

Daniel 9 (Part 1)

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[0:00] Good morning, and I want to say a special thank you to Pastor Don for allowing me to come this morning and bring this message.

! Chris, I know I can't hold a candle to your dad. He's just too eloquent. But I pray and have been praying that what we have to share with you this morning will be something upbuilding to your hearts and to your lives.

As the operatory was being played, I'm sure a lot of you are singing along in your hearts. All to Him I owe. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. And as I think about our team that's over in Southeast Asia right now, I've been praying a lot more for the persecuted church around the world.

And I know that we gather this morning because we do owe it all to Jesus and what He accomplished on the cross. So I want to thank Pastor Don for inviting me. I want to thank each one of you for making us feel so welcome here.

And we will dive into this morning one of the many passages throughout the Word of God, which when understood according to when it was written and the way that it was fulfilled.

[1:33] I'm speaking of biblical prophecies that have been given in the past, have been those that have been fulfilled up to the present, can speak to us in a powerful way that this book, the Bible, is not just written by men, but is given to us by inspiration of the One who created the whole universe, the One who sees the end of time from the beginning of time, and can reveal to men like Daniel truths that no man could have even conceived of ahead of time, apart from the Spirit of a truly existing God revealing Himself and His truths to us.

So this morning we're going to look at Daniel chapter 8. I've entitled this message, Daniel's Prophetic Precision, Evidence for the Bible's Divine Origin from the 8th Chapter of the Book of Daniel.

And I have to apologize to you ahead of time. I was working on this message, and as I was praying about what I'm going to share tonight, I was practicing this message, and I realized there is just too much here to cover in one message.

So it's one of those things, you've got to come back tonight for the sequel, because actually the sequel is the best part of this message, I think. So anyway, you all come back, invite your friends, whatever you want to do.

All right. What I'd like to do in diving into this chapter, first of all, is have you turn in your Bibles, Daniel chapter 8.

[3:07] If you don't have your Bible with you, I assume you have it all memorized, so you'll be able to follow along. No, I'm just kidding. We'll try to keep you up to date with slides on the screen there.

And what I'd like to do, first of all, though, is to say that this chapter was probably written somewhere around 548 B.C. 548 B.C. is when Daniel was serving under Belshazzar the king, and he, in serving under the king in his third year, saw this vision, and then it seems, as you read through Daniel, that he seems to have this habit of writing down his visions shortly after they occurred.

Now, the critics, the skeptics, look at this book, book of Daniel, and chapters like Daniel 8, and they say, you know, this was fulfilled, this vision was fulfilled so specifically, in such detail in history, there is no way any man could have written down this prophecy and had this specific of a fulfillment happen in history.

And you'll see why as we go through the things this morning and this evening. And so the skeptics say what happened is that this man, Daniel, really didn't write the book of Daniel.

It was somebody else writing sometime after, it had to be after 164 B.C., because that's when the final events of this chapter are fulfilled.

[4:38] And so it had to be just somebody writing down the events as though they were prophecy, but really they were already history. Well, there's just one little problem with that line of thinking, and that is that Daniel, the book of Daniel, had been translated in the Septuagint.

The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the whole Old Testament. That whole translation was completed in 285 B.C., about 120 years before these events conclude in 164 B.C.

So the book of Daniel is an amazing prophecy. It cannot be written off as just somebody coming along after the fact and trying to present these things.

So really the argument of the skeptics doesn't hold water. So having dealt with those details, let's dive into the text, starting at Daniel 8, verse 1.

It says, In the third year, Daniel is speaking here, he says, In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king, a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously.

[5:54] So the first questions we probably want to ask is, All right, when was Belshazzar's third year, and when was this previous vision?

And it's important to understand that, to understand this vision. So I've got a handy-dandy little chart. I took a little picture of it in one of my study Bibles that gives the dates and the chapters of Daniel as to when they occurred, when they were probably written down sometime around there. But the dates for the Babylonian kings are really, really sure in history. The ones for the Persian kings, there's a little bit of doubt and debate as far as when different ones of these, especially Darius.

