



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Daniel 8:1-27

Daniel

"East Meets West"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you Mark, and good morning. This week we're back in the Book of Daniel. We're in chapter 8. It's a lengthy chapter, and I have not been reading the entire chapters as we've been going through them, at least on most occasions. I'm not going to read the entire chapter this morning either.

I'm going to read the first two verses and give a summary of the vision that Daniel was given, and then resume with the interpretation of the vision in verse 20. But we'll begin with the first two verses.

Daniel chapter 8:

"In the year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. 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 I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal."

And Daniel looked up and he saw a ram with two horns. One horn was longer than the other. It was butting in every direction, west and north and south. And it seemed to Daniel that this ram was invincible. Then a male goat – what's later described as a shaggy goat – with one prominent horn between his eyes, came out of the west racing across the earth.

It struck the ram, struck it with such force that it shattered its two horns, hurled it to the ground and trampled it. While the goat glorified itself, its horn broke, and four horns grew in its place. And

then out of one of the horns, one of the four horns, a small horn grew and became great. It looked toward Israel. It opposed God, it stopped the sacrifices and it trampled on His people, but only for a limited time, for 2,300 evenings and mornings.

Now that was the vision. And when Daniel saw it, he didn't understand what had appeared and was puzzled. And then he heard a voice that told the Angel Gabriel to interpret what Daniel had seen. And so he begins to interpret in verse 20.

'The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power. In the latter period of their rule, when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue. His power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will; he will destroy mighty men and the holy people. And through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; and he will magnify himself in his heart, and he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, but he will be broken without human agency. The vision of the evenings and mornings which has been told is true; but keep the vision secret, for it pertains to many days in the future.' Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was no one to explain it."

Well, then you might wonder, "Didn't the Angel Gabriel just explain it." And, of course, he did. But I think the meaning of that is he still is not clear about its meaning.

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and our time of study in it together. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for this time together, this opportunity for us to read the Scriptures and then consider the

meaning of the text for some time. And we pray you bless our time of doing that. We pray that you'd guide us in our thinking. We are blessed of you who have put our faith in Christ. We have a new nature, new hearts, new minds.

We have capacities that we did not possess before. We have a flesh where before we had a heart of stone. And so we have the capabilities to understand and apply a text like this to ourselves. And yet, we are still in complete dependence upon you for an understanding of the things that we have read. Just as Daniel needed an interpreter, we too need the Spirit of God to explain the meaning, to make it register within our hearts and help us to understand how all of this applies to us.

And so we look to you to do that. We pray that the Spirit of God would guide our thinking, that He'd help us to focus on the details of this text and how it applies to us, the significance of it, and how it is a comfort to realize that even in the hardest of times, the most difficult of times, you are in control. Sometimes we lose sight of that very easily. Some of the most mundane and trivial of inconveniences can be a real stumbling block for us and cause us to forget that you're in control of everything. And we're to rest, not be anxious, and to trust you.

Certainly this text implies that, and it's a lesson for us to learn. I pray that you'd teach us, Lord, this morning. Build us up in the faith, give us strength, spiritually, to face the week, and do so in a way that is helpful to others and brings glory to you. I pray for ourselves, spiritually, in this hour and for our time this evening when we return to this place, remember our Lord. But we also pray, Lord, for our material needs. We have needs that are great, as listed on the Calendar of Concern and the prayer list in the bulletin.

And even, Father, we know that names that aren't listed can be there. And there are many people who have spoken of a particular issue. We all have issues, Lord. We are all dependent upon you, whether we realize it or not. Even in our best moments, we are

dependent upon you for everything. But for those who are facing particular challenges, health issues, procedures in the near future, we pray your blessing upon them.

Bless them with health, bless them with encouragement. We pray that your will would be done and they would be able to accept that and rejoice in it. Lord, that is difficult for all of us, but we do have the promise that everything works together for good for those who love you and are called according to your purpose. It's a great promise for us to rest in. And, Father, that certainly lies behind the things that we'll study this morning, and we pray that you would bless that to our understanding.

