

The King Of Fierce Countenance

Daniel 8

Pastor John Miller

Let's read Daniel 8:1, and I'll set the context. "In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first." When we began Daniel 6, we begin the prophesies of Daniel. Earlier in the book, Daniel was interpreting the prophesies of Nebuchadnezzar, and now Daniel is interpreting the very own prophesies God gave to him directly. There are basically three prophesies that God gave directly to Daniel. This is the second one.

This prophecy is written to encourage the Jews of the captivity. We need to understand that prophecy revolves around Israel. Israel is God's time clock. I love that expression: Israel, God's time clock. Even history revolves around the nation of Israel, God's chosen people. What is said in this chapter was written and recorded to comfort and encourage the Jews of the captivity that God is in control. There is a difficult time yet in their future, but God would come and the kingdom would be fulfilled.

In the Old Testament there are two basic covenants that God made with Israel that are very important to understand in light of prophecy. The first is what is called the Abrahamic covenant made to Abraham. God promised him the land and Messiah would come through his seed. God reiterated that covenant with David. It's called the Davidic covenant—through David Messiah would come, would reign upon the throne of David, and would be an eternal kingdom. It would go on forever and ever and ever and ever. God will keep His promises both to Abraham and to David. Also, we as the church get to be participants in that.

Go back with me to verse 1. "In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar," Belshazzar was the king of Babylon, and this takes place in 551 B.C. I'm going to try to resist giving a lot of facts and information tonight, though there is going to be a lot, and it's going to be quite informational. I'll try to make more application when we get to the end of the chapter, but try not to get too bogged down in dates, times, and things like that. I'm going to give you enough information to basically understand what is going on.

The vision of this chapter actually happened 200 years after chapter 7. Between chapters 7 and 8 there is a 200-year gap, and this vision chronologically happened before chapter 5. We're in a section of the book of Daniel that doesn't come down chronologically. Another little footnote for you Bible students out there, beginning in chapter 8 (verse 1 to the end of the chapter) the text that was originally written comes back to Hebrew. The beginning of the book of Daniel (chapters 1 up to chapter 2:4) is written in Hebrew. Daniel 2, beginning in verse 4 to chapter 7:28, is written in Aramaic. The reason is believed to be that in Daniel 1, dealing with the captivity, it had more of an emphasis for the Jews. The section of Daniel 2:4-Daniel 7:28, written in Aramaic or some refer to as Chaldean, had more to do with the world-ruling empires that were Gentile, the Gentile world-ruling empires. Now, as we move from chapter 8 to the end of chapter 12, the prophesies again pertain particularly to the nation of Israel.

What's going to happen in this section is remember in Daniel 2 and then in Daniel 7 when Nebuchadnezzar had his vision, he saw the world-ruling empires as a big statue that was a man—a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, feet and toes of iron and clay. The statue represented the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire, and the Roman Empire up until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—the ten toes of iron and clay. That coincided with Daniel 7, but from God's perspective (not man's) the kingdom of men are like wild, ravenous beasts. Again, we saw these four kingdoms. These four kingdoms are known as the times of the Gentile, these Gentile world-ruling empires. Again, they were (chapter 7) Babylon, Medo-Persia (which became known as the Persian Empire), the Grecian Empire, and then the Roman Empire. Now, this is what's going to happen tonight. The second and third Gentile world-ruling empires are going to be the focus, and we're going to find a reference to a man of sin, a wicked man who will persecute Jews who will come out actually in history (our history is past, and I'll explain it to you). His name was Antiochus Epiphanes. He prefigured the anti-christ who will still yet come, future to us, during the tribulation just before Jesus Christ comes back in the Second Coming.

What we're going to focus on tonight is two kingdoms: Medo-Persian and Greece. Then we go into more depth about the Grecian Empire. I hope I haven't thoroughly confused or lost you already. I was thinking about it today. When I was in school I hated history. As a matter of fact, I hated everything. The only thing I liked was recess. Just get me out of this classroom. This is a history lesson in advance. Daniel is getting this information in amazing detail. We're going to have information tonight about Alexander the Great and the Grecian Empire taking over the world 200 hundred years before it happened. Only God can do that! Only God knows, as the Bible says, "...the beginning from the end." Only God knows what the future holds, and He's in control. About 200 years before these empires, Daniel is going to describe them in very, very graphic detail.

