

**Daniel**  
**The Ram, the Goat, and the Little Horn (Part 2)**

**Daniel 8**

**October 13, 2019**

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Daniel, chapter 8 is where we find ourselves. Just to remind you of the big picture, the theme of Daniel, is that Yahweh is sovereign. He's sovereign over the lives of individuals, the affairs of nations, the span of empires; in fact, all of human history. Just to remind you of one of the ways to outline the book of Daniel, it's by language. The first Hebrew section comes from 1:1 through the middle part of 2:4; then begins a lengthy section in Aramaic. This is Yahweh's message to, and plan for the pagan nations.

We've just finished chapter 7 and we've now found our way into chapter 8, which begins the second Hebrew section. This is Yahweh's message to and plan for Israel, chapters 8-12. Here, with this Hebrew section, God issues, through Daniel, a message of comfort and hope to His people. It's a promise of their ultimate survival, even in the midst of intense persecution. Daniel 8, in specific, warns God's people about a coming period of intense persecution and it promises that God will ultimately destroy their enemies, and as a people, they will survive this time of intense persecution. That's really the theme of the second vision that God grants Daniel.

Now, let me remind you of what we've seen so far; and since it's been a couple of weeks with baptism and my being away, let me just give you a little a little more of a run up to what we're studying this evening. Chapter 8 begins with the vision of the ram, the goat and the little horn, in verses 1-14. Again, as has happened before in this prophecy, God uses animals to symbolize the world's great empires.

The setting of the vision comes in verses 1-2. Verse 1 says, "In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king..." This was the year 550 B.C. It was the same year that Cyrus the Mede, came to power. And so, you can see things begin to change. Verse 1 says, 'In that year, "...a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously.'" This came after the sweeping prophecy of chapter 7. Verse 2: "I looked in the vision, and while I was

looking I was in the citadel..." (or the fortified city) "...of Susa, which is in the province of Elam..."

It was located in the Fertile Crescent. Here, you can see a map of exactly where Susa is, related to the rest of the Middle East. He says, "...and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal." This was an artificial canal that connected two nearby rivers. Today, it's dry. But in the vision, he appears there in this fortified city that would become a significant city under the Medes, under Cyrus.

Then we have, after the setting of the vision, we have the content of the vision in verses 3-14. It begins with the ram in verses 3 and 4, which represents Cyrus and the empire of Medo-Persia. Notice, verse 3, "Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal."

Later, Daniel identifies the symbolism of this ram. Verse 20 says, "The ram which you saw with the two horns, represents the kings of Media and Persia." So, it's the Medo-Persian empire that followed the Babylonian empire. Verse 3 goes on to say, "Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last." This symbolized the two divisions of the Medo-Persian empire, Media and Persia; Persia coming up last, but ultimately being the stronger of the two.

Verse 4, "I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward..." Under Cyrus, the Medo-Persian empire spread west to Babylon, Syria and Asia Minor; south to Egypt and Ethiopia, and north to Armenia and the region up around the Caspian Sea. Verse 4 goes on to say, "...no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself."

Medo-Persia under Cyrus appeared absolutely invincible, as world powers usually do, but aren't. Because we meet, secondly, in this vision, the goat, verses 5-8, representing Alexander the Great and the empire of Greece. Notice verse 5, "While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west." The reason we know the identification of this goat is verse 21, "The

shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece.” Verse 5 says this “...male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth...”

The Greek empire would conquer the entire Mediterranean without touching the ground. That is intended to picture the speed with which Greece conquered the Mediterranean world.

Verse 5 says, “...and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.” Verse 21 identifies that horn; “...the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king.” As we discovered in our last study, this was Alexander the Great. Verse 6 says, “He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him with his mighty wrath.”

Then, in verse 7, we have a graphic portrayal of the revenge that Alexander exacted on the Persians, because of how the Persians had treated the Greeks. Verse 7 says, “I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him.” So, this seemingly invincible ram finds itself suddenly, irreparably, destroyed. “So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.”

Verse 8 says, “Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly.” And specifically, the first king, that is, Alexander the Great. In Greek mythology, there is a fine line between man and the gods. And Alexander began to think of himself as one of the gods because of his extraordinary accomplishments. But Daniel writes, “...as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken.”

