

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE ANTICHRIST

Daniel 8:1-27

Key Verse: 8:17

"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.'"

Daniel chapter 8 is apparently a repetition of chapter 7. The author of Daniel repeats the same event of chapter 7 to explain that the kings of the world are very powerful. The power of the kings of the world is indeed great. However, there is another invisible power which can devastate and ruin even the powerful kings and kingdoms. It devastates especially those who are faithful to God. Chapter 8 shows that the power of the evil one is getting stronger and stronger until he rebels against God and destroys the holy saints and desecrates the temple of God. We call this one the Antichrist, the agent of the Devil, a master of intrigue. But God destroys the Devil. In this passage we learn that there are worldly powers and the invisible power of the Antichrist.

I. Daniel's vision of a ram and a goat (1-8)

First, Daniel's vision (1-2). In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, Daniel had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to him. In his vision he saw himself in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in a vision he was beside the Ulai Canal. When Daniel was filled with the Spirit of God, he transcended himself. He was Daniel, but he was not himself; he was part of the prophecy in a vision. At that time, Daniel was in a sorrowful state of mind and he was a POW and he was old and tired. He was in a troubled world, and at the same time he was in a spiritual realm experiencing God's vision. At that time, the world was so evil and the leaders of the world were so corrupt. The empires of the times were nothing but a den of demons and a foxhole of the Devil. People were living in consuming sorrow and decomposition of their bones under brutal rulers. What harassed them most was the invisible enemy, the Antichrist—the Devil, who drove people to deception, constant torment and unbearable distress.

But Daniel was different. In that situation, Daniel loved God. When Daniel loved God, God was with him and gave him the peace of God that passes all human understanding. God also inspired him to be filled with the secret of heaven and with prophetic insight. Obviously Daniel was not groaning over his situation and his old age; rather he went beyond his human thinking and meditated on the word of God day and night. Then God brought him to the heavenly realm to see the troubled world from a bird's-eye view and let him know the sovereignty of God. God gave him the

word of God concerning future prophecy to be fulfilled in a vision. We can see many examples in the Bible of God giving visions to his servants in troubled times.

Paul was greatly persecuted and his old body had many pains. In addition, he suffered unbearable misunderstanding from fellow Jews. Many Christian fellows said, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." (2 Cor 10:10) At that time, when he was in Ephesus, he determined to go to Rome. He said, "I must visit Rome also" (Ac 19:21). He was in an unceasing anguish in his heart because of his people's ignorance of God's mission to a lost world. He was old and tired. But he was not worried about his future security. Moreover, he had a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7)--perhaps bad eyesight due to much reading or a stomachache due to irregular eating. He was full of problems since he was overseeing God's ministry throughout the whole world of the times. But he was not distressed. One day, in the midst of physical pain, he prayed to God. Then his burden was lifted and he was caught up to the third heaven, which was paradise. There, he could not be sure if he was in the body or out of it (2 Cor 12:2). He was in paradise. Though his body was in the world, his "real man" was in the kingdom of God. To Paul, this world was like a factory in which he had to work hard. But his inner man was in the kingdom of God, where he rejoiced in the love and peace of God.

St. John is another example. When he was young he was ambitious and passionate (Lk 9:54). But when he surveyed the cross of Jesus he met the glorious risen Christ and was changed; his spiritual eyes were opened. After that, he loved God and he lived in the grace of our Lord Jesus. At that time, persecutions against Christians were fiery, so St. John was charged with rebellion against the Roman Empire and sent to the island of Patmos with a life sentence. But he did not see the cruel faces of political leaders. Rather, he saw the glory of God: He saw the kingdom of heaven. He heard the angels' chorus singing: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Rev 4:11). Revelation 5:12 continues, singing: "'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!'"

Here we learn that we must overcome our fallen man's mentality. We must overcome the desires of our sinful nature so that we may not be captured by the roaring Devil to be devoured. Instead, we must fight the good fight of faith and run the race of faith with perseverance. The more the world is troubled, the more we must love God and do our best to fulfill God's mission to a lost world. We should be victorious and be caught up to heaven and realize that God is the Sovereign Ruler.

Second, the vision of a ram (3-4). Look at verses 3 and 4. "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 he charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him, and none could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great." The two-horned ram that Daniel saw represents the kings of Media and Persia (20). A ram with two horns was standing beside a canal. Its two horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew later. Daniel watched the ram as he charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him and no one could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great. This tells us that the power of the empire of the Medes and the Persians was indeed great and with great power she horrified and destroyed the people of the world. As we studied in chapter 7, Media and Persia destroyed the most powerful country, Babylonia. They were a united kingdom located between Egypt and India. Later they conquered Lydia to the west, Babylon to the north, and Egypt to the south. Their power was like that of a mighty ram against a baby rabbit. Media and Persia seized and captured and destroyed Babylon irrevocably. They destroyed the cultural achievements of the Babylonian Empire. They used all the comforts and benefits established by the Babylonian Empire. They also abused the Babylonians' human rights as they pleased.

Third, the vision of a goat (5-8). A goat is compared to the Greek Empire. When Daniel was thinking about the vision of a ram, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. This goat was so speedy that when he ran he produced such a remarkable degree of acceleration that his feet did not have to touch the ground. The goat was so powerful that when he attacked the ram, he shattered his two horns, and the ram was powerless to stand against him. In the end, the goat knocked the ram to the ground and trampled him under his feet. No one could rescue the ram from his power. The goat became very great. But at the height of his power, his large horn was broken off and in its place four prominent horns grew up to the winds of heaven. Four prominent horns refer to his four generals.

