**Believers in Babylon Series**

**“Wars, Wickedness, and Waiting”**

**Daniel 8.1-27**

**Preaching Prelude**

In our current series entitled “Believers in Babylon” we’ve been looking at the book of Daniel and how God enabled Daniel to live for the glory of God as an exile in a strange land.

Today we come to Daniel chapter eight where Daniel has another dream about a ram, a goat, and a little horn that causes get harm and violence against the people of God. But after all the wars, wickedness, and waiting, Daniel hears these encouraging words that this enemy of God’s people *“will be destroyed*.”

As the ushers come forward and we prepare to give the Lord His tithes, and our offerings and alms please listen to similar words of encouragement found in the book of Revelation as our call to worship.

**Call to Worship**

“*Rejoice, O heaven and you saints, for God has given judgment for you.* *Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for His judgments are true and just.*

*Praise our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him, small and great. Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory.”*

(adapted from Rev.18.20, 19.1b-2a, 5, 6b-7a ESV)

**Scripture Reading**

*In the third year of King Belshazzar’s reign, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me.****2****In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susain the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal.****3****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.****4****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.*

***5****As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground.****6****It came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at it in great rage.****7****I saw it attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering its two horns. 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.****8****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.*

***9****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.****10****It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them.****11****It set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the Lord; it took away the daily sacrifice from the Lord, and His sanctuary was thrown down.****12****Because of rebellion, the Lord’s people and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground.*

***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?”* ***14****He said to me, “It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.”*

***15****While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man.****16****And I heard a man’s voice from the Ulai calling, “Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision.”* ***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.”*

***18****While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet.* ***19****He said: “I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.****20****The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia.****21****The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king.****22****The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.*

***23****“In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise.****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 those who are mighty, the holy people.****25****He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. 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.*

***26****“The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.”* ***27****I, Daniel, was worn out. I lay exhausted for several days. Then I got up and went about the king’s business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.*

**Introduction**

This morning we come to chapter eight in the book of Daniel. Let me begin by reading a couple of quotes I came across as I prepared for this sermon. “Daniel chapter eight is a preacher’s nightmare.” (Deffinbaugh) One theologian wrote that Daniel chapter eight verses 11 and 12 are “the most difficult short passage of the entire book.” (Montgomery) These are not the statements you want to read when you are preparing a sermon! But we do believe that “*all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”* Right? So that includes Daniel chapter eight. Let’s ask the Holy Spirit to teach us God’s Word this morning so that we would be encouraged and strengthened as we live in our Babylon.

As I mentioned last week, the last six chapters of Daniel (7-12) are 80% prophecy and 20% narration. In these chapters Daniel is looking back look on dreams and visions he had during previous years recorded in chapters 1-6.

Since chapters 7-12 focus primarily on prophecy it is important for us to set some “ground rules” of the interpretation of prophecy.

1. The book of Daniel is a part of Holy Scripture, and therefore inspired by God, accurate, and trustworthy.
2. The prophecies of Daniel must be understood in relationship to and in light of other prophecies in Daniel.
3. The prophecies of Daniel must be understood in relationship to and in light of the rest of Scripture without causing contradiction or confusion.
4. Because prophetic literature uses figurative language one should be cautious in attempting to identify every horn, head, or toe.
5. Often the simplest interpretation is the safest and most edifying.

**Chapter Eight**

Chapter eight is divided into two parts. Daniel wrote down his dream in verses 1-14 and then the angel, Gabriel, gives the divine interpretation in verses 15-27. This is the first time an angel’s name is mentioned in the Bible. Just a little tidbit for the next time you are playing Bible Trivia. Daniel received the dream *in the third year of King Belshazzar’s reign.*(8.1) After Nebuchadnezzar’s death Belshazzar ascended to the throne after other successors experienced untimely deaths or assassinations. Belshazzar’s is most remembered as the king who saw the handwriting of the wall in chapter five. He was killed that same night as the Persian’s invaded and captured the great capital city of Babylon. (5.30)

*In the third year of King Belshazzar’s reign, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me.* (8.1)

Daniel’s second dream came two years after the dream that is recorded in chapter seven. Daniel’s first dream ended with Daniel writing, *“This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”* (7.28) Daniel was deeply troubled because he desired to know the details of what was going to happen after the destruction of Babylon. He knew that Babylon was going to fall but Daniel wondered about what empire would conquer Babylon and what would happen after that?