On June 13<sup>th</sup> in the year 323 B.C., in Nebuchadnezzar’s palace in Babylon, ironically, Alexander the Great died at the age of 33. Verse 8 says “...and in its place...” in the place of this first horn, this first powerful king, Alexander, “...there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.” That is, toward the four points of the compass. When Alexander died, he was survived by two sons who were shortly murdered, and then an intense period of conflict followed. After 40 long years his kingdom was divided into four parts. Four parts ruled over by four kings, just as Daniel had prophesied 270 years before. The four kings who divided the Greek empire were Antipater, who ruled Greece and Macedonia; Lysimachus who ruled Thrace and much of Asia Minor; but it's the final two of them that factor prominently in biblical history,

since the land of Israel literally lay between them. The third is Ptolemy 1, who ruled Egypt, and initially, the land of Israel; and Seleucus who ruled Syria, (yes, Syria and the problems there go back a very, very long time), Babylon, and much of the Middle East.

Now it's out of this last ruler and kingdom that there would come a mad man. And tonight, we meet that man. And that brings us to where we left off last time. Tonight, we meet the little horn introduced to us in verses 9-14, and his name is Antiochus IV, also called Antiochus Epiphanes.

Notice verse 9. "Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn..." "Out of one of them" means out of the four divisions that came out of the Greek empire of Alexander the Great. So out of one of those kingdoms, one of those points of division, would come a rather small horn, or a rather insignificant ruler. Now, first of all, let me make a note to you that this little horn, (because there's some confusion when people study the book of Daniel), this little horn cannot be the same as the little horn that we met back in chapter 7. To understand, the word 'horn' is simply a symbol that represents a ruler or a king. And the specific ruler intended is determined by the context. Well, in chapter 7, the little horn is a ruler who will come from the fourth beast, as we learned, from Rome, and will live in the last days when the Son of Man appears.

In chapter 8, the little horn is a ruler who comes from the Greek empire, specifically, from one of the four divisions of the empire of Alexander the Great. So, don't be confused. The little horn of chapter 8 is not the same as the little horn of chapter 7. The word 'horn' simply refers to a king or a ruler.

Now, the character of the two horns in chapter 7 and 8 is very similar. And that's because the king in chapter 8 is energized by Satan in the same way that the future Antichrist will be. And both of them share many of the same qualities, just as many dictators share the same qualities. In fact, I would put it this way. If you look, as we go through this chapter and chapter 11, at what this man Antiochus Epiphanes did to the people of God in his day, you will find the pattern for what Antichrist will do on a grander scale during the Great Tribulation.

So, understand then, after the division of Alexander's kingdom, the Ptolemy's, they were in Egypt. So, Egypt dominated Palestine for about 100 years, from 300 B.C. until 198 B.C. During the time that Egypt was ruling over the land of Israel, the Jews enjoyed a period of relative peace and autonomy. But in the year 198 B.C., Antiochus III, (not the man we've been talking about, but the one who was his predecessor), Antiochus III, who was also called Antiochus the Great, one of the Seleucid rulers from Syria, (by the way, if you're interested in history, also Cleopatra's father), this Antiochus III captured Jerusalem.

So, a Syrian ruler now comes and takes Israel away from Egypt, and becomes its ruler. In the year 175, that's a key year in our study tonight, in 175 B.C., his successor, Antiochus IV, or Antiochus Epiphanes, became king of Syria. As the rest of Daniel 8 and Daniel 11 unfold, we discover that the little horn in these chapters represents this eighth ruler in the Seleucid or the Syrian empire, a man called Antiochus IV, or Antiochus Epiphanes. By the way, this has been the view of most Jewish scholars. For example, even Josephus, the Jewish historian writing for the Romans, took this view, and it has continued to be the view of most Christian scholars as well. This little horn of chapter 8 is Antiochus Epiphanes. Understand, this man was a profoundly evil man. I love what Dale Ralph Davis in his commentary calls him. He calls him "a slick and godless piece of scum." That's pretty accurate, as you will see. Antiochus reigned in Syria, and therefore over the land of Israel from 175 B.C. until 163 B.C., and he receives a lot of space in Daniel's prophecy. He receives the space we're studying in chapter 8. He also will be discussed again in chapter 11 verses 21-35. And the reason he gets so much space, some guy that you have never heard about outside of the Scripture, is because of the major role he plays in the history of God's people.