Daniel had this vision (verse 2), "And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai." Shushan, the palace, is about 230 miles east of Babylon. At this time, it was a very small, insignificant place but would actually become the center of the Persian Empire. We also find in the Bible that Queen Ester was in Shushan, the palace. Whether Daniel was physically transported to this spot, I believe that he was probably not physically transported but was in the vision transported. He is having a vision where he actually sees it, and in his vision he was transported to the palace there in Shushan which is also by this river named Ulai near this palace in Shushan. In verse 3, it says, "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. 4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great."

When we get to verse 20, (I just want you to peek at it) this is my challenge. I want so much to explain it right here on the spot, but from verses 15 to the end of the chapter is the explanation

of the vision. Let's peek real quick. There's no question about what this ram represents. Verse 20, "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia." So, there you have it. No mystery. No guessing. No trying to figure out who this ram represents. Nebuchadnezzar first saw Medo-Persia as part of this big vision of a statue. Daniel first saw this as a wild beast, and now they see it as the normal animal, just a ram. By the way, the ram was a symbol in the Persian Empire. They had it embossed on their coins and so forth. It was one of their symbols of a ram.

I want you to notice this ram had two horns. Of the two horns, one was higher than the other. This represents the two aspects of the kingdom, Media and Persia. In the early stages it was known as the Medo-Persian Empire. What happened was, after they merged, Persia got stronger and took control. That's the reference there to the one horn that was larger than the other. It's believed to be a reference, and I think rightfully so, to the superiority of the Persian Empire. Of course, the king of Persia was Cyrus. We also have a prophecy about King Cyrus that took place 150 years before the Persian Empire in Isaiah 45, which is amazing to me as well. So, he saw this ram (verse 4), the Medo-Persian Empire "...pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great." It's basically describing the conquests of the Medo-Persian Empire which, history does affirm, took over after the Babylonian Empire.

We have the second animal representing Greece. This animal is called a "he goat" or a male goat (King Jimmy it's "he goat") and in verse 5 it says, "And as I was considering, behold an he goat came from the west...", which would be Greece, "on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes." This goat had only one horn between its eyes. "And he came to the ram...", which is Medo-Persia, "that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him," anger or rage, "and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand." I want you to notice verse 8. "Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven." I want you to stop right there.

This "he goat," this male goat, represents Greece 334 B.C. I want you to jump with me again, this time to verses 21 and 22, and it's explained. It says there in verse 21, "And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king." That is a reference to Alexander the Great. "Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." When Alexander the Great died at the age of 33 (no more worlds to conquer), four generals that were in his armies took over different areas. Out of one of those areas, the area of Syria from the Seleucids, is going to come this wicked man of sin called Antiochus Epiphanes. That is a reference to Greece and the Grecian Empire, but go back with me to verse 5. It says, "...came from the west on the face of the whole earth," all of these kingdoms we're talking about grew in their size until you get to

the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire consumed a larger area than even Greece. So it says, "...on the face of the whole earth," and notice the statement in verse 5, "and touched not the ground." That's an amazing statement because anyone that has studied history of Greece and Alexander the Great know that Alexander the Great was famous for the speed that his armies moved and conquered others around him. He had an army of 35,000, and as a very young man he came to power.

Alexander the Great actually fought for 22 years, but he came with such speed that he was able to overtake the other nations around him. Verses 6 and 7 are describing him on into verse 8. He came and overthrew the ram, which is the Medo-Persian Empire, and in verse 8 it says "the he goat waxed very great," the Grecian Empire, "and when he was strong," the height of his strength and power, this is a reference in verse 8 to Alexander the Great's death. It says, "the great horn was broken," so at the age of 33 (no more world's to conquer) and 22 years of fighting, Alexander the Great died. They asked, "Who should we give your kingdom to?" He said, "Give it to the strong." It's interesting too that he died and it gives such great detail in that eighth verse, and then it says from this ram "came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven." We do know that out of Alexander's kingdom, four generals took over these different areas: Macedonia, Thrace, Syria, and Egypt. The focus is going to be on Syria, out of which will come this wicked man known as Antiochus Epiphanes. We're introduced to him in verse 9. Look at it with me. It says, "And out of one of them," that is, one of the four of Alexander's generals, one of these four areas, "came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south," which would be Egypt, "toward the east," which would be Persia, "and toward the pleasant land." That's a reference to the land of Israel. "And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12 And a host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. 13 Then I heard one of the saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