Daniel calls him Darius the Mede, and so there's some question about who was this Darius the Mede. But we're going to be concerned with Belshazzar's third year.

The first vision, though, that Daniel is talking about, the prior vision that occurred to him was Daniel chapter 7, which was Belshazzar's first year.

[7:03] And as it says here, that occurred in 550 B.C. So this one, the third year, is 548 B.C. Now, something to understand. The vision that occurred in chapter 7 has four beasts and covers a long period of time from about 539 B.C. all the way down.

Actually, it even goes back before 539 B.C. a bit. And then all the way down to possibly the return of Christ, the second coming of Christ.

So it's a large period of time. And several empires mentioned in there. Daniel chapter 8 is going to be focused on just two main empires. And the happenings of the things that took place under these empires and their extensions through history up to 164 B.C.

All right. So just a little background there. Now let's go on. And Daniel continues in verse 2. I looked in the vision, and while I was looking, I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam. And you can see up here that Elam and the city of Susa are about 200 miles to the east of Babylon. Babylon, you know, is where Daniel served under Nebuchadnezzar.

[8:27] But Daniel had one of the highest positions in the kingdom. And so he probably got around to these other parts of the empire, was probably familiar with Susa, if not in Susa at the point where this vision occurred.

It is possible that he was in Babylon and having a vision of the Uli Canal in Babylon in the province of Elam. Either one of those are possible.

But then Daniel goes on in verses 3 and 4. Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal.

Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last. I saw the ram budding westward.

We're going to see a map of this in a minute. I saw the ram budding westward, northward, and southward, and no other beast could stand before him, nor was there anyone to rescue from his power.

[9:30] But he did as he pleased, and he magnified himself. And so Daniel probably saw something like this. Vision of the ram, one horn longer than the other.

A ram coming from the east, budding toward the west, then north, then south, and apparently there was some kind of, within Daniel's vision, you know how you see this photo-lapse photography, or time-lapse photography.

There's some kind of photo-realism going on here where Daniel was able to see that the latter horn, the larger horn, grows up last, and becomes larger than the smaller horn.

Now, while we're going through this vision, I'd like to ask those of you that have studied Bible prophecy to kind of put that aside for a minute. The reason why is, I want you to think of yourself in Daniel's sandals, so to speak, and seeing what he's seeing, having the confusion, and the emotions, and the wonderment of, what is this all about?

What am I seeing? What is going on here? Because as we get into these details, this vision has so many moving parts, you're going to be saying, wow, if I were Daniel, I'd be like, what is this all about?

[10:51] And that is, in fact, the question that Daniel asks, and then has it answered. All right, going on, verse 5, it says, Daniel says, while I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west, over the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground.

Remember that phrase, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between its two eyes, between his eyes. So, possibly something like this is what Daniel was seeing, and you'll notice that he's flying over the face of the earth.

This goat is swift and powerful. And apparently, this huge horn, what is this all about?

We're going to find out in a minute. Daniel then goes on to say, he came up to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath.

Another term to keep in mind, mighty wrath. I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him. You could underline that, enraged. And he struck the ram, and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him.

[12:09] So he, the goat, hurled him, the ram, to the ground, and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.

Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. So apparently, this one is given to a couple of qualities here. Rage, and a grandiose view of himself in the position of, in all of history.

Now, the Bible does tell us pride goes before a fall, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. And so, Daniel 8, verse 8, B through 9, says, But as soon as he was mighty, as soon as this ram with the long horn was mighty, the large horn was broken off.

It was broken. And in its place, there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. North, east, south, and west. Right? Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south.

So now we have a smaller horn coming out of one of those four horns. growing a great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the beautiful land.

[13:29] The beautiful land is a term used for the nation of Israel, specifically the city of Jerusalem, located what was in the Greek Empire and the Roman Empire usually called Syria.