So, what Daniel tells us in the in the vision that he saw, is out of the kingdom of the Seleucids in Syria, would arise this man, Antiochus, and he would come with relative obscurity and insignificance. Literally the Hebrew text says "he came up out of littleness." He was a nobody. After the death of Antiochus III, who was Antiochus Epiphanes' brother, the rightful heir to the throne was not Antiochus Epiphanes, it was his nephew. That nephew was still alive, but that nephew was held hostage in Rome. And so, Antiochus Epiphanes began to systematically bribe and flatter his way to power.

In fact, if you want a glimpse of how he accomplished it, go over to chapter 11. As I said, we'll meet him again. And there's so much amazing detail about his life here. But look at 11:21. There would arise, notice, this "...despicable person on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred..." So, it wasn't like he deserved the role, "...but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom..." how, "...by intrigue," by deception.

This is how he will accomplish his place of power. Antiochus was an extremely proud man whose self-perception greatly eclipsed his actual accomplishments. Once he gained the throne - you ready for this? You thought you knew politicians who were proud - Antiochus gained the throne and took the name for himself of Antiochus Theos Epiphanes. You know what that means? It means "Antiochus, the illustrious God." Or perhaps we could translate it, "Antiochus, God manifested." He was talking about or referring to himself as being a physical manifestation of the Greek god Zeus. He actually had that title imprinted on the coins that he minted for his kingdom, "Antiochus Epiphanes, God manifested."

His enemies, by the way, didn't exactly buy his new title. So, there was a little play on words. He called himself Antiochus Epiphanes. His enemies called him Antiochus Epimames, which sounds very similar, right? But it doesn't mean "Antiochus, Manifestation of God," it means "Antiochus the Madman." This man would have a very small beginning, but would become great and powerful. Notice verse 9. This horn "grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land."

His conquests would be in these three areas of the Mediterranean world. Toward the south, that is, toward Egypt. We're going to find him intruding into Egypt's space a number of times; and toward the east, toward Persia, and especially, Armenia. And then, the "Beautiful Land." That, of course, is a reference to Palestine. It's used that way again in 11:16 and 11:41. Why is it called the Beautiful Land and why did it matter to this guy?

Well, as I have pointed out to you before, the tiny land of Israel is important. It's crucial in the ancient world because it lay as the only land bridge connecting the three great continents of the

ancient world, Europe, Asia, and Africa. You didn't want to travel the Mediterranean. You didn't want to travel through the desert to the east. And so, all you had was that tiny little land bridge we call Israel.

It mattered to him because it lay between his two major interests: Syria, where he ruled, and Egypt where he wanted to rule. Verse 10 says, "It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth..." Now, the Hebrew expression, "the host of heaven" can refer to one of two things. It can refer to angels, 1 Kings 22:19, or it can refer to actual stars, Deuteronomy 4:19, for example.

Here, the reference is to stars, but stars as symbols of God's people. How do I know that? Look down at verse 24. "He will destroy mighty men and the holy people." You say, why would he call them stars? Well, Daniel will do this later. Go to 12:3, and there you read this "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

And so, God's people in this text are compared to the stars because they are like the shining lights in the world. Of course, Paul uses that same image, doesn't he, with the Philippians? This king, verse 10 says, would be so proud, he would be so arrogant, that he would set himself against the people of God. In fact, Daniel says he would cause some of God's people to fall to the earth. That's likely a reference to those he would kill.

Verse 10 says, "...and it trampled them down." This predicted Antiochus would bring severe persecution to God's people. Which is exactly what happened almost 300 years after this prophecy. Let me give you a glimpse of Antiochus's reign of terror over the people of God, just so you appreciate this text and what it's teaching.

Antiochus, when he came to power, was thoroughly Greek. He had bought into everything Greek; the Greek way of life, the Greek philosophy, everything pertaining to the Greek world; and he had one primary political agenda, and that was to force the Jews to become Greek in their thinking and behavior. If they resisted his policy of Hellenization, which is what it was called,

they would be severely persecuted, or even killed. In the year 175, as I said, he had schemed his way to power and then his persecution of the Jews began immediately, in small ways. But it began in earnest in the year 170 B.C., when he assassinated the Jewish high priest, Onias III,

in 169 B.C., he invaded Egypt. Remember, he wanted to go down to the south, he wanted to have Egypt as his possession. As he returned home to Syria, he stopped in Jerusalem and he murdered many of the Jewish people. He plundered the temple, he took its greatest treasures, including the furniture from the temple. I'm going to quote several times tonight from the Book of Maccabees, which are not inspired, but they record the Jewish history of this period.