I want you to go back with me to verse 9. Again, I'm sure some of you are saying, "I don't have a clue what in the world this is all about or what you're talking about or what these beasts are. I think I'm going to have some nightmares tonight." Let me try to explain it as simply as I can. Out of one of these kingdoms of the four that came after Alexander the Great, specifically the Syrian kingdom led by the Seleucids which was from 175 B.C. to 164 B.C., came a man whose name was Antiochus Epiphanes of the gods. He gave himself that name, "Epiphanes of the gods." He actually claimed to be God and commanded people to worship him. In simple statement, basically he hated the Jews—nothing new. Right? He had this crazy obsession to just destroy and persecute the Jewish people. When he was on his third campaign from Syria down to Rome, which he would have to pass through Israel, he would actually persecute, kill, and seek to destroy the Jews. He actually wanted to promote Greek culture and Greek pagan

religion. He wanted to wipe out Judaism, so he forbid them to read the Torah, observe Sabbath, and to practice circumcision. Those who disobeyed the edicts were massacred. In one assault in Jerusalem, 40,000 Jews were killed in three days and 10,000 Jews were carried away into captivity. You can actually read in Josephus about Antiochus Epiphanes. You can Google his name (if you want when you go home) and Wikipedia and you can get information about this Seleucid leader named Antiochus Epiphanes and his hatred of the Jews.

I want you to notice in verse 10 that it says, "And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them." C.I. Scofield in his Study Bible says that this is the most difficult verse in all of prophecy to interpret, but I don't know that that's necessarily true. I can't be dogmatic, but I believe that these are kind of picturesque words or word pictures describing his persecution of the Jewish people. What he is most famous for was at one time he actually went to the temple in Jerusalem in defiance to the Jews and sacrificed a pig on the altar. You don't think that would make a Jew mad? To take a pig, sacrifice it on the altar in the temple, and then spread its interns all over the temple—desecrated their temple is what he did. Then he set up an image in the temple of the pagan god Jupiter and commanded the Jews to worship it.

Now, I'm going to save what I'm going to say a little bit for just a few more verses, but what happened as a result...and this takes place in history between the Old and New Testaments. What happened in light of this desecration, this became a picture, and you'll remember and recognize this phrase of what was called the abomination of desolation. Jesus spoke about it in Matthew 24, but what happened in light of that is a man by the name of Judas Maccabeus, and all the Maccabean family, revolted against Antiochus Epiphanes. That revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes was around 165 B.C. It led to the overthrow of Antiochus, and Antiochus actually died a horrible death, but victory for the Jews. What this actually led to was the feast of lights, which is what we call Hanukkah today. This is where the Jewish feast of Hanukkah comes because they actually cleansed the temple on December 25 in 165 B.C., and now they celebrate this event of the Maccabean revolt overthrowing Antiochus Epiphanes, reestablishing their temple, and it's celebrated in Hanukkah or what we call the feast of lights.

I want you to go back with me again to this little horn in verse 9. As I have been talking about Antiochus Epiphanes, some of you might be saying, "Well, isn't the little horn back in Daniel 7:8 the anti-christ?" Listen to me very carefully. Back in Daniel 7:8, the little horn came out of the fourth kingdom. It came out of the Roman kingdom. This one comes out of the third kingdom, and I don't believe that this little horn here is the anti-christ. I believe that he prefigures and pictures the anti-christ who is going to come. Just as in a sense you might say Haman pictured the anti-christ or Hitler or other people who have persecuted the Jews have pictured the anti-christ. This is a clear prefiguring or picture of a future man of sin where we are going to get him in verse 23. He is called the "king of fierce countenance." This is a historical figure known as Antiochus Epiphanes that prefigures or pretypes a future man of sin called the "king of fierce countenance" which would be the anti-christ.

In describing this man (verse 10), "And it waxed great...magnified himself," the Bible tells us

that he will place an image of himself in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. The anti-christ will claim to be God and command people to worship him just as Antiochus Epiphanes did. In verse 11 it says, "...by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down." He desecrated the Jewish temple. The question is asked in verse 13, "How long is this going to go on? How long is this wicked man going to persecute God's people?" You're saying, "How could this comfort the Jews of captivity?" Well, what upset them to realize that they still had persecution coming but knowing that God is in control and God's kingdom will come, the answer is in verse 14, "And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days," just a little over six years, "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." That's the reference to the Maccabean revolt and what is known today as the feast of lights or the celebration of Hanukkah where God miraculously supposedly kept the lamps in the temple burning until they could remake the oil to keep it going. This is the length or period of time in which the man of sin, Antiochus Epiphanes, will desecrate the temple and persecute the Jews. All that to get to verse 15 and even down to verses 20-21 for the future prophetic application.