Alright, are you overwhelmed yet? You've got a lot of things going on here, stars, fallen, hosts.

What is all of this? Well, Daniel goes on and adds a little bit more to it.

It says, it grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the hosts and some of the stars, oh sorry, I got a little ahead of myself, to fall to the earth and it trampled them down.

So here the goat is, have you ever had one of those dreams where everything is just out of place? I mean, it's, there's big stuff, there's little stuff, there's fast stuff, everything is happening like, it had never happened in realism like this but that's what Daniel was having here and he's seeing all this and wondering, this seems like there's a meaning to this, what is this all about?

Then in verse 11, Daniel says, it, the, the little horn on the, on one of the four horns, it even magnified itself to be equal with the commander of the host.

[14:43] That would be a term referring to God. And it removed the regular sacrifice from him and the place of his sanctuary was thrown down.

It's an amazing fulfillment how this happened in history. We're going to get into that in just a minute. And on account of transgression, the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.

Then I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one said to the particular one who was speaking, how long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply?

Now, keep your finger on the text right there. The vision is for the length of period of the regular sacrifice. He says, how long will this apply that this sacrifice, as he says, while the transgression causes horror, another word for horror translating from the Hebrew is desolation, that which makes desolate, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled.

how long is that going to take place? He said to me, for 2300 evenings and mornings, then the holy place will be properly restored.

[16:07] All right, more detail here. And at this point, I want to emphasize this principle that one of my professors constantly drilled into us. It doesn't have a fancy name.

He just says, keep your finger on the text. We're going to see how important that is in just a minute. When I'm leading Bible studies at times, I might throw out a question, and oftentimes, I'll see the people participating in the Bible study do something like this to answer the question.

And I'll have to remind them, wait a second, why are you looking up there? The answer needs to come out of the text, not be read into the text. Reading into the text is called eisegesis.

Bringing your answers out of the text is called exegesis. That's what God wants us to do. Pull the answers out of the text. So, there was, there are these several moving parts, and the 2300 evenings and mornings, what do they refer to?

They refer to the length of the indignation that is completed when the sacrifice is, first of all, done away with, and then restored. How long is that going to be?

[17:25] And he says, for 2300 evenings and mornings. Now, we need to get further into the text here. If you have a Bible that says 2300 days, that's a mistranslation.

The text actually says for 2300 evening, morning. And there's a, an understood word there that's missing, which in the context would be sacrifices.

For 2300 evening, morning sacrifices. In other words, the Jews sacrificed the daily offering once in the morning, actually once in the evening, and then once in the morning.

The Jewish day ran from sunset to sunset. So, they offered one sacrifice in the evening, one in the morning. Come back tonight, we're going to see the fulfillment of that.

For now, though, I want to mention the importance, why it's so important to keep your finger on the text. Back in the 1800s, there was a very committed group of believing Christians who were headed by, pretty much headed by a guy named Miller, Mr. Miller, I'll call him.

[18:41] And they were very dedicated, and they would study the word and put together their doctrines, but they wouldn't always keep their finger on the text.

And one of the texts that they basically ignored was where Jesus said, no man knows the time of my coming. Only, not even the son knows, only the father knows that.

And so, the implication is, don't sit around trying to predict the time of his coming. Well, they ignored that, and this man, Mr. Miller, and his followers decided that this text, 2300 days, or 2300 evenings and mornings, must refer to 2300 days, and then they went to another part of Daniel to hook it up to say, okay, it's the 2300 days, really should be years, and it should start at this particular time, the command to rebuild and restore Jerusalem, and you count off 2300 years, and you get to the date, October 22nd, 1844, as the date they believed that Jesus was returning to the earth.