Here's 1 Maccabees 1:20-21 and following:

He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all of its utensils. He took also the table for the bread of the Presence...,” where the daily bread was placed, “...the cups for drink-offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found. Taking them all, he went into his own land. He shed much blood and spoke with great arrogance.

2 Maccabees refers to his killing spree. 2 Maccabees 5:11 says,

...Raging inwardly, he left Egypt, (he felt like he had been betrayed, by the way, and so he came and) took the city (of Jerusalem) by storm. He commanded his soldiers to cut down relentlessly everyone they met and to kill those who went into their houses. Then there was massacre of young and old, destruction of boys, women and children, and slaughter of young girls and infants. Within the total of three days eighty thousand were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting, and as many were sold into slavery as were killed.

**Commented [CJ1]:** can't really know what version of Maccabees Pastor Tom is using, but I googled the text as he spoke it in the sermon, and this appears to be 1 Maccabees 1:21, instead of 1:20, which is what Pastor Tom stated in the sermon.  
<https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrsa/1-maccabees/passages/?q=1-maccabees+1:21-31>



40,000 killed, 40,000 carried off into slavery. The next year, in 168 B.C., he invaded Egypt again. This time, however, he was confronted by the Roman general, Laenas. Laenas gave Antiochus an ultimatum. At this point, Rome was beginning to exercise its power; it was beginning to rise. You know Roman history, we're getting close to that period of time, and Laenas gave Antiochus an ultimatum. He said, if you want to continue to try to conquer Egypt, fine. Just know you're also going to be at war with Rome. And if you don't want to be at war with Rome, then you just need to go home.

Antiochus told Laenas he needed to think about it, like a typical politician, I need some time to consider this. Laenas agreed to give him some time to consider the decision. And then Laenas, if you remember the story, famously drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus and said, make up your mind before you leave the circle. I'll give you time to think, just don't leave the circle until you've decided.

He tucked his tail between his legs and headed back to Syria. After his humiliation in Egypt, the following year, in 167 B.C., he sent his chief tax collector, Apollonius, to Jerusalem. The result was a massacre again; massive looting, rampant destruction. Again, listen to 1 Maccabees 1:29:

Two years later, the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. (It was more than 20000 soldiers, by the way.) Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, (as it turns out he took advantage of their worshipping on a Sabbath day) dealt a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. They took captive the women and children, and seized the livestock.

He followed this massacre with enforced Hellenization. Notice how Daniel describes it in verse 11. This horn, this ruler Antiochus "...even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host..." Who is this, this Commander of the host? It's no one less than God himself. Down in verse 25, this person is called the Prince of princes, a name reserved for **God**. Shockingly,

**Commented [CJ2]:** **Dan 8:20** - "The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. I think Pastor Tom meant verse 25. **Dan 8:25** - "And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his [fn]influence; And he will magnify *himself* in his heart, And he will [fn]destroy many while *they are* [fn]at ease. He will even [fn]oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without [fn]human agency.

Antiochus was such a blasphemer that he considered himself God's equal. He intentionally set himself in opposition against Yahweh; attacked His people.

In fact, notice verse 25. "He will even oppose the Prince of princes." How did he do that? Well, he sought to eradicate the worship of God entirely, from the land of Israel. Go back to verse 11. "...It removed the regular sacrifice from Him." The Hebrew expression, "the regular sacrifice" refers to the morning and evening sacrifices offered each day at the temple. It may also refer to all that went on with the worship of God at the temple. Antiochus would cause all of the worship of Yahweh at the temple in Jerusalem to cease; and that's exactly what happened.

In 167 B.C., Antiochus issued the order to stop all temple worship. Verse 11 goes on to say, "...and the place of His sanctuary..." of God's sanctuary, "...was thrown down." That could refer to the city of Jerusalem, but more likely to the temple itself. You say, did he destroy the temple? No. But he completely, totally, desecrated the temple. How did he do that? Well, in December of 167 B.C., he erected, in the temple court, an altar to Zeus. And commanded that sacrifices be made, including a pig, and its juices were spread all over the temple grounds.

