

### Daniel 8:15–27 (ESV)

15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." 17 So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end." 18 And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up. 19 He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end. 20 As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. 22 As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power. 23 And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise. 24 His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. 25 By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken—but by no human hand. 26 The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now." 27 And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.

### The man of intrigue

We are returning to our study of Daniel. We have reached the second half of Chapter 8. We have reviewed a large part of history revealed in chapter 8 last week. So this week we may not focus as much on the history.

**15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man.**

Ok, so Daniel is just done seeing what he saw, and remember what we said last week. We are probably supposed to **experience** with Daniel what he **saw**, since what he **saw** was so emphasized in the text.

Now he wants to understand what he saw. It is interesting that even when God shows us something of the **reality** from **His perspective**, that does not mean we will instantly **understand** it. That has been very helpful to me in this study. I have had to rely upon a lot of help to help **me** understand what it means. Daniel was in the same spot here. Except the help that he got was a bit more exceptional than mine. I got Youtube. He got Gabriel.

It is also interesting that Gabriel looked like a man. There are many times in scripture that angels showed up looking like men. A quick glance could not tell them apart. We are told in scripture that some in the New Testament ministered to angels unaware. That tells us a lot about angels. They are mighty. They are powerful. They are dangerous. Yet God uses them from time to time to deliver important messages. And they have the capacity to look like normal humans. Here is one instance.

Have you ever wondered why Angels are hardly ever used to deliver the **gospel** to humans? I think that is interesting. For whatever reason, God nearly always chooses **human beings** to minister the life changing gospel to **human beings**. Maybe it is because he wants the message to be delivered through a channel of **weakness** so that the glory for the outcome of **people's salvation** will all fall on Christ. When Christ uses **humans** to deliver the message, the **message** will always outshine the **messenger**. And that is how it is supposed to be.

**16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision."**

Given that the voice is giving a command to the angel without hesitation, and the angel obeys immediately, there is no reason to **not believe** that the voice is of **Christ**. It sounded like a man's voice and Christ was the son of man. So it is fitting.

We see Gabriel mentioned 4 times in scripture. We see him in Daniel 8 and 9, and then again when he gave a message to John the Baptist's soon to be father, and to Mary about her pregnancy. When we see Gabriel, we see him delivering messages.

Never believe that God cannot communicate to you if that communication is necessary. An EMP could take out every means of long distance communication we rely upon. But **NOTHING** can take out the angelic delivery service. If God wants a message delivered, it gets delivered. Sometimes there might be some mysterious delays, but even those are pre-ordained by God.

So Gabriel is in charge, now, of making Daniel understand what's up. Gabriel is given the freedom to reveal the secrets of this vision.

**17 So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, “Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.”**

We have seen lots of places in scripture where angels scared people. So even though the angel in some ways looked like a human, the closer he got to Daniel the more scared Daniel got. We are not told why. Daniel clearly took the subservient position. I don't think it was to worship the angel. But I think it scared Daniel so badly that he impulsively threw himself down. He was not strong enough to stand and face the angel. There was something about standing in Gabriel's presence that did not seem like a natural thing to do.

So while Daniel is face down in the dirt in front of the angel, Gabriel said to Daniel something that appears to be meant as some kind of comfort,

**“Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.”**

I think we are to understand that it is comforting by the use of the word **“but”**. I was scared stiff **but** the angel said. So the but is to give us the idea that what the angel was saying was **in contrast** to what **Daniel was feeling**.

So the first thing that Gabriel wanted Daniel to understand is the vision is for the time of the end.

The million dollar question here is the **end of what?**

We discussed this a bit earlier in our study.

Only 2 of the 4 kingdoms are dealt with in Daniel 8. OK. Both refer to the time of the end. So logically either the 3<sup>rd</sup> kingdom in Daniel 8 must be describing the same kingdom as the 4<sup>th</sup> kingdom in Daniel 7. If they are both at the **end of time**, then they must both be the 4<sup>th</sup> kingdom. People who understand it this way would say that the **3<sup>rd</sup> Greek kingdom** in Daniel 8 evolves into the **4<sup>th</sup> Roman kingdom** described in chapter 7.

The only other logical conclusion is the one I prefer, at this present day and hour, that the time of the end described here in Daniel 8 is **not** the end of time. The angel is telling Daniel, don't worry. This prophecy is not for a time **that is near**. This will not happen **soon**. It will finish up at the **end of the Greek Kingdom**. That is why it would have been comforting to Daniel. This vision is to provide details that future generations will need to know, and particularly as time moves to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.

**18 And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up.**

Now we can know that Daniel did not fall asleep like we might do during a sermon. If Jack were here in the audience I would look at him at this point. No,

maybe it was the sheer relief after the terrible fright that caused Daniel to fall asleep or pass out. Maybe God caused him to fall asleep. We don't know, but it does not seem like an optimal time to catch up on his sleep.

Anyway, Gabriel touched Daniel and made him stand up. It never says that the angel woke him up. So was this happening in a dream, or did the angel wake him up. I am not sure we can know.