And to that end, Father, we pray that you'd prepare us for our time of worship and study and of our next hymn. Prepare our hearts for a time of learning, as well as worshipping. We commit that to you. We pray for our time together now. We thank you for what we have in Christ. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.

[Message] "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," quotes Rudyard Kipling in one of his best known lines. Geographically, that's true but not politically. And in Daniel chapter 8 the twain do meet in a colossal collision that altered the course of history and almost destroyed the Jews. Chapter 8 introduces a new emphasis in the second half of the book.

It is different from the first half in some significant ways. It's mainly composed of prophecy while the first part is mainly narrative. And in the second half of the book, beginning with chapter 8, there is a return to the Hebrew language. The first half from chapters 2 through 7, it was written in Aramaic. And that was quite appropriate because that portion of the book was mainly concerned with the future of the gentiles, the rise and fall of nations and empires.

And the second half is principally about the future of the Jewish people, so the Hebrew language is appropriate to tell the story. It came to Daniel in a series of visions that were disturbing and left him exhausted, because they foretold difficult times ahead for his people.

And yet, in those difficult times God demonstrated His faithfulness to His people. He's in control. That's certainly an emphasis of the chapter.

And he never forsakes us. That's the lesson of encouragement that was given to Daniel, certainly there in this chapter by implication. The vision here in chapter 8 is the second vision that Daniel had. The first was in chapter 7, a vision of four beasts that came out of the sea, beast that gave a preview of world history at the end times. It prophesied the career of the antichrist.

The second vision forewarns God's people of another monster, another tyrant to come, Antiochus Epiphanes, who would also persecute the Jews. Daniel dates the vision in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar. So this is around the year 550 BC, well before the events of chapter 5, which is the chapter we studied about the feast of Belshazzar, the end of Babylon, the conquest of that empire by Persia, and the famous scene of the hand writing on the wall. This is long before that. And this is the second of the visions that Daniel had during the reign of Belshazzar.

Now, isn't it interesting that both visions occur during the reign of that king, a very wicked king, when the times, spiritually, were very dark. But that was when God gave Daniel these visions. That was when God gave His people light in the midst of that darkness. I think there is something of a lesson there for us. And that is when times are perpetually dark, spiritually; when we live in evil times, God is still very much at work, very much at work in the lives of His people to bless them with an understanding of revelation, with light, with illumination.

So we can be encouraged in the worst of times. God is working on our behalf. Well Daniel was located in the southern part of Babylon in the city of Susa, or *Shushān*, beside Ulai Canal. He lifted up his eyes. He wrote he saw a ram standing by the canal.

It had two horns and was butting its head "westward, northward, and southward." Daniel writes "he did as he pleased and magnified

himself." To Daniel he seemed to be invincible. But then a male goat came out of the west. He had one prominent horn between his eyes, and he was moving so rapidly that his feet didn't touch the ground.

He was enraged against the ram and struck it with such force that he shattered the rams two horns and trampled the animal under his feet. Daniel watch all of this in amazement, and he wrote, "there was none to rescue the ram from his power." And as you would expect, the goat became great, became dominant. And we read in verse 8, "Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn broke: and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven."

After the previous vision in chapter 7 of the four beasts coming up out of the stormy sea, Daniel had some idea that the two animals that he sees in this vision represented two kingdoms. But in verses 20 through 22, he is given some help in all of this. He is given some interpretation, in order to identify the two animals, by the Angel Gabriel, who at the instruction of the Lord interprets this vision for him and for us. The lamb, we're told, with its two horns is the Medo Persian Empire. The two horns represent the two parts of that empire.