Here's what 1 Maccabees says. 1 Maccabees 1:54, "Now on the 15th day of Chislew, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year..." (the Seleucid kingdom), "...they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt-offering. 2 Maccabees goes into a little more detail in 6:2.

(He caused them) to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus... ...Harsh and utterly grievous was the onslaught of evil. For the temple was filled with debauchery and revelling by the Gentiles, who dallied with prostitutes and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit," (I mentioned the pig). The altar was covered with abominable offerings that were forbidden by the laws. People could neither keep the sabbath, nor observe the festivals of their ancestors, nor so much as confess themselves to be Jews.

Look at verse 12. “And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice...” Now, there's some debate about what that expression “on account of transgression” means. It could mean because of the transgression of Antiochus. More likely, I think it means because of the transgression of the Jewish people. Because of their sin, God brought His judgment in the form of Antiochus’s persecution. In fact, the book of Maccabees refers to the fact that there were plenty among the Jewish people who welcomed this Hellenization, who were eager to fit in with their culture.

Because of the transgression of God's people, God gave them over to Antiochus in the sense that Antiochus controlled their land, persecuted God's people and ended all sacrifices to Yahweh. Notice verse 12: and this horn “...will fling truth to the ground...” There's a graphic description. Sadly, it sounds all too familiar, even in our culture. How did Antiochus fling truth to the ground? He did it by ignoring the Word of God initially, then by suppressing the teaching of God's Word, and ultimately by attempting to destroy the Scripture itself. We heard earlier about efforts by the Catholic Church to destroy the Scripture, as translated by William Tyndale. This is exactly what happened in that day.

1 Maccabees 1:56 says, “The books of the law that they found...” wherever they found someone who had the scrolls, who had the Scripture, “...they tore to pieces and burned with fire,” those books. “Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king.”

Of course, that is an utterly fruitless enterprise. I wish I had time to take you to Jeremiah 36, where you see the story of Jehoiakim, who tried to destroy the Word of God, and all who try to do so ultimately end up destroying themselves. Verse 12 says, and it will “perform its will.” This ruler will “perform its will and prosper.” In the end, Antiochus was able to do exactly what he pleased without any sort of control, without anyone saying no. This underscores the absolute power that he exercised over Israel at this time. At the same time, just in the way it’s said here, you can kind of sense the shock in Daniel, even as he writes this, that although Antiochus did all these things, he still continued to prosper. This is a struggle God's people always have in every

generation. Why doesn't God intervene? How can He tolerate that? Why doesn't He strike that person to the ground?

In the middle of this vision, two angels suddenly appeared. Verse 13, "Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking..." Daniel here overheard a heavenly conversation. One angel was speaking to another, presumably describing this vision that Daniel was seeing, perhaps explaining a portion of it, and the second angel interrupted. I love this. This happens even among angels. It happens in my family and it happens among angels.

A second angel interrupted him to ask a crucial question, no doubt a question that Daniel himself had had at this point. Verse 13, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?" How long would the worship of Yahweh cease at the temple? By the way, you see that expression, "the transgression that causes horror."

That is equivalent, as we will see in the future, to an expression in 11:31 that you will recognize, "the abomination that causes desolation." Happened in Antiochus's time; it was a reference to his setting up the altar of Zeus in the temple. It will happen on a much grander scale in the time of the end, when Antichrist will set up an image of himself to be worshipped. How long? How long would this continue? How long would the people of God continue to be persecuted by this "slick piece of scum"?

Well, since the second angel had asked the question, really, for Daniel's sake, notice the first angel addresses his answer to Daniel. Verse 14, "He said to me, 'For 2,300 evenings and mornings...'" That's how long it's going to last. Now this expression is debated. There are two possibilities of what the angel men by 2300 evenings and mornings. One option is that he means 2300 sacrifices. And since there were two a day this totals 1,150 days, or three years and two months. You say, well, how do they figure that out? How did they lay that out over Antiochus's history? Well, in December of 167, you remember, Antiochus has set up the altar to Zeus. The temple was rededicated to the worship of Yahweh in December of 164.