So, on that night, on that evening, they all went to the hills, and waited for Jesus to come. I don't think we have any historical records of Jesus coming, you know what happened, Jesus didn't come, and so this man, Mr. Miller, later recanted of his foolishness, said he shouldn't have been doing that, and returned to faithfully serving the Lord, but there were some others, one, a 17-year-old girl, very fervent in her devotion to the Lord, who said, no, he did something on this date, because I was in a field walking, and I saw this vision of Jesus, not coming from heaven to earth, but transferring from the outer sanctuary of heaven to the inner sanctuary of heaven, to enter into a ministry of cleansing the sanctuary in heaven, and to entering into a ministry which she called investigative judgment, and transferring out of his previous ministry of ever making intercession for the saints. Now, I don't know how that hits you, but to me, that sounds a little heretical, that Jesus is no longer ever interceding for the needs of the saints.

[21:18] No, Jesus ever intercedes for the saints according to the will of God, and if we did not have an advocate before the Father, we're in a heap of trouble, right?

We have an advocate before the Father right now, and so this young lady goes on to write the equivalent of 27 Bibles stacked on top of each other of various types of devotional studies, and weaved in and out of those, there's a lot of good stuff there, but weaved in and out of there, occasionally you hit on these various doctrines that you say, whoa, wait, was her finger on the text there?

I don't see that. So, all of that to say, be very careful when you're interpreting, especially Bible prophecy, keep your finger on the text. Alright, now, so at this point, Daniel expresses what we've

all been feeling, and that is, verse 15, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it, and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man, and I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Uli, the river Uli, apparently he was hovering over the water there, and he called out and said, Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision.

Alright, Gabriel is one of these angels that appears occasionally throughout the Bible, one place Gabriel appears, I believe, was in speaking to Mary, Virgin Mary, about the upcoming birth of Jesus. So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face, but he said to me, Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.

[23:07] To the time of the end, that's important. But what is the time of the end? Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground.

So if any of you want to go to sleep this morning, since Daniel fell asleep when he's talking to an angel, I won't be offended. So go ahead. Alright, he touched me and made me stand upright. He said, Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation. The final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.

Now there are two ways to take that. And one thing that we need to understand about biblical prophecy is that it's like viewing a mountain range.

I remember when I drive into Colorado from the eastern plains, way off in the distance would be this range of mountains. And you'd look at it and say, there's the mountains, there's the range.

[24:11] And as you got closer, you began to see that, oh no, there's not just one range, I can see some peaks of another range behind that. And so often times when you read prophecy in the Bible, there will be a short range fulfillment, and then a long range fulfillment.

So here, we may have a short range fulfillment in Antiochus Epiphanes doing the exact same thing that's going to be done possibly by the Antichrist, which we learned from other scriptures, in the end of time as we know it.

There's another way to look at it, and that is that the end of the indignation is probably, and I believe this is a more accurate way to look at it here in Daniel 8, keeping our finger on the text of Daniel 8, if you look while you're keeping your finger here over to Daniel 11, 36, that whole chapters 10, 11, and 12 of Daniel in detail describe the happenings of these Greek kings, the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, and all that happens down through the trampling of the temple, the desecration of the temple, the ceasing of the sacrifices for a period of over three years, and it describes that in detail, and you begin to sense, oh, the indignation is the period of time that the Israelites are conquered and dominated by the Gentiles, starting with

Assyria in the 700s BC, down through Babylon, then the Medes and the Persians, then the Greeks, then Herod the Great, then the Roman Empire, and the time of the indignation then comes right up to the birth of Christ, the ministry of Christ, and then the final devastating removal of the temple, not one stone stood upon another, I've been to that temple and seen what it was like, not seeing what it was like there, but seeing what it was like before they built, before Herod built the current temple, there was nothing there, the Romans literally threw off every stone that was on the temple mount, and it was totally desecrated, and it was at this time I believe that Genesis 49:10 was fulfilled, get that next slide there, Genesis 49:10, the scepter, that is the power to rule, shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh, that is Messiah, comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the people, you see all this time that

