

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
SEPTEMBER 21 2024

God is in control

Scripture Story: Daniel 8; 9.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Daniel 8 records a prophecy that involves symbolic imagery such as beasts, horns, and the future actions of the powers they symbolize. "The action begins with the ascendancy of the Medo-Persian ram (verses 3, 20), followed by the Greek goat (verses 5, 21). The Greek goat's great horn is Alexander, whose reign is followed by the breakup of his empire into four kingdoms symbolized by the four horns (verses 8, 21, 22)" (William Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide*, p. 222).

"The little horn of Daniel 8 is Rome. The true fulfillment of the little horn of Daniel 8 can only be the Roman Empire and its successor, the Roman Church. . . . Inasmuch as the Roman Church was a continuation of the Roman Empire, a single prominent horn appropriately represents both of them" (Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family,* pp. 160, 161).

The certainty of God's Word brought both perplexity and comfort to Daniel. Daniel was perplexed at how or why God would allow trouble, tragedy, and rebellion for so long. And though answers were not readily given, Daniel was comforted in the fact that God Himself would war and win against the little horn and bring His people through victoriously. Not only is God's Word certain, His power is reliable.

Even though the future, and oftentimes the present, seems hard to comprehend, Daniel shows us that God is still in control. The fact that God showed Daniel such trouble was coming is reassurance that nothing, not even tragedy, catches God by surprise. Not only does He know about it, He has a plan to rectify it, in His time.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that nothing, not even their problems, catches God by surprise. *(Know)*
- Feel secure in the reliability of God's plan and power. *(Feel)*
- Respond to life's problems by trusting in God. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Holy Scriptures, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 1

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

An alternate activity for this lesson is to pass out index cards to each student and ask them to come up with a definition for the word "vaticinate" (vā-tĭ'ə-nāt), without the use of a dictionary. After the students have finished composing them, collect all the definitions. Shuffle them and add to the pile the correct definition, which is "to prophesy or foretell." Read all the definitions aloud and have students guess which one is the real definition. Afterward, say: "The prophet Daniel vaticinated or prophesied about the last days. Today we are going to look at some of his prophecies."

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Becky strapped herself into the plane like a pro. No one could tell this was her first flight, or that on the inside she was terrified. She grabbed her safety card from the back of the seat in front of her and read it with deliberate attention. She located the nearest exit, which sat just rows behind her. She listened intently to the speech the flight attendants gave and tried to commit to memory all the safety procedures in case of emergency.

Everyone, including the flight attendants, had taken their seats. The baggage was stowed, and the plane began its ascent into the cloudy sky. It was not nearly as bad as she thought. Becky was afraid for nothing. The beverages came and the in-flight movie began to play. Becky was having the time of her life. She even chatted a little with the person next to her.

Just then, a bell sounded overhead and the captain's voice interrupted the movie. The captain warned that he saw a storm up ahead. For the next 20 minutes, it would be a bumpy ride. Those around Becky looked at her to see how she would take the news. She assured them she was calm. She was reassured by the fact the pilot was able to see the storm before he got to it. Since it did not catch him by surprise, he was able to plan and prepare for it. Becky explained, "Since it did not catch him off guard, I will not let it catch me off guard either."

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The prophet Daniel received a warning much like Becky's warning. God was telling Daniel through his visions that there were some storms ahead. There would be some turbulent times coming, but God was still in control. He is the Master Pilot, and none of the things to come would catch Him by surprise. God knew about them centuries before they would even happen, and had already charted out solutions for problems that had not even occurred.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- What was Daniel's reaction to the vision God gave him?
- Why do you think he responded this way?
- What kingdom did the goat represent?
- What reasons can you give for God using symbols such as goats and horns to describe future kingdoms?
- Daniel's visions made some pretty gloomy predictions about some coming kingdoms. If the prophecies were written out in plain language, rulers of those kingdoms might have purposed to destroy the Bible and such important prophecy. Sometimes God hides things from us and reveals it at just the right time. Read Daniel 8:26. God told Daniel to seal up the vision. Why do you think He told Daniel to do this?
- The goat had a horn that would start out small but would grow up to the heavens. *Underline* the things the little horn would do.
- What promises does God make in this passage?
- God promised that the little horn would be destroyed. What role did the little horn play in history?
- What do you think God means when He says He will reconsecrate the sanctuary?

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Think Time

Good things come to those who wait. This is true in life and in the classroom. Studies show that when teachers give at least three seconds of wait-time after a question is asked and after a student answers, great things happen. There are less "I don't know" answers or no answers at all.[1]

Ask students, "As a result of this lesson, what changes will you make this week?" And then wait at least three seconds in silence giving someone an opportunity to speak. After a student speaks, continue to wait at least three seconds before responding. Students will feel more comfortable and will potentially contribute more in class.