Now, that's not exactly 2,300 days. But those who hold this view argue that, well, the daily sacrifice might have stopped before he set up the altar to Zeus at the temple, and that that is possible. I think the second option for understanding this expression is more likely, and that is it simply represents 2,200 days. There are several reasons to accept this view. First of all, literally, the Hebrew reads this way: "Until evening and morning, 2300." Now, in the Old Testament, the phrase "evening and morning" describes what? A day. A day.

A second reason to take this view is that, in Hebrew, to distinguish between two parts of a day, you include the number with both parts. You know this; for example, 40 days and 40 nights. If you want to talk about two different day parts, you put a number with both. He doesn't do that here. A third reason to take this view is, is, you know, some will say, wow, this must be three and a half years, like he talks about in chapter 7 and 9. That's confusing everything, because to appeal to chapter 7 and 9, to argue for three and a half years here, is invalid because those passage are describing Antichrist, not this evil man Antiochus who has already lived and died. So, the length of the persecution then that would come under Antiochus was 2,300 days. That's about six years and four months. It's a long time, but it's a limited time. Plug that away. That'll become important in a moment.

Now, the 2,300 days ends, we know it ends, with the rededication of the temple. Notice the end of verse 14: "...the holy place will be properly restored." So, there's the end of the 2,300 days. That was December of 164. So, what began? Well, it began in the fall of 170 B.C. What significant event happened in the fall of 170 B.C.? It was when the former, faithful, high priest was murdered. So that's the time this persecution will continue.

Verse 14: "...then the holy place will be properly restored." God promised Daniel, and promised Daniel's people, God's people, that after this intense six-year period of persecution, the temple would be rededicated. A little more than three years after Antiochus had set up his altar to Zeus, a man that we will meet later in coming weeks named Judas Maccabees cleansed and rededicated the temple on December 14th, 164 B.C. The Jewish Feast of Hanukkah is still celebrated in December today. By the way, the word 'Hanukkah' means 'dedication,' commemorates the

rededication of the temple, the cleansing and rededication of the temple after Antiochus in 164 B.C.

Now, if you're sitting there thinking, I came for spiritual food and you're giving me history, let me correct your thinking. Why does this matter? What is the point? Why would this be in the Bible? Well, there are some crucial lessons for us that come from this amazing story. Let me just walk them through with you.

Number one: God prepares us, as He did the people who would suffer under Antiochus, for times of trouble so that He can preserve us through them. I mean, think about this. Why did God provide so much insight into the time between the testaments? Why so much revelation about the kingdoms of Greece and Rome and men like Antiochus? Remember, there was no revelation from God from about 420 B.C. in Malachi's prophecy, until Gabriel's announcement of the birth of John and of Jesus, almost 450 years later. Just to put that in the time frame, that's about from the year 1570 until now. For those years, no revelation. But in His great grace, while God didn't give revelation during that time, God gave, through Daniel, His people revelation about that time. Why? For their peace and confidence in the middle of their trouble and their trial; for their hope in God's sovereignty over their trouble; for their hope in God's sovereignty, to bring it to an end in His time and in keeping with His plan.

Chapter 8 was written beforehand, to warn the people of God of a crisis that wouldn't come until 375 years after Daniel wrote. It would be one of the darkest times in the history of God's people. They would find themselves under the persecution of this maniacal madman who would take every effort to destroy their faith. He would try to corrupt God's people and those he couldn't corrupt, he would kill.

Why did God's people need to know about this ahead of time? Because being forewarned helps you to prepare to endure it. If I could use an example without making light of the suffering these people went through in this time, let me just give you a sort of everyday example. It's like when you're sitting in the dentist chair and the dentist says, "Prepare yourself; this may sting a little."

What he means is, get a really firm grip on the chair, because this is going to hurt a lot; and it helps you prepare for that moment.

This is what God is doing for His people. By the way, Jesus does the same thing. I want you to turn to John, because here we get an insight into why God does this. Look at John 15. This is during the upper room discourse, and Jesus tells the disciples about what's coming. Verse 18:

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent me.

Now go down to 16:2. He gets very specific.

They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. These things they will do because they had not known the Father or Me.