A ram was an appropriate symbol because the Persian ruler would carry the gold head of a ram when he marched his army. So it was a symbol of the nation, and that's the symbol that's adopted here in the vision of the Medo Persian Empire. Media was the first part of that empire. That had dominance to begin with. But then, under Cyrus, Persia gained control and the empire expanded under him, conquering kingdoms to the west and the south and the north.

So you see the sense of the one horn being longer than the others. One side of that Medo Persian Empire was greater than the other. The Persian part was the greater. That becomes the dominant part of that kingdom. This empire, the Medo Persian Empire, became the greatest empire that the world had ever known.

It seemed unconquerable until the male goat came out of the west and the two collided. Verse 21: Gabriel identifies it as "the

kingdom of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes," he says, "is the first king," which we know is Alexander the Great. The description of the goat in verse 5, racing over the whole surface of the earth, illustrates the lightning speeds of which Alexander conquered the world of his day. He came from the west, wanting revenge for what the Persians had done 150 years before when they invaded Greece, first under Darius and then under Xerxes. And under Xerxes, they attacked Athens, attacked the city, put it to fire.

So there's much resentment on the part of the Greeks toward the Persians. And so in the year 334 BC, Alexander invaded Asia Minor, carrying a copy of Homer's Iliad and a shield from Troy. He was 22 years old. He freed Greek cities that had been conquered by the Persians, and then he fought a series of battles against Darius III, and fought against an overwhelming number of Persian troops. Yet he won battle after battle, until the final battle near Arbela.

He routed the Persians. And an ancient historian wrote of that battle and wrote that the Greeks continued beating and battering with no quarter given. That's what Daniel saw in his vision of this shaggy goat rushing the lamb with "mighty wrath," as he says, shattering its horns, hurling it to the ground, trampling upon it. In a quick three years, Alexander conquered the Persian Empire. He sacked the cities of Susa, **Expotona**, Ecbatana and Persepolis.

He continued east through Afghanistan as far as India, before his soldiers tired of war. And he returned to Babylon which he established as the kingdom of his empire. But not for long, because very shortly after that he died of fever at the age of 32. His early death fulfilled the prophecy that "as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken." After his death, his generals fought among themselves for power, and eventually the kingdom was divided into four parts.

Cassander ruled over Macedonia and Greece. Lysimachus was over Thrace, which is in the eastern part of Bulgaria, modern-day Bulgaria, and he ruled Asia Minor, most of it. Seleucus ruled over

Syria and the eastern part of the empire, and Ptolemy ruled over Egypt. This fulfilled the prophecy that when the large horn was broken, "in its there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven," exactly how it played out in history.

Then in verse 9, we read about another horn. Like the other horns, it represents a person. It represents a king, and this one was an especially terrible king. He's called a small horn, but he is not the little horn of chapter 7 which we saw a couple of weeks ago. That's the antichrist. He rises from Rome.

This king is a Greek. It's clear from history that he's Antiochus IV or Antiochus Epiphanes, the Seleucid ruler of Syria. The title, Epiphanes, comes from an inscription that he had minted on coins that had his image on them, and the words *Theos Epiphanes*, which means "God made Manifest." In verse 23, he's described as "insolent and skilled in intrigue." He was like a character out of a Shakespeare play, like Richard III, the hunchback prince who lied and murdered his way to the throne of England.

At least in the play, that's how Richard is presented. But that's how Antiochus was in history, in reality. He was a cruel and wickedly ambitious man. He flattered people in order to gain power. He murdered people in order to gain power; murdered his brother's son in order to gain the kingdom, which according to Shakespeare, is what Richard did as well.

Well, he was ambitious; wickedly, cruelly ambitions. Verse 9 describes him as "a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land." The Beautiful Land is a description of Israel, which Antiochus terrorized after his attempt to invade Egypt to the south was stopped by Rome. Rome at this time was beginning to emerge as a significant world power. And we'll study this in the chapters to come, but the Romans stopped Antiochus from invading Egypt.