- Why is the cleansing or reconsecration of the sanctuary necessary?
- What does this passage teach us about God?
- How can we apply this knowledge in our lives today?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Daniel 8:26; Psalm 77:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Romans 8:35-39; Isaiah 55:8, 9.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Daniel had a disturbing vision about a ram and a goat. The vision opened with a mighty ram with two horns. He was very powerful. Nothing could withstand him. He conquered to the west, the north, and the south. The ram's power, however, came to an end when a ferocious goat, with a giant horn, came on the scene. The goat trampled the ram and grew to be very great. The goat's giant horn was broken, but was replaced by four horns. Out of one of the four winds of heaven came a little horn that grew great in power. In prophecy, horns represent kings (Daniel 8:20).

Gabriel told Daniel that the ram with the two horns represented the empire of the Medes and Persians. The goat symbolized the empire of Greece. The great horn represented Alexander the Great. At his death, his kingdom was given to his four generals, hence the four horns. Out of the four winds of heaven came a little horn that set himself up against God and His people.

This little horn symbolized the the Roman Empire and its successor, the Church of Rome. This religious and political power would not only war against humanity. It would war against God and His people. It would defile God's sanctuary, trample God's people, come against the Prince of princes, and throw truth to the ground.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

Gabriel reassured Daniel that the sanctuary would be reconsecrated in 2300 days, which in prophetic time was 2,300 years. The time period of 2300 prophetic days, or 2,300 literal years, extended from 457 B.C., the decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, to A.D. 1844, the time Jesus began the second part of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, that is, the work of investigative judgment.

As Daniel continued to study, he realized that the Jews should be freed from Babylonian captivity soon. It was supposed to last only 70 years, but the last vision made it seem like oppression would go on for thousands of years.

Gabriel gave Daniel a clearer understanding that the things he saw were for the end times. Gabriel also shared God's solution for the problem, the Messiah. He not only shared *that* the Messiah would come but *when* the Messiah would come! See Daniel 9:24-27.

God still had everything in His control. Even though there were some rough times ahead, none of these situations would catch God by surprise. He would bring justice in His time. God also promised to destroy the power of the little horn permanently.

Besides presenting the great conflict that involves the attack of the little horn against Christ's kingdom, the prophecy focuses on God's solution through the plan of salvation.

The prophecy described in Daniel 8 presents Jesus as "out Great High Priest, the heavenly Prince, our Intercessor and Mediator. We receive from Him today the sanctification of our lives. Finally one day, according to the promise of the prophecy of Daniel 7, those lives will be transformed into the glorified lives of the saints in the new earth" (William Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide*, pp. 223, 229).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Give each student a piece of paper and instruct them to write at the top of the paper a situation they want to completely trust God to work out. Below the situation's description, have them pen a prayer of surrender, letting God know they are going to stop worrying about this problem and place it in His hands. Lead the students in a season of prayer in which each student can share a sentence prayer of surrender aloud.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

We are indeed living in the last days of earth's history. Although the last days will be marked by conflict, the Bible promises that they will end with God's victory over the forces of evil. Then He will redeem His saints and enter them into His kingdom of glory. Yet for a little while the people of God will experience turbulence ahead. God, our Pilot, does not promise to lead us *around* every storm, but He does promise to lead us safely *through* the storm. God's warning of storms ahead affords us an opportunity to be prepared and proves that God has prepared also.

God's Word is certain and His power is reliable. He will bring us out, not only of the trouble in the last days, but out of the problems we face today. "Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 100).

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[1] Robert J. Stahl, "Using 'Think-Time' and 'Wait-Time' Skillfully in the Classroom," *ERIC Digest.*



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*) has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Daniel 8; 9.

God is in control



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keytext

"Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."

(Daniel 9:19, NIV)

flashlight

"Through another vision further light was thrown upon the events of the future; and it was at the close of this vision that Daniel heard 'one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision?' Daniel 8:13. The answer that was given, 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed' (verse 14), filled him with perplexity" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 554).

what do you think?

Daniel received a vision from God about things to come in the last days. It told about beasts, horns, and the future actions of the powers they symbolize.

In addition to these beasts and horns that symbolize kingdoms and powers, Daniel was told in vision that at the end of a period of 2300 prophetic days "the sanctuary shall be cleansed" (Daniel 8:14, NKJV). This is the hopeful message of the prophecy that presents Jesus' work as our Great High Priest and Intercessor. He began the work of investigative judgment, the second phase of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, at the end of the prophetic time of 2300 days.

What does it mean to you that Jesus is your Advocate, Mediator, and Intercessor before the Father? What is your response to Him?

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did you know?

The 2300-day prophecy is the longest time prophecy in the Bible. One day in prophecy is equal to a year (Ezekiel 4:6), so this prophecy is actually 2,300 years long! Daniel 9:25 tells us this prophecy would begin when the decree went out to rebuild Jerusalem. This happened with Artaxerxes's decree in 457 B.C. Twenty-three hundred years later takes us to 1844. Remarkably, God gave Daniel this prophecy 90 years before it would begin. When the predicted time came for its fulfillment, it happened just as He said.

INTO THE STORY

"In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me. . . .

"As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. . . . The goat became very great, but at the height of its power the large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven.

"Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. It set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the LORD; it took away the daily sacrifice from the LORD, and his sanctuary was thrown down. Because of rebellion, the LORD's people and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground.

"Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, 'How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled—the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, the surrender of the sanctuary and the trampling underfoot of the LORD's people?'

"He said to me, 'It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.' . . .

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

"[Gabriel] said: '. . . The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king. . . .

"In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.' . . .

"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, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What symbols did Daniel see in the vision of chapter 8? (See verses 3-14.)

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What do these prophetic symbols represent? (See verses 20-26; read also the *What Do You Think?* and the *Did You Know?* sections of the lesson to find answers for interpretation.)

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God promised that the little horn would be destroyed. What role did the little horn play in history?

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What does this passage teach us about God?

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Daniel's vision reveals the great conflict between good and evil, between Jesus' sacrificial and High Priestly ministry for the salvation of our souls on one hand, and the boastful actions of the little horn that seeks to undermine Christ's ministry on the other hand. How does this prophecy help you distinguish between these conflicting forces? Will you allow Jesus full control in your life?

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punch lines

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered" **(Daniel 12:1, NIV).**

"God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" **(Numbers 23:19, NIV).**

"Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled" **(Joshua 21:45, NIV).**

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" **(John 16:33, NIV).**

"For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock" **(Psalm 27:5, NIV).**

further insight

"Our lives may seem a tangle; but as we commit ourselves to the wise Master Worker, He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory. And that character which expresses the glory—character—of Christ will be received into the Paradise of God."—Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 367

Sabbath

Read Numbers 23:19.

Why do you think God showed Daniel what would happen in the future?

God is never caught off guard about things that happen. He has told us about some future events, through Daniel and other prophets, so we can also know and be prepared. The great controversy is happening all around us. The work Jesus is doing right now as our High Priest and Intercessor is of great importance to us. This tells us that He is coming soon and that we should be preparing and helping others to prepare as well. Our text today tells us that God does not lie and what He has said will happen. Are you ready? What can help you be prepared and ready for whatever the future brings your way?

Sunday

Read Psalm 27:5.

Read the *Into the Story* and then answer the questions in the *Out of the Story* section of your lesson. God shared His plan for cleansing the sanctuary. The sanctuary pointed to Jesus' sacrifice, which would take away the sins of the world. God warned that the enemy would come with a counterfeit plan for salvation. No human being can deliver us from sin or a guilty conscience. Jesus alone can save us from our sins and can offer forgiveness and peace. There are no shortcuts that can substitute for earnest prayer to our heavenly Father. Jesus' sacrifice for cleansing our sins allows us direct access to the Father through prayer. God shared this prophecy to warn His people of *what lies* ahead, and to warn of *the deceptions and lies* ahead.

The enemy often uses counterfeits to distract us from God's plan for our life. What kind of counterfeits have you encountered? How did you recognize them to be counterfeits? How did you resist them?

Monday

Read Daniel 9:19.

When we find Daniel, he is in Babylon with the rest of Israel in captivity. Daniel was hoping they would be freed soon, but God kept giving him these disturbing visions. As a result, Daniel was not sure when all of this trouble would end!

Read this week's *Key Text.* On the lines below, rewrite it in your own words.

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What does this prayer reveal about Daniel's faith? What does it reveal about Daniel's relationship with God?

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Tuesday

Read Daniel 12:1.

In this week's *Flashlight*, Ellen White talks about God's solution to the problem the little horn was causing. He was defiling the sanctuary and trying to take away the sacrifices. God would cleanse the sanctuary and reconsecrate it. God would bring restoration. God would do this through judgment. What things come to your mind when you think of judgment?

In a competition, the judging is the most exciting part, because someone is declared a winner. God has declared that all who love Him and keep His commandments would be victorious. Even though we had to fight hard, when judgment comes we will be vindicated and declared winners!

Wednesday

Read John 16:33.

We have pondered why God would share such a distressing prophecy with Daniel. In the *Punch Lines* section, Jesus gives us a possible answer: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace" (John 16:33, NIV).

How can we have peace when we know that our future will be filled with trouble? Because we have the assurance that God knew about our trouble in advance and has a way for us to either get out of it or get through it. Are you willing to trust God with your future?

Thursday

Read Psalm 119:105.

One of the strongest themes of Daniel is that God is in control, no matter how bad things get. No matter how dark the storm, God promises to guide us through it. God not only predicted dark times, but He promised deliverance. His Word is sure. Just as we can depend on His prophecies, we must lean on His promises.

When times get dark, we must hold on to the light of God's Word. Choose a promise or two that reminds you of God's power and His plan to get you through tough times. Commit it to memory. Write it on an index card and put it in a prominent place so you can see it every day.

Friday

Read Matthew 10:30.

Nothing, big or small, catches God by surprise. He knows all and has a plan to make it work out in the end. What situations have tempted you to believe God has forgotten about you?

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God has solutions for problems you have not even had yet. Write out a prayer of thanksgiving that God has charted out your future.

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