Israel was dominated during the indignation by other nations, they still retained a certain amount of power for their own laws, power to exercise their own laws, they lost that completely in AD 70, so Messiah had to come before then, Jesus comes in AD, actually BC 3 or 4 is when he was actually born, ministry of 33 years, and then the death and resurrection of Jesus, I believe the indignation refers to that time of period, right up to the end there, where Israel is dominated, and then we enter into a whole new empire in God's economy, that whole new empire is the church, the new empire is the kingdom of his dear son, and that I believe is what took place after the indignation, we'll see more about that tonight, and so I just urge you to come back tonight,

[28:02] I'm sorry we can't dive more into that, now we come to the amazing interpretation that's given to Daniel, Daniel's sitting there, what is this all about, we're sitting here, what is this all about, okay, we get the interpretation, now, Daniel 8, verse 20, says the ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia, now what had happened is that the Medes were actually more in power first, then Cyrus the Persian comes in and conquers the Medes, and he unites the kingdom, so it's a kingdom called the Medes and the Persians, you see this in other

places, in Daniel especially, and you remember now that Daniel is receiving this vision in 548 BC, the Medes and the Persians won't conquer Babylon until 539 BC, so, not a big stretch of the imagination for Daniel to say, oh yeah, okay,

I've heard of the Medes and Persians over there to the east of us, okay, so they're going to conquer Babylon, all right, I can see that, they're on the rise, the Medes and the Persians are on the rise, then Gabriel continues, so what's going to happen to the Medes and the Persians, he says, the shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, now this is really remarkable because in 548 BC, there was no kingdom of Greece, there were city states, you've heard of Sparta and Macedon and all these little city states that were over there in the area of Greece, well they were just all warring with each other and so there was no kingdom of Greece at all, it'd be kind of like somebody in Jamestown colony, 1625 AD, saying one day the United States of America is going to be the dominant superpower of the whole world, well here

Daniel is getting the message, one day there is going to be a united kingdom of Greece that is going to conquer the whole known world and they're going to do it very fast, so what happened is that under Philip II of Macedon in 337 BC, remember this being seen in 548, we go about 200 years down to 337 BC, Philip II unites these city states in what's called the League of Corinth, not yet the nation or the Empire of Greece, but the year after that, Philip is marrying off his daughter to a, it's one of those political alliance kind of marriages, and at the marriage he gets assassinated, so Alexander the Great, who by the way would sometimes get quite enraged because he thought his father Philip was going to give the kingdom to somebody else, maybe the guy that's marrying, I don't know if that was his blood sister or step sister, but at any rate, Alexander would get really enraged, we're going to see more about him in just a second, so in 336, Alexander takes over the kingdom, kingdom, he takes two years then to unite the kingdom of Greece under him, then Gabriel continues, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king, Alexander the Great, we know from history, became the first king of the Greek empire, he takes two years, approximately two years, to get the kingdom united under his rule, really solid, he is a very thorough person, some things we know about Alexander the Great is first of all he was educated by Aristotle, and Aristotle was a pupil of Plato, so he had the best of Greek thought being poured into him, he also had the best of

Greek military training being poured into him, he was already out acting as a commanding presence on the battlefield while his father Philip was involved in various camps, campaigns, and you know just looking at this guy, I mean how would you like to come into hand-to-hand combat with him in the field, Tom how do you think that would go, with just swords, you know just looking at a guy I'm saying no way, I'd rather be an archer from a long ways away you know, but anyway he was fierce on the battlefield, he did, he was known as a natural born leader of men, so he was very proficient at what he did, at what he did, Wikipedia, that great mass referee journal on the internet says of him starting from his base in Macedon in northern Greece, Alexander conquered the Persian empire in 331 BC and went on to forge an empire that ultimately stretched all the way to

[33:22] India, so after he solidifies the kingdom, really approximately three years is all it took for him to conquer Persia, now it takes him a few more years to go all the way to the Indus River in India, at which point his soldiers say, we've been with you Alexander all this way, can we please go home to our wives and families, and at that point he relents, says yes, we're going back, and he goes back to the middle Persian, the middle of the former Persian empire, and marries a princess there, and his troops go home, so Alexander the Great is like this goat with a horn between its eyes that conquers so rapidly it's like his feet don't even touch the ground, conquered a million five hundred thousand square miles of ground in that short space, he died at the age of 32 or 33, some conflict on that, in the, in the, the year 323