**19 He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end.**

Gabriel is clarifying. I will go into more detail about what happens surrounding the time of the indignation, which is probably the abomination that causes desolation when Antiochus kills a pig on the alter to Zeus in the temple. This will be very soon before the time when the Greeks lose control of Jerusalem. So it is the end of the rule of the Greeks.

**20 As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. 22 As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.**

You can visit SermonAudio for last week's sermon on this if you like. We went over these details describing who is who. For this week we want to focus more on the end of the second kingdom and the evil horn that arose.

**23 And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise.**

OK, in verse 23 where it says the latter end of their kingdom, it is the **Greek kingdom**. The Greek empire ended about 146 BC when they became part of Rome. So this is describing what would happen as they approached this time period.

We already discussed that the transgressors were probably the **Jewish people**.

They had gone as far in their sin and rebellion as God was going to allow them. So God appointed a man with a bold face.

This is the same phrase used for the prostitute in Proverbs 7 where she proceeds to brazenly address a man and escort the man back to her home with sinful intentions.

In Antiochus's situation, it is describing an attitude where he is flagrantly **mocking and going against** everything that the One True God says is sacred and holy. He is brazenly sinning against the Judean God.

The ESV says “who understands riddles”. Many of the other translations say that he is “skilled in intrigue”. I think that is more likely the case. Antiochus gained his power through intrigue. There are several stories told about how he came to power, but they all involved deception and trickery and masterful political strategies. He did not deserve the throne, but he found a way to get it.

**24 His power shall be great—but not by his own power;**

No one is really sure what this means. Is he riding on the coattails of those who actually created the empire. Antiochus simply weaseled his way in. So the power he had was really power that others had earned. Or was it the power of Satan that strategized to put Antiochus in power? Or is this speaking of the fact that it is ultimately God who places everyone in power? That might be the best guess seeing that, first, God’s people had to reach their limit of transgression.

We don’t know for sure.

**and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints.**

Antiochus was brutal to the Jewish people. He was highly successful and he certainly destroyed a lot of faithful Jewish people who were the saints.

When Antiochus took the city of Jerusalem, he allowed no acts of worship outside of the Greek religions. He forbade all the outward signs of the Jewish religion. This would have put God’s true people in a tough spot. They could serve God and die. Or they could compromise and live. Odds are very good that the ones who did the most dying in Jerusalem were the most faithful.

**25 By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great.**

In this world, deceit, by its very nature will prosper. Those who have kids know this to be true. It takes a great deal of supervision and fact checking to know when we are being told the truth or when we are being lied to. If we are slothful, what we are going to get are lies. Sometimes we want lies. Because if a kid lies to us about what he did wrong, we feel relieved of our need to do the work required to fix it. If we are lazy, we may find ourselves wanting to be lied to. And the kids who refuse to lie are going to get the lion’s share of the discipline. When authorities are not diligent, they will positively reward lying and negatively reinforce truth telling. I remember a document I had forgotten about when I was working for the bank. In that document I was candid about another department that did not do their job. Eventually I inadvertently handed that document over to that very department. Everything I said was 100% true. But when the document was discovered, you can guess who got in trouble. It was not the

people who weren't doing their jobs. No. It was me because I told the truth. That is just how it is.

I remember being so frustrated in the corporate world because the goal always seemed to be to come up with a strategy to move forward and never to negatively reinforce the bad behavior. Blame did not matter. So it positively reinforced those who did not care about right and wrong and punished those who cared.

So deceit has an advantage in a fallen world from the start. But that was not good enough for Antiochus. He wanted a culture of deception. He wanted a political system and a civil government of deception. It is one thing to **fail** to be diligent and promoting that climate. It is a whole other thing to be **completely for** such a thing, to intend to create a culture of deception.

**Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken—but by no human hand.**

It is interesting it says **without warning** he will destroy many. How often does God not grant a warning before he punishes? Think about the prophets. God gives warning after warning before he acts. The wicked give **no warning**.

Because destruction is their goal. We read in scripture that God has some **aversion** to punishing people. We are not exactly how that plays out in His sovereignty, but He clearly provides opportunity for repentance. The devil would destroy all of God's people this instant if he was only given a chance.

Then we are told that Antiochus will rise up against the Prince of princes, which is about the same as the King of kings. This is probably God the Father but it could be Christ as well.

We discussed last week how Antiochus had coins pretty much announcing he was equal to God. That is a big mistake.

There is something to note here, especially in light of end time prophecies. The roots of rebellion are the same everywhere. Satan's goals are ultimately always the same. His methods vary, but his goal is the same. So those who are most in His power will share those goals and attributes. He hates God. He hates God's people. He is the father of lies. He masquerades as some kind of light, some kind of morality, but he is sheer evil. He loves destruction. He loves chaos. So we will find many antichrists in history. Because the devil is the inspiration for every one of them. There are more to come. The antichrist in Antiochus Epiphanes will be followed by one in the Roman Empire. And then it will be followed again at the end of time. And there will be lots of them between now and then. What would we expect. Evil is evil. It's character does not change.