The vision is now explained (verse 15). "And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man." The text doesn't really explain who this man is. Some feel that it's a pre-incarnate reference to Jesus Christ, and that's possible, or it could be a reference to Gabriel, who is mentioned as well in verse 16. He does come on the scene. He says, "I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." By the way, this is the first time in the Bible that an angel is named.

Did you know there are only three angels named? When you read books about angels and they have all kinds of names or all kinds of angels, it's made up. Okay? You angel lovers out there, I'm sorry to mess up all the cool angels you have named. We only know of three names of angels. We know Gabriel, Michael, and we know Lucifer—which you could forget about, you don't really want to think about him, who was son of the morning or light bearer, and he became satan in his fall. He is a fallen angel.

Here's this man's voice "between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." Certainly, we can't understand without God revealing it to us. By the way, this same Gabriel appeared to Zacharias and announced the birth of John the Baptist and also appeared to Mary and announced the birth of Jesus Christ.

Verse 17 says, "So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid," believe me, if you had an angel show up and talk to you, you would be afraid too, "and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man, for at the time of the end," notice that phrase "time of the end," "shall be the vision. 18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation," I'm going to let you know how it is all going to turn out or how it's going to be at the end of this persecution in this indignation, "for at the time appointed the end shall be." Again, the key is that this is a reference to the nation of Israel and the Jewish people when we'll come to the end of their persecution.

He says (verse 20), "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king," Alexander the Great. "Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." They weren't as strong or powerful as Alexander the Great's kingdom. But notice now the passage takes a turn and, I believe, very clearly beginning in verse 23 that what has up to this point been a reference for us history, Antiochus Epiphanes, shoots off into the future. Our world that we live in right now is yet to see a world-ruling individual, a man who will obtain world power. The world is going to become one. There are a lot of people today that believe that the only solution to preserving civilization and mankind on planet earth is to have a one-world government. That is actually what is going to happen, which is interesting how we've seen in the last many years the world become one—globalization, unity of the world, modern travel and communication has all created a global community. That's what exists today, and it's going to give birth to the rise of this man of sin.

That begins in verse 23. I want you to notice it. It says, "And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up." I don't believe this is Antiochus Epiphanes. I believe that this is the anti-christ. Here (verse 23) he is given a different name. He is called the "king of fierce countenance." What we're going to read about in these next few verses, we've already been drawing from the last several weeks, 2 Thessalonians 2 after the church is caught out in the rapture, I believe that the restraining force is pulled back and the anti-christ is revealed. I believe the church is taken out of the world before the anti-christ can even be revealed, and then he's going to make a covenant with the nation of Israel for peace.

It's interesting that today Donald Trump met with the so-called "president" of the Palestinians. It's interesting that you still have Hamas in the West Bank, but you have this token president of the Palestinians met with him. Every president has thought that he could at least give it his best shot to try to solve the Palestinian problem, to try to solve the middle-east crisis. Do you know that more wars have been fought in Israel, that little piece of real estate, than in any other real estate or turf on the entire planet of the whole world. The buzz lately is about will Donald Trump support the United States embassy moving from Tel Aviv over to Jerusalem. I think he should do that. I think we should do that, but it would cause a holy war. The Arabs would just rise up and go crazy. In meeting with this Palestinian leader, the whole issue is will there be a two-stage solution in which...no there won't. There won't be any peace until this pseudo-messiah...anti- by the way means in place of and against, this false messiah, this false christ..remember in Revelation 6 he comes on a white horse, and we're going to see in chapter 9. By the way, we have to wait two weeks, but one of the greatest chapters on prophecy in the entire Bible, the greatest prophecy is in Daniel 9, the 70 weeks prophecy, that he makes a covenant with Israel for seven years.