His response was to retreat into his own region and then try to strengthen his kingdom against Roman influence by uniting all of its

people. And he did that by a policy of Hellenizing the whole of his population, which was a disparate population of different kinds of people with different religions. And he wanted to unite them by making them Greek, Hellenizing them, imposing Greek culture and Greek religion on them. Well, many were receptive to all of this. And we even see evidence of this attempt still, archaeologically, in the northern part of Israel in what's **an area** known as the Banias.

There's a cave there at the foot of Mount Herman, which is up near the Golan Heights, where the Seleucid Greeks, the Greeks of Antiochus, built a shrine to the goat god, Pan. It's still there; you can visit. You can see the place where all of this happened. This is what they were doing under this king's rule. And the importation of Greek paganism was immediately resisted by the Jews.

Not all of the Jews. Actually many began to conform and adopt the religion, but a significant number of Jews resisted. So this was a case of East and East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet. In this case, they did not meet, at least with the righteous remnant. So because there was resistance to this policy of Hellenizing the people, the Jewish people, Antiochus attempted to force Greek culture and religion on the Jewish people by stamping out the Jewish religions.

He made it a crime to possess a copy of the Scriptures, made it a crime to observe the Sabbath and to practice circumcision. And those who did, those who disobeyed his policy were punished by death. And many Jews died for their faith. Here in Daniel, this is what is described figuratively in verse 10, where the horn is described as growing up to heaven and causing stars to fall and be trampled down. That's interpreted for us in verse 24 of saints being killed. "He will destroy mighty men and the holy people."

This was the time of the Maccabees, and it's all found in the Book of Maccabees. All that he did is described there. The soldiers of Antiochus slaughtered 80,000 men, women, boys and girls, even infants, during his attack on Jerusalem. In verse 11, the horn is

described as magnifying itself, glorifying itself, making itself – or himself "equal with the Commander of the host," which is reflected in that title that Antiochus took for himself. Antiochus Epiphany, God made Manifest.

He elevated himself up to being either a manifestation of Zeus or at least the pagan gods representative on earth. Either way, his arrogance was in direct defiance of the Lord, and he took action against the worship of God. Antiochus looted the temple of its treasure, taking away the golden altar of incense, and the table of shewbread, and the golden lamp stand, the Menorah. And then, according to verse 11, he "removed the regular sacrifice from Him." He took the daily sacrifices. He stopped them.

He slaughtered pigs on the altar and he set up an idol of Zeus in the temple. And this is what is called, later on in the book, the "abomination of desolation." His attack on the Hebrew Scriptures is given in verse 12, where it is stated that he threw the "truth to the ground." He did that literally. In 1 Maccabees it is stated, and I'm quoting here, "The books of the law which they found, they tore to pieces and burned with fire."

So he made a direct attack on the Scriptures themselves. Some of the Roman emperors would later do that against the church. But Antiochus was seeking to wipe out everything, the entire religion of the Jewish people. Well, at this point in the vision, Daniel heard angels asking how long the persecution would last. And the answer's given in verse 14, 2,300 evenings and mornings."

Commentators have spent a lot of time on that number. I think the simplest way to understand it is very directly, as it's stated, which is that this period of persecution will cover a period of what equals six years and nearly four months. Now, that covers the entire time of the persecution, beginning when it did with the murder of the faithful Jewish high priest in the year 170 BC, and then the looting of the temple in 169 BC and the slaughter of the Jews. The conclusion of this almost seven-year tribulation was a victory under Judas

Maccabeus. And the rededication of the temple is celebrated by the Jews at this time every year in December with the Feast of Hanukah.

In fact, the Feast of Hanukah began, I believe, last night. This is the week of it. And so the things that we're reading of here are being celebrated now. You can probably, if you'll drive through the neighborhood in the evening, nearby you'll see some of the Menorah in the windows, as they begin to light the candles, celebrate what's called the Feast of Lights. Well, that happened as a result of Judas Maccabeus and the faithful fighting against paganism and triumphing.