It seems that these questions occupied Daniel’s thought until two years later Daniel writes,*In my vision. I saw myself in the citadel of Susain the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal.*(8.2) Daniel had been either mentality or physically transported to a little unknown town of *Susain*. At that the time of Daniel’s second dream people would had been unfamiliar with this little town but it wouldn’t be long until *Susain* would become the great capital city for the Persian Empire, the Empire that would overthrow Babylon. So, Daniel is standing in “enemy territory” and not just standing in the Persian capital city but in the Emperor’s Palace. (translated in the NIV “*citadel*”)

This whole experience of being transported to another location would have been enough to put Daniel into a state of shock but standing in the Persian Palace must have blown his mind. All of Daniel’s other dream experiences have been in Babylon either standing before Nebuchadnezzar (Ch.2, 4), at Belshazzar’s great feast (Ch.5), or laying on his bed (Ch.7). But now Daniel finds himself outside of Babylon in a foreign land. This unusual experience described in detail by Daniel in the opening verses of chapter eight becomes the stage on which a great drama is played out. Daniel’s dream uses animals to describe the conquest of the second and third empires. What Daniel sees in his dream is fantasy but what he is describing is reality. Daniel is seeing real nations and real historical events.

**Daniel’s Dreams**

In Daniel’s previous dreams he saw four kingdoms prior to the establishment of God’s eternal Kingdom in Christ.



Christian teaching throughout the ages has always held that Nebuchadnezzar’s statue in chapter two are the four empires prior to the first coming of Christ. (Babylon, Persian, Greece, and Rome.)



In chapter seven Daniel saw four beasts. Conservative scholars agree, with few exceptions, that the four great beasts in Daniel’s dream in chapter seven signify the same four empires prior to the first coming of Christ. (Babylon, Persian, Greece, and Rome.)

But Daniel’s dream in chapter eight is different in that he only sees two beasts. Scholars agree that in this dream two beasts represent Persia and Greece waging war. Daniel sees the increase wickedness in the world, and asks God how long will the people of God have to wait for deliverance. So, as Daniel stood in the Persian Palace he saw a two-horned ram.

**The Two-Horned Ram**



*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.* (8.3-4)

And Gabriel later tells Daniel, “*The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia.”* (8.20)

Gabriel clearly identifies the two-horned ram as the empire of the Medes and Persians. (8.20) You don’t need to be a biblical scholar to figure that out! The two horns, one *longer than the other* represents the dual states of the one empire. We are told that Persia’s conquest will charge *toward the west and the north and the south.* Even through Persia did expand to the east, history records that its principle movement was to the west, north, and south. No kingdom could stand against the Persian Empire for 200 years. But then comes the one-horned goat.

**The One-Horned Goat**



*As I was thinking about this* (two-horned ram)*, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground.* (8.5)

And Gabriel tells Daniel, *The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king.*(8.21)

Again, you don’t have to be a biblical scholar to understand that the goat is Greece. Gabriel states it clearly. Even though the description of the goat is brief it is obviously anticipating the dynamic role of Alexander the Great, the first king of Greece. The single unicorn type horn symbolizes that Alexander single handedly lead the empire to greatest. Alexander was one of the world’s greatest military minds and nothing could stand in his way. He crossed *the whole earth without touching the ground.* Alexander would wage war against the Persians and bring an end to the Persian Empire.

**The War between the Ram and the Goat**



*It* (the one-horned goat) *came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at it in great rage. I saw it attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering its two horns. 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.*(8.6-7)

Daniel’s dream describes Alexander’s mighty victory over the Persians. History records that Alexander the Great died at the height of his power while in his thirties. But before his death Alexander divided his empire among four Generals, which is illustrated in Daniel’s dream of four horns.

**The Four Horns**



*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.* (8.8)

And Gabriel tells Daniel, *The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.* (8.22)

But Daniel sees a little horn emerging out of the four horns. He writes, “*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.”* (8.9)

**The Wicked Horn**

Many identify the Little Horn with Antiochus Epiphanes, a Greek king, who rose to power about a hundred years after Alexander had died. I’m going to call him “Anti” for short. Anti’s military expeditions covered all the areas mentioned in verse nine including the Palestine, which is identified as *the beautiful land*.

This horn, which started small, grew exceeding great. Daniel tells us, “*It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them.”* (8.10) This description is something new. The Ram and the Goat had magnified themselves (8.4, 8) but this Horn magnifies himself to be equal to *the host of the heavens –* equal to God. This Horn had no regard for God or His *starry host* and considered himself capable of trampling over the army of God.

Gabriel helps us to understand the Horn. *The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.* (8.22) These are the four Generals mention earlier that replaced Alexander.

*“In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have 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.*(8.23-24)

Gabriel’s focus is not on the Horn’s desire for world domination but on its character. I want you to notice three characteristics that are mentioned about the Horn that have not been mentioned in reference to the Ram, the Goat, or the Four Horns.