Turn to Daniel 9:27. We won't wait two weeks, I'll give you just a quick little sneak preview. It says, "And he...," that "he" is this man, the king of fierce countenance, the anti-christ, "shall confirm the covenant with many for one week," I don't have the time to explain the word "week"

there is the Hebrew word heptad which means "seven." It's a unit of seven. It's like our word "dozen." It means one seven. If you look at the chronology of this prophecy, it comes to seven years. So, he makes a covenant with the nation of Israel for seven years, and in the midst of that week, or seven years, three-and-a-half years, "he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate," which we just read that Antiochus Epiphanes did that, "even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." That is what Jesus talked about when He said, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place," don't come down from your rooftops and get your clothes and woe unto women that are nursing babies in those times. Flee into the wilderness because there will be great persecution like there never has been on planet earth. He says just pray that your flight be not in the winter, and it's just going to be a difficult time because these last three-and-a-half years of that seven years, which is God's last seven years for fulfilling His promises to the nation of Israel and bringing to a culmination His kingdom upon the earth. It's that time of Jacob's trouble, that time of persecution of the Jews.

I believe that this "king of fierce countenance" is the anti-christ, and the description of him there is that he has understanding of dark sentences and notice verse 24. "And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power." In Revelation 13 it says, "...and the dragon," being satan, "gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." He also takes over ten nations, and they give him his power and authority. "...and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people." That's referring to the Jewish people. In verse 25 it says, "And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many," notice that phrase there, "by peace shall destroy many."

In Revelation 6 (we already looked at it), he comes on a white horse with a bow in his hand but no arrows. This man of sin, this "king of fierce countenance," do you know what his mantra is going to be when he first comes? Peace. He is going to solve the Palestinian, Arab-Israeli conflict, and the whole world is just going to be in awe of him. They are going to be amazed by him, and they're going to wonder after this beast. It's only going to last for three-and-a-half years. They're going to say, "Peace, peace," then sudden destruction will come upon them. Jesus likened it unto a woman who was ready to give birth to a baby.

You women that have had children know that in those last days of your pregnancy you don't know when the labor pains are going to start. It may be a time that you least expect it, you go into labor and the child comes. The Bible tells us that the tribulation period is going to be like labor pains until the birth of a new age when the Messiah comes. Anti-christ is going to come and mesmerize the world as though he is the savior, and many Jews are going to think their Messiah has come, that peace has come. No doubt, he's going to allow them to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem, and they're going to think that he is their savior, he is their messiah, but then he erects an image of himself that Revelation 13 tells us in the temple that's being rebuilt, like Antiochus Epiphanes' desecrated the temple, so he is going to desecrate the temple and erects an image and commands everyone to worship him claiming that he is God.

Notice verse 25 of our text, “And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes,” which is the Lord Jesus Christ, “but he shall be broken without hand.” Catch that phrase at the end of verse 25. Remember Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the image? At the bottom of the image there were ten toes, feet mingled with iron and clay, and he saw a stone. It specifically says in the Bible that the stone was cut without hands. That term is used to describe the fact that this is the eternal God, and He comes back and strikes this image on the feet and the image crumbles. The kingdoms of men come to an end and the stone grows into a great big eternal kingdom—that’s the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. That’s just as the anti-christ has come to power, seven years after he comes on the scene, three-and-a-half years after the abomination of desolation. This is also described in Revelation 19.

In conclusion, (verses 26-27) “And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true,” Daniel says, “This is true!” “...wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.” What does he mean by “shut up the vision?” He doesn’t mean put it away and let no one see, read, or know about it. The phrase in the Hebrew conveys the idea of preserve it, and we’re reading it tonight so it has the idea of take care of and preserve it “for it shall be for many days. 27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king’s business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.”

It’s a big enough challenge for us tonight, but we look back historically and we have all the facts and information. Now, because of what we read tonight, there’s a lot of people that don’t believe in the supernatural. They don’t believe Daniel wrote this 200 years before it happened. They basically have their presupposition that God doesn’t do miracles, there isn’t a God of miracles, He doesn’t tell us the future, so this couldn’t have happened. They presuppose that God doesn’t reveal Himself in these ways, so they conclude that it was written after the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire, after the rise of the Grecian Empire, after Alexander the Great, after his death, after his generals came to power, after the Roman Empire came on the scene, that it all must have been written afterward. They theorize that it was written during the intertestamental periods. There is absolutely no evidence for this at all and plenty of evidence to the contrary.