So Antiochus Epiphanes tried to destroy the Jews in Judea and failed. Later – later to Daniel, long before Antiochus, this same thing happened. You can see that in the Book of Esther. When Haman tried to destroy the Jews in Persia, he would fail to do that. And his life, as you know, ends on the gallows. The very gallows he built for Mordecai became the gallows where he himself was hung.

Antiochus' end also came in Persia when he died of grief and remorse after he suffered a military defeat, and then he learned that his army in Judea had been destroyed. Well, now we might have expected that he would have been killed in a more violent way, or he would have died in a more violent way if the Jews would have formed some kind of conspiracy against him, and he would have been slain by the sword, since our Lord said, "Those who live by the sword die by the sword." But Antiochus didn't die in that way. And that was prophesied of him in verse 25.

It said that he would not be put to death by a human hand. "He will be broken," it says, without human hand, or "without human agency." And true to God's Word, it happened just as that, just as the word said that it would happen. But for Daniel, all of that was still almost 400 years in the future. So at this point in the vision, all of this was naturally very confusing to him.

And while he was trying to understand these things, make some sense of these things – he might have been able to do that somewhat because of the previous vision, and he knew that these animals

probably represent kings or kingdoms. But he's confused, and in the midst of all of this Gabriel appears. The angel comes to him and gives him help. In verses 20 through 25, Gabriel explains the vision, revealing what the kingdoms, the ram and the goat, represent. But it is the small horn.

It's Antiochus that is the real focus of Gabriel's interpretation, the real purpose of this whole vision. And he explains his rise, explains his increase, his persecution, and his fall, in verses 23 through 25. As he explains to Daniel, in verse 19, the events that he saw would happen "at the final period." Now, what does he mean by that? Well, the final period, or the time of the end, is an expression in prophecy that refers to the period at the end of a prophetic vision.

And this is a vision of the rise of Greece. And so the final period refers to the end of that period of the goat, the period of Greece, and it's ending in the reign of Antiochus. It's not about the antichrist and the end of history, not directly. That is not Gabriel's meaning here. But certainly there is much about the two careers of Antiochus and antichrist that parallel each other.

So it would be correct to see the rise and the fall of Antiochus as a kind of type or foreshadowing of the coming of antichrist. For example, both are symbolized as horns. The antichrist is a little horn in chapter 7. Antiochus is a small horn in chapter 8. That fact that both are represented as horns indicates that the antichrist, like Antiochus, will be a ruler.

He'll be a king. He'll be a man of power. Antiochus is described in verse 23 as "insolent and skilled in intrigue." And the brilliance of the antichrist, you'll remember from our study last time, is suggested in the description of him as a horn with eyes. You'll find that back in chapter 7 in verse 20, a peculiar description of a horn.

This is a horn with eyes. That's what riveted Daniel's attention to that little horn in chapter 7. He sees things. This is a horn with insight into power and politics. He knows intrigue.

He knows how to gain power from others, and he does that. And like Antiochus, he's a blasphemer. That little horn not only had eyes. He had a mouth, and it's described as "uttering great boasts." Both men commit the abomination of desolation.

Antiochus desecrated the temple, and the antichrist will do the same in a future temple. Paul speaks of that. He writes in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 of this man he calls the lawless one, or the man of sin. And he says he will exalt himself and "takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God." So there'll be a future temple built.

And this antichrist will come along, this beast as he's described in the Book of Revelation, and he will take his seat in that temple and he will exalt himself as God. And that is the abomination of desolation. He, too, will be a great persecutor of the Jews. Antiochus killed thousands; antichrist will kill more. In Revelation 13:7, he makes war on the saints.

And that war is not a localized war. It is worldwide. It's against the people of God. His power is satanic. Antiochus is described in verse 24 as being "mighty, but not by his own power." I take it that that means his power is supernatural, his power was given to him by the devil, the prince of the power of the air, the prince of this world, as he's described.