We can always expect the devil to be the devil.

We see that the antichrists always strike at these points.

1 He always wants **Sacrifice to God** to not be that big of a deal. In our case it is the **living** sacrifice of **ourselves to God** that He wants to put an end to. He will always push to have believers live godless selfish lives. And when he can, he will make living a godly life punishable by death.

2 He always wants the **destruction of the temple**, and in our case it is **the body of Christ, the church**. We are always his target. That will never change until he is cast eternally into hell.

3 He always wants to **cast truth to the ground**. We can rest assured that he will do all in his power to **remove** truth or **distort** truth. It isn't shocking that our history books are being rewritten. And even those that are not rewritten tend not to be read. I find it frightening how each generation finds reading more and more a supreme discipline. There is something frightening about that. Reading and listening to the word of God have got to have a high place in our lives if we hope to avoid believing lies. The devil wants people to get their "truth" through media that puts out sound bites but rarely puts out all the facts and reasoning that takes more than a single paragraph.

Now how was Antiochus broken without human hands?

Not all of the details are clear, but it looks like Antiochus was attempting to raid the temple of Artemis in Elymais. This would be similar to him raiding the temple in Jerusalem, but this time it was a temple to an idolatrous god. It was there that he heard about the victories that Judas the Hammer was having against his armies. As he was uttering dire threats against the Jewish armies

I quote-

**He was seized with severe abdominal pains that never left him; and thus he fell out of the chariot in which he was riding. Finally, as a result of his severe injuries from the fall and the attack of worms on his bowels, accompanied by a revolting stench, he finally died with vain petitions on his lips, imploring the God of Israel to spare his life.**

*Gleason L. Archer Jr., "Daniel," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 105.*

We need to wrap our heads around this. No one gets away with sin against God. No one does. Never ever envy the wicked. They are not getting away with it. Their reward is always temporary no matter how intense.

You cannot ignore the God of heaven forever. You cannot mock Him without consequence. You cannot **harm His anointed ones** unnoticed. God **sees**. He

**knows.** He **cares.** And He is vicious in His wrath. We only need to look at the cross of Christ to understand that. No one gets away with sin against God. It is either punished in the **death of Christ**, or it is punished **by Christ Himself.** Never envy the wicked, no matter how their plight looks at the present. The future is what we need to focus on. Set your mind on things above. Where Christ is.

**26 The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.” 27 And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days.**

OK, again Daniel is told, this is for the future. This is not **soon** to come. It is actually **hundreds** of years. It is wonderful that God provided this for His people. What a grace it was for them to be able to know that the things happening to them in the future were not by some kind of mistake. God had not forgotten them.

But for Daniel, it was a lot to take in. He just saw hundreds of years of history in a short period of time. And there was very little pleasant about it. Seeing into the divine purposes can be **devastating.** Most of it was gut wrenching. Sometimes we wish we knew the future. It would certainly make it easier to buy stocks. But we should thank God that He **does not** show us our futures. We already worry about facing what **we don't** know. Can you imagine how hard it would be to deal with hard things that were coming if we **DID know?**

So it made Daniel sick for a while. I suspect this would be like seeing the Nazi death camps in action. We find a divine sorrow based on man's wickedness. A normal person could not see all this and be unaffected. And then if the scenes would move from camp to camp, the magnitude of the evil would be impossible to take in all at once. I think that is the kind of thing that Daniel was grappling with.

I do not think this was the kind of thing that faith just shakes off. There are things in our lives like that. The impact of the wickedness leaves a lasting impression and it is supposed to. There are wounds we experience in this life that will not be healed until we see Christ. That is to be expected. And faith does not **free us** from the wound, but it provides **hope** in the presence of the pain. It provides an **under riding joy** that carries us through to a point in the future where that joy will break through to the surface.

**Then I rose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.**

OK so Monday came as usual. Mondays keep coming.



God graciously always gives us the next thing to do as long as we breathe. If you do not have enough to do, just keep asking God and keep looking around for needs. It should not take very long to find your next Monday task.

John Wesley was once asked by a man what he would do if he knew that Christ would come tomorrow. Wesley pulled out his calendar. He read off all that he had listed to do in the following day. He said, "That dear sir is what I would do." You and I always have King's business to do. Maybe it is raising kids. Maybe it is showing up at our place of work. Maybe it is reading God's word. Maybe it is reaching out to God's people. But we always have stuff to do. No matter how dramatic of an experience we just had with God, no matter what insight we have had. We always have work to do on the following day.

What work do you have today and tomorrow? Do it for the Lord.

I am not sure what application to make from this text. For sure we know that God is always accomplishing what He wants through who He wants in our world.

Maybe we should consider that more in our thinking.

Maybe we should think about how deceit wins when we do not do our jobs in our arenas of influence. Or maybe it is something else. But God has given us a great deal to think about in the prophecies of Daniel.

And your Monday is fast approaching. As you consider the Lord's return, do your job.