



Unshakable Faith

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Week 8

Theme: Vision (Chapter 8)

Weekly Memory Verse

“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.”

– Daniel 8:27

Day 1: Watch

Prayer of Illumination

Jesus, Every word of Scripture points to You. Open my eyes to see You for who You are, the One who is fully in control of the past, present, and future. Open my heart to receive what You are giving to me. Come Holy Spirit. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 8 entirely, then focus on Daniel 8:1-4.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 8:1-4?

What do these verses say about God’s character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

As we jump into Daniel 8, Daniel gives his account of another vision. In this vision, Daniel sees himself, “in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam...beside the Ulai Canal” (v2). It is from the watchtower of the capital city that he sees the two horned ram at the canal charging in all directions, overpowering other animals. Further on, we read the ram meets its match, when a multi-horned goat arrives on the scene. Towards the end of Chapter 8, the word of God comes to Daniel by way of explanation from a man that appears in the vision. Complicated stuff here.

Whether the vision was a specific prophecy only for that day and time or has further eschatological meaning will be debated among biblical scholars. One thing is certain, Daniel has a front row seat to the action.

As we read these opening verses of Daniel 8, consider where we as Jesus followers are positioned in our day. Like Daniel standing from the citadel at Susa, we stand on Capitol Hill (or wherever we are) at a moment in history where rams and goats charge at each other in the halls of government and on public streets.

“Now, the rest of the story” (borrowing Paul Harvey’s famous tagline). Perspective is everything. We, as followers of Jesus know that He wins in the end. Rams and goats will continue to be in conflict. Jesus said Himself, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33). So, as we continue to navigate the pandemic of COVID-19 and come alongside those that are hurting in this cultural hurricane, we can watch with confidence keeping in mind that God’s got this!

Reflection

From your “citadel,” do you watch the world with despair or hope?

How do you interpret the times? Do circumstances inform how you read Scripture OR do you rely on Scripture to inform how you read (understand) the circumstances?

Day 2: Insight

Prayer of Illumination

Father God, help us rest in the truth of your providence today. We know and trust You to have our paths made straight. Thank You for the path.

Reading

Read Chapter 8 entirely, then focus on Daniel 8:5-14.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 8:5-14?

What do these verses say about the human condition?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

In Chapter 7, we see four crazy, scary and dramatic creatures. But in this vision, we see a ram and a goat. Comparatively, these are not scary or dramatic creatures. Not only are the beasts less fierce in the human mind, but there are two this time around instead of four like the previous chapter. Even the description of the ram and goat seem unspiritual and pretty straight-forward.

So often, Daniel seems to be pushing us to see the kingdoms of the world at that time in deep theological ways, but this section seems plain and simple in comparison. The audience of the first century hardly needs an interpretation of this vision.

It's a good reminder for us that not all prophecies from God need to be dramatic or bigger than life to get our attention.

Reflection

Have you had a vision or dream that didn't seem super dramatic, but now in hindsight, has changed the trajectory of your life?

What excites you about the future? What worries you about the future?

Daniel needed God's help to interpret the vision. What are ways we can seek better understanding of God's Word?

Day 3: Understanding

Prayer of Illumination

Holy Spirit, open our minds and hearts to have greater understanding today. Fill us with your wisdom and your insight. Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 8 entirely, then focus on Daniel 8:15-25

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 8:15-25?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

"I sought to understand it." This is the first thing Daniel did after seeing the wild vision of the ram and goat. Proverbs tells us to get wisdom, insight, and understanding, calling those who find these things blessed. The understanding that Daniel received blesses us with hope even today.

Secondly, Daniel fell to the ground face down in response to the angel Gabriel coming near. His reflex was to fall prostrate, perhaps in humility. I can imagine it was overwhelming, frightening, and stressful simultaneously. There's something beautiful about Gabriel restoring Daniel to a standing posture of dignity to receive the understanding he sought.

The ram and the goat here are mighty, unstoppable, raging, warring beasts. They represent the rise and fall of vast and powerful kingdoms. At the end of the vision, we have this curious new character: a small horn that grows big. The interpretation tells us that this horn is a king who is a master of deception. This horn, which stands for the historical king Antiochus IV, is a model of sinful political power. The saints of God are seemingly at the mercy of an egotistical, reckless, and deceptive ruler so corrupt and full of pride that he's bold enough to challenge even the Prince of princes, Jesus.

If the vision stopped here, sorrow and despair would seem to prevail. The enemy would seem to be the victor. Instead, through Gabriel, God gave Daniel a glimpse of the end of the story. He learned that the chaos was to be broken by only divine intervention – the hand of an omnipotent and victorious God. Thank God for the end of the story! The end of the story remains our hope today in times of chaos, fear, and overwhelm. Because of it, we have the long view- God's perspective, the end of the story, and the eternity of His reign.

Reflection

Reflect on the lyrics to "God, I Look to You"; by Jenn Johnson. Say or sing them out loud even.

How might your life look with the vision to see things like God sees them?

How might your community look with the vision to see things like God sees them?

Day 4: Sovereignty

Prayer of Illumination

God, we thank you that You are in complete control of our lives. There is nothing that happens that is a surprise to You. May Your sovereignty be a comfort to us so that we may live in the present, while still waiting patiently for the hope of the future. Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 8 entirely, then focus on Daniel 8:26-27.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 8:26-27?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

When you receive a dream or vision from the Lord, how often do you want to understand it and know the details? Putting ourselves in Daniel's shoes, it can be easy to ask questions: what exactly does 2,300 evenings and mornings mean? When exactly is that? How will the sanctuary be reconsecrated?

We can get so bogged down in the details. But what if that's not what God wants us to focus on? What if we instead focus on the fact that God gives us pieces of a plan more for our own comfort than for us to understand the details? What if it is a reminder to us that God knows what He is doing and that we can trust Him and His sovereignty.

In the end, Daniel was exhausted and appalled by the vision. It appears he acknowledged this and rested for a few days, but then he continued to carry out the business he was set to do. Let us not grow weary in the details or trying to understand but continue to be present through trusting where God has placed us and walking towards where He is leading us.

Reflection

What is a dream or vision you have been given for your life that you don't have the full details for? Spend time thanking God today, resting in the fact that He knows the plans and details of those plans for your life.

In what ways have you seen God's Sovereignty on display in your life?

Day 5: Pause & Reflect

Ask the Lord, journal, and pray through the following questions ...

God, what are some of the takeaways from Chapter 8 that you want to highlight in my life?

Spend time today posturing yourself to listen and reflect on each day's theme:

- Watch
- Insight
- Understanding
- Sovereignty

What is one thing you are going to do in response to this week's message and reading plan, and who is going to hold you accountable?

Write down one takeaway and one action step in a journal to commit to it.

Weekly Memory Verse

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