First, Gabriel tells us that in the latter part of the reign of the four Generals that the rebels have become completely wicked. Up to this point the dream has only focused on the waging of war by the Ram, the Goat, and the Four Horns. But now wickedness has completed taken over and this Horn emerges as the most wicked of all. Gabriel brings attention to the Horn’s wicked character describing it as *fierce-looking, a master of intrigue* meaning that the Horn had a dark obscure nature.

Secondly, notice that this Horn *will become very strong, but not by his own power.* This Horn has a demented spiritual condition that is driven by a power other than his own. He is so wicked that it is apparent someone or something is fueling his wickedness.

Thirdly, the Horn’s *astounding devastation* is amplified by his extreme violence upon the holy people – the people of God.

Daniel tells us that this Horn *set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the Lord; it took away the daily sacrifice from the Lord, and His sanctuary was thrown down.* (8.11) History records that Anti did all three of these things. He set himself up to be as great as God demanding divine honor. His name actually means, “God Manifested.” He stopped the morning and evening sacrifices from being offered as worship. And He desecrated the temple in Jerusalem to such a point it was not fit for use. *Because of rebellion, the Lord’s people and the daily sacrifice were given over to it* (the Horn)*. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground.* (8.12) Gabriel adds, *He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they* (the people of God) *feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes.* (8.25a) This Horn not only wanted to destroy the people of God but he stood in defiance to the Messianic hopes in Christ. He took his stand against the Lord and His Anointed. (Ps.2.2)

The intense wickedness has caused some theologians to concluded that the Little Horn is not only identifying Anti of Greece but as a prototype the anti-Christ figures that will emerge throughout world history until the coming of Christ. (IJn.2.18)

But Gabriel does give Daniel some good news saying, “*Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.”*(8.25b) Just like God sent the Messianic Meteor to destroy the kingdoms of this world and establish eternal Kingdom of Christ in chapter two. Just like the Son of Man destroyed the beasts and establish His eternal Kingdom in chapter seven. Gabriel tells Daniel that the wicked horn will be destroyed, but not by human power, but by the power of God and then the end will come. (8.17, 19, 26) And we need to know that no matter how wicked the world becomes or how many anti-Christ’s there are our God reigns and His judgments are true and just.

Daniel then over hears two angels asking how long will we have to wait until God issues His judgment against the wickedness of the world.

**Waiting**

*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?”**He said to me, “It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.”* (8.13-14)

I believe it is pointless to attempt to calculate the 2,300 evenings and mornings in order to determine an exact number of days or years. This type of pointless speculation has caused an endless number of interpretations. I believe 2,300 evenings and mornings simply imply that the people of God will only have to wait a relatively short duration of time. The Apostle Peter expounds on this when he writes, *with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,**looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God? But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.* (2Pt.3.8-13)

**Closing Thoughts**

Daniel’s second dream describes the time of Daniel’s later years in Babylon up to the first coming of Christ. Daniel sees that there will be wars, the increase of wickedness, but finally the Messiah will come and destroy the works of the evil one. Christ defeated principalities and powers, making a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col.2.15)

But Daniel’s second dream also serves as a prototype of world history leading up to the second coming of Christ. Where there will be wars and rumors of wars, people will turn their ears away for the truth, and wickedness will increase but Christ will come and establish His eternal kingdom where we will enjoy our glorious inheritance. (Mt.24.6-7; 2Tim.4.3; Rev.11.15; Rev.5.10)

But Daniel’s second dream also serves as a prototype of the Christian life as we dwell in this our Babylon. Foreign forces seeking to tempt us and lead us astray attack us spiritually. If we give in to those attacks wickedness will increase in our lives. We must wait on the Lord to renew our strength to overcome the attacks of this world by the power of God.

Brothers and Sisters there is a war waging against us right now. But our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against world forces of darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness. (Eph.6.12) The warfare we experience is nothing like what is record in Daniel chapter eight or what Christians experience in Communist countries or territories control by ISIS but it’s a war nevertheless.

We live in a world where people set themselves up higher than God; they frown down on people who worship, and they have thrown truth to the ground. Many people stand in defiance to Christ. That’s the world we live in and that mindset is increasing very day. Some of you are really struggling right now. You are in a war. It seems like wickedness is winning. And you are asking, “How long do I have to wait for the Lord to show up?” You feel like Daniel at the end of this dream *worn out, exhausted, and appalled*. (8.27) But you need to hear the good news today *he will be destroyed*! What you are going through will be destroyed! Your attacker will be destroyed! It will be destroyed, but not by human power but by the work of God in your midst.

*Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power.*

*Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.* (Is.40.28-31)

And the Lord is here today to give strength to the weary. Even though you have grown weary and tired and maybe you have stumbled badly, the Lord is here today to give you His strength.

**Transition to the Table**