And it's the same with the antichrist. It's stated very explicitly in Revelation 13:2. John writes that the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority to the beast. But it's at the height of their power, the height of their pride when they're magnifying themselves, that both men have a sudden, ignominious death. In *Richard III*, at the end of the play, after lying and murdering his way to the throne, is left alone on the battlefield crying famously for a horse.

"A horse, a horse, my kingdom for my horse." And no horse is given. All he gets is death. Well, so too with his men. They don't last. They are suddenly cut off, but not by men.

The antichrist is destroyed by Christ. He's tossed into the Lake of Fire. And that's the end of all tyrants. That is the end of all men of violence, men of blasphemy. In the end, they die and they face judgment.

They had their moment and it's full of pride and arrogance and blasphemy. But it ends, and it's but a brief moment. The reason for that, of course, is God's in control of things, not men. They magnify themselves, they utter great boasts as though they're in control. And no doubt, Antiochus thought he was; no doubt the antichrist will think he is.

But God is in control. Man's not ultimately in control. Man makes his decisions, man is responsible, man does think. He acts as a free, moral agent, and he will give an account for all of things that he does and says. But, ultimately, all of it fits within the sovereign plan of God, His plan of the ages.

And that's one of the great lessons of this chapter, one of the great lessons in chapter 8. It's one of the great lessons that we see all through this Book of Daniel. And that is that God is absolutely sovereign. He's in control. Now, that assurance is given to a troubled and confused Daniel in verse 19, when Gabriel tells him that the vision "pertains to the appointed time of the end."

In other words, this word, "appointed," indicates that nothing that he saw was random or arbitrary. It was all planned. It was all appointed by God, who is Lord of history. All of this, as terrible as it was, as frightening as it was, as disturbed as it left Daniel, all of it was part of God's plan. Why would He plan this?

Why such a terrible thing that happens to these people? Well, the reason for that is indicated in verse 12, and also clarified a bit in verse 23. But it was, as verse 12 says, "on account of transgression" that the people would "be given over to the horn." So the people were given over to the horn because of transgression. In other words, because of the sins of the Jewish people, they would suffer trials, tribulation.

And you go back to the Book of the Maccabees, in 1 and 2 Maccabees, and it's written that many in Israel were not faithful to God. They even adopted the idolatry of the Greeks. They fit right in with the world. They conformed. There was apostasy in the land, and so God did what God must do with His people.

He disciplined them. He disciplined them and their discipline was severe. But He never forsook them. As terrible as it was, the Jews survived and they triumphed over their enemy. No doubt the chastening of it all stimulated repentance and galvanized opposition to that which was evil, and they triumphed.

And one purpose of the vision given to Daniel was to give that encouragement to him and to his people. They were captives in Babylon. When this vision comes to him, it's still the first of those four kingdoms. It's still Babylon, and for all they could see there was no end to it. It's still a vast kingdom.

Belshazzar was firmly on his throne. There may have been indication to the East that a rival kingdom was rising in the Medo Persians. But they were confident behind their walls in Babylon, and the kingdom would go on for some years before the Persians would arrive. And so when this vision comes to Daniel, they are still captives in this great pagan empire. The Persians would come, and they would be under the Persians; and then the Greeks would come and they'd be under Greek rule.

But in each case, they would survive. They'd survive the Babylonians, they'd survive the Persians, they'd survive the Greeks. They would later be under the heel of Rome, and then they would be scattered across the earth. Anti-Semitism would dog the Jew from ancient times to modern times. It still does.

But the Jewish people survived. Mark Twain noticed that; had some interesting things to write about it. He once commented on it. He wrote about the First World Zionist Congress that was held in Basel, Switzerland. Theodor Herzl planned to establish the homeland for the Jews which set forth there.