BC, and died of malaria, they think, could have been something else due to his lifestyle, but anyway, he was an amazing, amazing conqueror, now, I want to stop this morning with an account from Josephus, brought my coffee of Josephus here this morning, if you want to read some interesting literature, some interesting history, some very detailed and accurate accounts of history, go get a copy of Josephus, if you don't want to get a copy of Josephus, go over to Tom's house, he's got two of them, I think he said, and he'll let you read in one of his bathrooms where he keeps all of his books, so, no, I'm just kidding, Tom, now, here is what Josephus says of Alexander that is one amazing fulfillment of this prophecy, or events around it illustrate the amazing fulfillment of this prophecy, in Josephus,

Antiquities of the Jews, book 11, chapter 8, Josephus says, so Alexander came into Syria, and took Damascus, that's kind of in the news today, and when he had obtained Sidon, he besieged Tyre, which at that time was an island, he built a causeway out to the island to besiege it, and when he was doing that, when he sent to the Jewish high priest to send him some auxiliaries, said, hey, high priest over in Jerusalem, I need some supplies, and he sent to him to supply his army with provisions, and that what presents he formerly sent to Darius, Darius was the commanding general of the Persians, Alexander says he would now send to him, Alexander, and choose the friendship of the Macedonians, that is the

Greeks, and that he should never repent of so doing, but the high priest answered the messengers, that he had given his oath to Darius, not to bear arms against him, and he said that he would not transgress this while Darius was in the land of the living, while he was alive, upon hearing this answer, Alexander was very angry, again, and though he determined not to leave Tyre, which was just ready to be taken, yet as soon as he had taken it, he threatened that he would make an expedition against the Jewish high priest, and through him teach all men to whom they must keep their oaths, alright, got the picture, Alexander, he's finishing up conquering Tyre, then it says Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, Gaza was another little place in Syria, on the south side, you know where Gaza is over there, between Egypt and Israel, made haste to go up to Jerusalem, and Jeduah the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony, I think he may have just picked up the book of Daniel and may have been reading in there and thinking, oh no, is this the one, and he says, and under terror as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience, he therefore ordained that the people should make supplications and join him in offering sacrifice to God, whom he besought to protect that nation and to deliver them from the perils that were coming upon them, whereupon God warned him in a dream, I don't know why it says warned, God let him know, some good news in a dream, which came upon him after he had offered sacrifice, that he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates, that the rest of the people should appear in white garments, but that he, the high priest, and the priest should meet the king in the habits proper to their order, very colorful, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of [38 : 56] God would prevent, upon which when he rose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced, and declared to all the warning he had received from God, according to which dream he acted entirely, and so waited for the coming king, the king of Greece, Alexander the Great.

Now we go on, and it says, and Josephus says, and when he understood that he was not far, when he, the high priest, understood that Alexander was not far from the city, he went out in procession with the priests and the multitude of the citizens.

The procession was venerable, and the manner of it different from that of other nations. Other nations would go out to him in sadness and mourning, and when the Phoenicians and the Chaldeans, who were with Alexander, that followed him, Alexander, thought they should have liberty to plunder the city and torment the high priest to death, which the king's displeasure fairly promised them, they thought.

The very reverse of it happened, for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance in white garments, while the priest stood clothed with fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his miter on his head, having the golden plate whereupon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself.

In other words, Alexander the Great says, hold it guys, stay here, I'm going first, I'm going alone. And he adored that name, and first saluted the high priest, the Jews also did all together with one voice salute Alexander, and encompass him about whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind.

