

DANIEL DECODED

2. LASTING HOPE

9/27/20, Daniel 8

In what ways do you think that “our nation is in trouble”? What times can you remember that compare to this time? How?

If you lived in Daniel’s time, what would be the scariest/hardest thing for you about the Exile?

What gives you hope these days?

Share about a time in your life when your hopes were most disappointed.

What are some false hopes that you think people cling to these days?

How would you feel today if you had a vision that indicated things were going to get worse?

Daniel 8:1-12 (NIV84)

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. 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.

As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none 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 toward the four winds of heaven. 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 of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. 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.

What feelings or impressions do the ram and the goat evoke compared to last week's four monsters?

What is most troubling to you about this vision?

What are your thoughts/feelings as you learn how accurate the details of the vision are?

What does God seem to think is most important here?

Daniel 8:16, 19 (NIV84)

And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision"... 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."

Why do you think it was important to God for Daniel to know this about the future?

NOTE: the "time of wrath" could be referring, among other things, to a future time when Israel would come under intense persecution.

Daniel 8:23-24 (NIV84)

"In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced 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 the mighty men and the holy people."

What is the most hostile thing toward Christians you see today?

What surprises you most when you encounter hostility directed at believers?

Daniel 8:25 (NIV84)

"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."

What are some ways deceit "prosper" today?

Where do you see a lust for power at work?

What are some reasons you think the Jews – and Christians today – draw such fire from those who desire total power and loyalty?

Antiochus set up a statue of Zeus/Jupiter in the holy temple and sacrificed a pig on it. Can you think of any contemporary examples of blasphemy and desecration?

Daniel 8:26 (NIV84)

*“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**.”*

How would knowing these things ahead of time help you during a tribulation such as this?

2 Thessalonians 2:3 (NIV)

*Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until **the rebellion** occurs and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.*

Many scholars believe that the events described in this chapter are a foreshadowing of events at the End of history. What do you feel when you hear that an Antichrist is a real, future figure?

2 Thessalonians 2:4, 9 (NIV)

*He will **oppose** and will **exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped**, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, **proclaiming himself to be God**... The coming of the lawless one will be **in accordance with how Satan works**. He will use **all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie**.*

How would you recognize him? What would be some indications? What would make it hard to be sure?

Have different members of the group take turns reading the following verses:

1 John 2:18 (NIV)

Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.

1 John 2:22 (NIV)

Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist — denying the Father and the Son.

1 John 4:3 (NIV)

But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

2 John 7 (NIV)

I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

What appears to be the animating spirit of the Antichrist?

2 Thessalonians 2:8 (NIV)

*And then the **lawless one** will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.*

How does this reveal that the foundational conflict in all of this is *spiritual*?

How would you feel if you knew we were living in the time of tribulation that this describes?

How does it make you feel when you hear that the “writing is on the wall” for the empires of the world?

Daniel 8:27 (NIV84)

I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king’s business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.

Why do you think there is such an industry claiming to know how current events reveal when Christ will return?

How would it help you if you did know when?

What’s the hardest thing about living with only partial understanding of these future events?

How might you relate to Christians who interpret Daniel differently than this view?

How does getting “about the king’s business” help you handle this information?

How does it make you feel to know that your work matters to God? How does that help you cope with the fears generated by this vision?

Who is the “real” king we are working for? How do you reconcile that with the reality that Daniel’s bosses were worldly, pagan, ungodly rulers?

If Jesus was coming back tomorrow, would you plant a tree (cf. Martin Luther)? Why/not?

We know some things Daniel did not know. For example, what does it say to you that Jesus walked the very porticoes of the temple that Antiochus desecrated during the last days of his life?

John 8:58–59 (NIV)

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

How about the fact that in the place where Antiochus declared himself divine, Jesus did also?