Do you know that the Bible is the only (and I’ll use the expression because it’s just a familiar term you can grab ahold of) “religious” book that ventures into prophecy. I know that there are modern prophets today that write certain things, but of all of the main religions—Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism—none of them enter into prophecy like the Bible does because God is the God who knows the end from the beginning. God sits in the heavens and knows everything. Do you know that God right now actually perfectly knows what is going to happen to you tomorrow? Some people want to go to a seance or a palm reader and tarot cards and try to figure out, “Will I meet the perfect guy? Will he be tall, dark and handsome? What will he look like? Will I have children and what ages?” They want to do that kind of a thing. God has the future in His hands. I don’t know what the future holds, but I know Who holds the future. Amen? We can rest in that. This brought comfort to the Jews, God’s people,

the time clock Israel, because God is saying to these Jews of the captivity, "I'm in control. I've got it covered. I know what I'm doing."

No more are you going to see better that Israel is God's time clock than when we get to the 70 weeks or 70 sevens prophecy in Daniel 9 which covers everything. It's just a fabulous prophecy! Israel is God's time clock, and God will keep His promises to Israel. God will keep His promises to us the church, and Jesus told us in Matthew 24 and 25 when the disciples came to Him in Jerusalem and were saying, "Aren't these beautiful stones the temple is made out of? Aren't they amazing?" They were gawking over the magnificence of the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus said, "I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." They were puzzled by that and said, "When is this going to be? What is going to be the signs of Your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus went on for two chapters (Matthew 24 and 25). It's called the Olivet discourse. He gave great detail about the end of the age. He said there shall be false christs and false messiahs who will deceive many. There will be wars, famines, and pestilence, and these things are the beginning of sorrows. In the Greek it is actually, as I mentioned, birth pains—like a woman in labor. He says see that you realize the end is not yet. He went on to actually describe what we have read the last three weeks in these prophecies about this man of sin, the abomination of desolation, He went into the days of Noah, and then as He comes to the end of the sermon, He talks about the servant that needs to be busy and watching and waiting for his master is going to come—he doesn't want to be caught unawares.

Daniel concluded this prophecy by saying, "I was shaken and I was sick. I laid on my face and couldn't do anything for a few days. Then, I got up and did the king's business." My question is: How does prophecy affect you? I realize these last couple of weeks and I believe this is why very rarely do you hear this stuff taught at churches because it's like all this information about what is going to happen in the future, I just want to know how to be a better Christian, how to have a better marriage, how to raise my kids, and so forth. How does prophecy affect us, how does it really grip us right now, and what good really is it?

Let me mention a couple of benefits of prophecy. The Bible says, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure." If you really believe that Jesus Christ is coming again, it should grip your life and you should want to live a holy life. You're not going to want to be going out sinning if you think Jesus Christ could come back at any time. You want to be looking, watching, and ready. Amen? It's also motivation for evangelism. Do you have family that don't know Jesus? You work with people that don't know Jesus. You have neighbors that don't know Jesus. You see people in the community that don't know Jesus Christ. The Lord could return and they'll be left behind. We need to be motivated to evangelize. It also should encourage us to allow the contact to this world to be as light as possible. You don't want to get all earthbound and wrapped up in this world. You want to keep an eternal perspective. I believe that we need to have that blessed hope ever before us.

H.A. Ironside (one of my favorite preachers of the past generation, he actually died in 1952) for almost 50 years was the pastor of Moody Bible Church in Chicago. He was preaching at a

church one time on prophecy, like I have tonight, and a man came up to him afterward and said, "Dr. Ironside, I loved the teaching. I agree with everything you said. I believe the Lord is coming back and He is going to take us to heaven." Dr. Ironside said, "That's great that you believe that, but how has it gripped you? How has it changed you? How has it really affected you?" This guy was caught off guard. He said, "Does it keep you from sin?" The man looked real ashamed and just kind of turned red and bowed his head. He said, "Honestly, I've actually been living in sin, and I haven't been living as though I really believed the Lord was going to come again." Really, that's not what the prophetic word is supposed to be doing. It's supposed to be motivating us to purity, an impetus to godliness and devotion, to reading your Bible, and growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This world is going to pass. This world is going to come to an end. The kingdoms of this world are going to cease, but God's kingdom is going to be eternal. That's the kingdom we should live for, and the study of this prophetic word should comfort and assure us that God is in control. His kingdom is going to come, and we need to keep an eternal perspective. We need to live pure lives. We need to evangelize and share the gospel. Amen?