[40 : 56] However, Parmenio alone went up to him, Alexander, and asked him how it came to pass that when all others, all the other nations, adored him, Alexander, he should adore the high priest of the Jews, to whom he replied, I did not adore him, the high priest, but that God who hath honored him with his high priesthood.

Now, why would Alexander honor the God of the Jews? Well, Josephus gives us the answer. This is my last slide of Josephus.

Sorry for the small print, but this is amazing. For, Alexander says, I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, in this very clothing.

When I was at Dios in Macedonia, this is prior to him setting out to conquer Persia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he, God, would conduct my army and would give me the dominion over the Persians.

Whence it is that, having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring the army under the divine conduct.

[42 : 32] Alexander is seeing this person in this habit, is the one I saw in my dream, I remember what they told me in my dream, I think I'm fitting into a divine plan of God here.

And so he said, I believe that I bring the army under the divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind.

And when he had said this to Parmenio, and had given the high priest his right hand, the priest ran along by him, and he came into the city, and when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, not the Greek gods.

According to the high priest's direction, he offered sacrifice, and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests, and then get this, when the book of Daniel was showed him wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended.

I love the way Josephus says that. The next day he called them to him and bid them ask what favors they pleased of him, whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers and might pay no tribute on the seventh year.

[43 : 59] He granted all they desired. Isn't that amazing? God saw this hundreds of years before, revealed it to Daniel, Daniel wrote it down, and now it's happening, it's taking place, and the Jews come face to face with Alexander, and God works it out through supernatural dream.

I mean, we hear dreams happening to Muslims in the Middle East and around the world of Jesus, and I don't doubt it for a second that these people are seeing the dreams of God calling them to Jesus, because that's the way he worked here.

And so, Alexander comes face to face with the Jews and reads this prophecy about himself, takes heart, realizes he's the guy, and he goes on to fulfill this dream in minute detail.

Now, Alexander, I want to ask you a couple questions first. Do you ever doubt that God has a plan for history?

We don't need to doubt that. It's pretty clear he has laid it out from beginning to end that there is a plan. But there's probably a more relevant question, that is, do you ever doubt that God has a plan for your life?

[45 : 30] You know, maybe you're a Christian, maybe you're not yet a believer, but you're going through this life, and you're facing some really, really difficult times.

Could be a number of different things, but maybe you're at about the lowest you've ever been. Are you facing some challenges? Any of you facing challenges? Actually, if you're facing challenges, I believe you're in a better place than if your life is just moving along, no problems, because you have an opportunity to exercise faith in a way that somebody who's just got it all easy, does not usually exercise faith.

If you're facing some deep disappointments, I want you to look at this next passage, and we're going to end on this. 2 Corinthians chapter 4, 8 through 10.

The Apostle Paul probably faced challenges deeper than any one of us in this room will ever face in our lives, but this is what he did. He described his condition as this way, we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed.

We are perplexed, but not despairing, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed, always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifest in our body.

[47 : 02] You may be facing some difficulties, challenges, sorrows that you cannot get above emotionally. That's okay.

We're not to live by our circumstances or by our feelings. We're to live by faith. And look what Paul has done here. With each challenge that he was facing, he replaces it with a positive viewpoint from God.

So that he's not crushed, he's not despairing, he's not forsaken, and he's not destroyed. He is replacing his circumstances and his feelings with the objective statement of God that he can trust that he's not going to be crushed, despaired, forsaken, or destroyed.

So I want to just stop here by urging you and encouraging you, if you're facing some difficulties, think of what God has promised.

Think of what God is doing in history. Think of where he has you, where he wants to move you, and say, you know what, I'm going to take an act of faith not to live by my feelings and not to live by my circumstances.

[48:27] Sometimes that is really hard. Have you ever had a circumstance surrounding you where everything looks so bad that you just wanted to say, I am just going down with the ship?

Don't do that. Fix your eyes on God and say, no, I'm going to believe God that you've got something that you're working in this situation right now that is so far above anything I could ever think, dream, or imagine.

walk by. . Thank you.