In light of secular history, the horn between the goat's two eyes refers to Alexander the Great (3,5,6--323 B.C.). Alexander the Great was the king of Macedonia and one of the greatest generals in history. When he began his campaign, he did not have enough army forces. He had only 30,000 soldiers and no newly made weapons. But he was confident that he could conquer the Persians on the bank of the Granicus River. Darius, the Persian commander, had a large number of soldiers who were well-disciplined and a cavalry for flanking maneuvers. The Persian army even captured one of Alexander's camps. But the major forces of Alexander's army made a surprise attack on the headquarters of the Persian army forces and won the war. After this, Alexander reinforced his troops and reached the rich plain of India. Next his fleet sailed

along the coast of the Persian Gulf.

What was Alexander the Great's political approach to the colonial countries? He was not mindful of colonial people. He forced colonial people to adopt Greek culture. He wanted to see all conquered people speak his native language, Greek. In this way Alexander the Great tortured colonial people, not only by shedding blood, but also by coercing them to study Greek. He thought that Greek culture was number one. But his arrogant mind only oppressed colonial people. Alexander became sick and died at the age of 33 with no son to inherit his name. Of course he died because of his sickness. But he died when he finished his conquests and had nothing to do and spent his time in hedonistic living. When he lived a corrupt life, legions of demons crept into him and tortured him until he died tragically.

II. Daniel's vision of another horn (9-27)

Historically, Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria conquered the Beautiful Land, the holy Jerusalem. He stopped the offering of sacrifices at the temple. So God's people could not offer sacrifices at the temple. He also destroyed many parts of the temple to take out tuckpointed gold from the walls. And he brought the head of a pig into the temple and worshiped his own god. Antiochus IV Epiphanes represents Antichrist.

In verse 9, "another horn" also symbolizes the Antichrist. This one is invisible and most powerful. All the kings of the world exercise their power in the limits of time and space. But his power lasts far longer than that of the kings of the world. In history, no one landed on a star. But the Antichrist is so powerful that he reached to the starry host and took some of them down. Until now the kings of the world did not believe the holy God Almighty. Yet, they did not dare to stand against the holy God Almighty. But this Antichrist even challenged God by desecrating the temple of God with the bloody head of a pig.

The Antichrist also persecutes the holy saints of God day and night. That is why verse 23 calls him "rebel" and "master of intrigue." With astounding devastating power, he destroys the mighty men and holy people. Look at verse 24. "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 the mighty men and the holy people." We must know that the Antichrist is the invisible Devil, who ruins our soul. Whenever we do not love God wholeheartedly, the Antichrist immediately comes into our hearts to persuade us not to commit ourselves to God and to live as we please. When we listen to the Devil, soon we find we are just like the Devil, smart and wicked.

Look at verses 11-12. "It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place

of his sanctuary was brought low. Because of rebellion, the host of the saints and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground." The Antichrist places himself in the place of God. The Antichrist hinders the holy saints from worshiping God or studying the Bible. "For Christ and the Church" was the motto of Harvard University. But antichrists have made it difficult for Harvard students even to call God's name. Dr. Joseph Schafer, when he was in the Ph.D. program at Harvard, went to New York every weekend to escape from the power of the Antichrist. The Antichrist prospers, whatever he does. With his success and power he does his best to throw truth to the ground.

The Antichrist likes most to devour yuppie people. Look at verse 25b. "When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power." There are many people who work hard and establish themselves by their future security and become complacent. But to our surprise, after they establish their future security many people are not happy. They become very miserable. It's because the Devil never leaves complacent and proud people alone. The Devil comes to them and captures them one by one and puts them in the place of distress and torment. Usually we think that those who have fame and money are happy. But 99.9% of those who have fame and money are under the torment of the invisible Devil's intrigue. Most people work hard to build up future security and live in ease. What they say sounds good. But they are nothing but couch potato candidates and gourmet food for the Antichrist.

Look at verse 23. "In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise." This verse tells us that the Antichrist has two faces: one is smiling, the other very stern and makes people utterly depressed. In this verse "rebels" refers to the antichrists. The Antichrist is not one. All those who are against God or against the holy saints are antichrists. They rebel against God. Also, antichrists are completely wicked, like the stern-faced king, the master of intrigue. This is the image of the Antichrist. He is strong. But his power is not his own; it is from the Devil. The Antichrist causes people to stumble by deception. The Antichrist causes each one to think, "I am the greatest." So it is easy for anyone to be overcome by the deception of the Antichrist. Antichrists are those who live without mission. When we look at them, they look confident and seem to have no problems. They look carefree. We say to ourselves: "What am I doing? Why do I have to live a pure life?" That happens when we see external phenomena only. But when we have spiritual insight to see their inner men, they are all nothing but suicide candidates or drug patients because they are under the torment of the Antichrist (Ps 73:1-17). When we come to God and study the Bible, we understand their final destiny. Those who live without God are oppressed by the burden of sin and torment of Satan. After that they

face the inevitable judgment of God. But those who keep their hearts pure and those who are loyal to God can make the sovereign Lord their refuge.

The vision Daniel saw concerns the distant future. So Daniel was told to seal up the vision. As soon as Daniel saw the vision, he was exhausted and lay ill for several days. When Daniel saw the first vision, his face turned pale. But this time when he saw the vision, he was exhausted and lay ill for several days (7:28; 8:27). Daniel was probably terrified even to think about the activities of the Antichrist.

In this passage we learn that we must admit the existence of the Antichrist, who hinders our lives of faith. We must be aware that each person's worst enemy is not his brother or uncle, but the Antichrist, the invisible Devil, who hinders us from coming to God. But God promised that the Antichrist will finally be destroyed.