary symbolically. And actually, lines up better. Now, we're only taking a part of this because to better understand this, we're also gonna have to explore Daniel 9, which Bill's gonna do next week. So this is, you really can't just not come next week. You have to come. Let's continue. Verse 26. The vision of the evenings and the mornings that have been given to you is true, but seal up the vision for it concerns the distant future.

Now, one of the things that I appreciate about this is that God, number one, is looking out for us, amen? Because God is trying to give us a path, okay? And

even though the path is not literally like plot point to plot point, in a sense, we still have to be faithful, we still have to seek, we still have to be led by God, God gives Daniel a vision, which in turn is related to us. But remember, we have to look at what is the perspective of Daniel? Verse 27, I, Daniel, was what? I was overcome or worn out, as the NIV says. I was exhausted for how many days? Several, and then I got up and I went about the king's business. I was, how did he respond to the vision? He was appalled because it was beyond understanding. Imagine Daniel at this point, even Daniel struggled because he couldn't totally understand. God had to explain to him. Are there ever points in your life where again, I asked earlier, have you ever been given information you just don't know what to do? And sometimes you just feel so overwhelmed. You're so depressed. You don't even want to get out of bed because you don't want to deal with the day because you don't know what's going to happen next. I take great strength from this because I believe that God is looking out for us and also especially for Daniel and the people to be able to share on what to expect. We can always know that God is confident, we can have confidence in God that God is working on our behalf. The challenge for Daniel though is to recognize that, yeah, this message was for him, but also for others. Let me ask you this. I'm sorry. Oops. I keep forgetting to press this button.

Let me ask you this now, as Adventists, we've been waiting for literally hundreds of years, okay? And we believe, if God doesn't come soon, will my faith be affected? Were the Israelites' faith affected, even though they had the prophet's scrolls? They could see, they could understand, there was descriptions. Was their faith affected? I'm sure, yeah, it was affected, I'm sure, at some point. Let's be honest. When life hits us hard, do we question God, why did this happen? Or God, why can't you come sooner to get us out of this mess that we're living in? Is that, are some of you asking that question even now, based on the world that we live in? How many of you, I would love to stay in this world forever. No, thank you. Because I ultimately want to be with God. But I also don't want to live in anxiety and fear of what fresh circumstances of anxiety can be delivered to us tomorrow, right? Who knows what they're going to say? Who knows what's going to happen around the world? And the world responds in worldly ways. But what does God ask us to do in this time? Wait

patiently. Did God tell Daniel to wait? Did he not tell him to seal up the vision? Okay, and wait.

And so my friends, I don't have a crystal ball. Okay, I can only encourage and affirm you in spite of everything. And if everything that has just gone over your head, that's okay too, because that's what happened to me the first time I read and discussed all of this, okay? It's okay to ask questions, find somebody. Hey, what does this mean? There are plenty of people. would love to discuss this with you. But the takeaway that I have from this is that not everything is always clear, but God has our back. We know. that we have victory through Jesus. So hold firm to Jesus. Know that our salvation is victory through Jesus. Not as victorious, but through Jesus as we patiently wait for him. And so if God comes later this afternoon or God comes in 10,000 years, Lord have mercy. It doesn't matter because what does Jesus also share with us? What is the greatest commandment to love our God with what? Everything, with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. I think if we do that and share the promise that Jesus will one day return soon, I think that's what God calls us to do. Now, I know this is heavy stuff. We're gonna continue next week. Bill's gonna talk about some more unfortunate views for Daniel that's gonna tie into this. But in spite of that, even though it may look unfortunate and maybe scary, we still have confidence Our God is sovereign. Remember? So stand firm with God, just as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did.

Father in heaven, Lord, you are good and your mercy endures forever. Lord, there's sometimes so many things. And as James 1.5 says though, even when we don't understand, we know that we can go to you. If any of us lacks wisdom, we go to you. Lord, Proverbs 35 and six says, trust in the Lord with all of our heart and lean not on our own understanding. Lord, we acknowledge you, leading guidance. Until we meet again next time, give us strength, give us courage. May you help us to be the hands and feet you've called us to be. In Jesus' name, amen.

Grace and peace, everyone.