You say, well, wait a minute. Why do I need to know that? I'd rather not know that! Why does Jesus tell the disciples this is coming? Look at verse 4. "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them."

OK. Why? Why do I need to remember that You told me? Go back to verse 1. "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling." That's why God tells us the difficulties and the troubles that are coming. God's preserving power is present, but He wants to forewarn us of the trouble that's coming, just like He did the people who would live in the time of Antiochus. He forewarned them. Why? So that they would know and remember that God said this would come, and they would be kept from stumbling.

By the way, that's the same in our lives. The things that we're told about the suffering of this life, the things we're told about expecting that we will encounter persecution and suffering in a fallen world, you know what that does in our own individual and personal lives? It preserves us. It keeps us from stumbling, because the Bible says this is going to happen. Don't be surprised. "Man is born for trouble as the sparks fly upward." He's not going to protect you from trouble. He didn't protect His own Son. So when it comes, you won't stumble. You'll know; He told you, He prepared you. It's OK.

Secondly, God prepares us for times of trouble in order to remind us that the prosperity of the wicked is only for a moment. You know, these kings seemed invincible. First, it was Medo-Persia seemed invincible, and then Alexander came and crushed Medo-Persia. Then Alexander seemed invincible, and he dies under mysterious circumstances at the age of 33. Then Antiochus comes along, and he seems completely and utterly invincible. We'll discover that he, too, dies in a fascinating way under the hand of God. Listen, there are no untouchable rulers. We learned that in chapter 5, didn't we? Belshazzar in his dining hall with the walls of Babylon around him having a feast, and God shows up.

You see it in Psalm 73, right? It's easy to look at the prosperity of the wicked and think they're untouchable. Nothing happens to them. And then, the writer of Psalm 73 says, I thought that until I went into the sanctuary and then I remembered, what? Their end; You have put them in slippery places. It's not going to last. Keep that in mind. The prosperity of the wicked, those who seem invincible, those who seem like God's enemies and like they're untouchable, they aren't.

Thirdly, God prepares us for times of trouble to remind us that, in His sovereignty, He has fixed the times and limits of persecution. It was true for Antiochus, right? 2,300 days, that's it, and then it's done. Same thing was true in Revelation 2:10, when Christ says to the church in Smyrna, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for 10 days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."



Listen, God has established and fixed the boundaries of this world's evil and wicked rulers. And when He says they're done, they'll be done, just like we saw with Antichrist in chapter 7. And then finally, God prepares us for times of trouble simply because He loves us. There's no better way for me to put it than John Calvin does. In his commentary on this passage, he says, "Although the church often lies prostrate in the world and is trodden underfoot, yet it is always precious before God. Although the sons of God are pilgrims on earth, and have scarcely any place in it because they are as castaways, yet they are nevertheless citizens of heaven. Hence, we derive this useful lesson,"- listen to this. You want to know what the lesson here is? Here it is. "That we should bear such patiently when we are thrown prostrate on the ground, and are despised by tyrants and those who condemn God. In the meantime, our seat is laid up in heaven, and God numbers us among the stars. Although, as Paul says, here, we are considered as dung and the offscouring of all things." To the people around us, that's their perception. But God has set His love upon us, and God sees us as among the stars. Let's pray together.

Father, how can we ever thank You for Your goodness in revealing Yourself in this way? Lord, thank You for what You shared, through Daniel, with Your people who would live during the time of Antiochus, who would suffer.

Lord, there were real brothers and sisters of ours who live during those days. And because of Your love for them, You prepared them, so that they would be kept from stumbling. Thank you, Father, that You have prepared us in the same way. You prepared us by telling us to expect the troubles and difficulties of this life. You've prepared us by telling us that we would endure persecution, that people would hate us. But thank you, oh God, that You can bring us through that, and that Your love is unchanging; it is fixed as the North Star. And that you see us, not as the dung of the earth, like the world does; not as the offscouring of all things, but as the stars of heaven. Lord, we look forward to the day when we can worship You, in Your presence, for Your great love. It's in Jesus' name that we pray,

Amen.

**Commented [CJ3]:** Wasn't sure if this was meant to be a direct quote or a paraphrase. I couldn't find the exact wording, so I just wrote it as Pastor Tom spoke it. This is the only reference [link](#) I found online, and it doesn't match Pastor Tom's quote.