And Mark Twain wrote, "The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor ... then passed away. The Greek and the Roman followed The Jew saw them all, beat them all All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

Well, there is no secret to his immortality. It is God's promise which is unfailing. That's the well known secret to the student of the Bible. God chose Abraham and He promised to make of him "a great nation." And to the nation God promised a glorious kingdom.

And God keeps His promises; God keeps His Word. His Word never fails and His promise to Israel will never fail, and He will never give up His nation. Even when Israel was in sin and apostasy, He asked in Hosea 11:8, "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel?" He can't. That's the point of the rhetorical question.

And He won't. Now, that's a promise we see elsewhere in the prophets. Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31:34-35. In those verses, He declares that when the sun fails to give its light by day, and the moon and the stars fail to give their light by night, "If this fixed order departs from before Me, then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever."

He adds, "If you can measure the heavens, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel." In Jeremiah, then He gives the promise to rebuild Jerusalem. Well, the point of all those statements is the stars can't fail to give their light, the moon won't fail to give its light, the sun won't fail to give its light. I'll not fail regarding my people, is what the Lord is saying. Well, that's the secret of the Jews' immortality. It is God's grace.

And that, of course, has important implications for the church as well, the church made up of Jew and gentile alike, those who are the one body in Christ. He will not give us up either. We wouldn't have that confidence if it were true that God cast off Israel. If He threw them away, if He threw His chosen nation away, if He said, "All the

promises have been forfeited. There's no future for the Nation Israel, for the Jewish people."

If he could change His mind after setting forth promises all through the Old Testament, then we have no confidence at all as His New Testament people, as the church, that He won't change His mind about us, and at some point cast us off. But He will not give us up either. The God who won't give up Israel will not give up His church. But we could not have that confidence if He did not stay true to His people. He will stay true to Israel; He will stay true to us.

He has a future for all of us. And He's made the security that we have emphatically plain all through the New Testament, all through the Word of God. One example, John 6:37. Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." Now, that is a great statement of sovereign grace.

Who's saved? Those whom the Father gave to the Son. And all that He gave to Him, Jesus is saying, will come without fail, because God is great and He will bring them. But then he adds, "And the one who comes to me, I will certainly not cast out." Now that is the sovereign grace of God, and that is the eternal security that the Lord of history gives to every believer in Jesus Christ, everyone who comes to Him.

Everyone who believes in Him has that absolute security, the security that the nation has. It will someday be saved. And that's what Paul devotes a chapter to, or actually three chapters in the Book of Romans, 9, 10 and 11, to make that very point. Someday He will bring Israel to faith and to salvation. In the meantime, He is preserving that people through terrible trials, trials we see all through history, and greater trials yet to come.

But what about you? Are you in that faith that He will someday bring the Jews to understand and believe? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ? Someday they'll look upon Him whom they pierced and they'll repent. Have you believed in Him? Well, if not, we invite you to do so, to come to Him.

And all who come to Him, He receives and He will not cast any of them out. Come to Lord Jesus Christ in faith. He's Lord of history; He's guiding history to a glorious end. And in the meantime, He is protecting all of His people along the way. Even in the midst of trials He's blessing us. And even in the darkest days we can know that He is in control, and He can bless His people greatly in the midst of that.

So if you want eternal life, you can have it through faith in Christ. Come to Him, trust in Him. And those of you who have – I trust it's everyone in here; I hope it is – rest in Him. He's in control and you are secure in Him. Let's bow in a word of prayer and give thanks.

[Prayer] Father, we do give you thanks for that great truth. We're secure in your Son. Not anything in us. It's all of you. And just as you are indicating that all of these events that unfolded in this vision that Daniel saw were events that you had determined. So it is with all of the events of this life. You're in control.

And while they are mysterious to us sometimes, they're working together for our good. We know that. You promised that. We give you praise for that. We give you praise and thanks that we can rest in Christ and know that He is absolutely in control. We give you praise and thanks for Him. In His name we pray. Amen.