

“Correct Interpretation of Daniel”
Daniel 8:27
(Preached at Trinity, August 31, 2014)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I’ve pointed out, the last half of the Book of Daniel is challenging to interpret. Theologians of great ability have scratched their heads in awe of this passage of Scripture. **Chapters 7-12** record visions of the future which are prophetic and of the apocalyptic literary genre. This means that much of this section is highly symbolic. That doesn’t mean that we throw up our hands in complete bewilderment and conclude that it cannot be known. It does mean, however, that we must treat it with much care.
 - A. Matthew Henry aptly stated it:
“*There are many things dark and hard to be understood, which we dare not positively determine the sense of, and yet many things plain and profitable, which I trust God will enable us to make a good use of.*”
 - B. I’m fearful of those who claim to have everything in this book all figured out and set forth elaborate schemes for the last days that often seem to be swallowed up by vain speculation. Even Daniel himself shared his lack of understanding of everything he saw:
Daniel 12:8 NAU - "As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what *will be* the outcome of these *events*?"
Daniel 8:27 NAU - " I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain *it*."
2. Too often well-meaning pastors, teachers, and theologians approach the books of Daniel and Ezekiel and Revelation and immediately interpret them as referring to the end of the world.
 - A. The visions received by Daniel are chiefly revealing to Daniel the history of Israel leading up to the coming of the Messiah and the many trials that God’s people would face.
 - B. It does, however, look beyond the trials of Israel and we catch a glimpse of the trials of God’s people until the end of the world.
3. This is where one’s eschatological perspective on the millennium will have a great impact on how he responds to the prophecy of Daniel. Remember there are three main views:
 - A. Premillennialism – teaches that Christ will come *before* the millennium which they interpret as His literal 1000 reign upon the earth. The prospect for the future involves apostasy and tribulation. They maintain a very pessimistic view of the future. They are basically “holding on” until Christ returns.
They stress little social involvement since there is no hope for its reform. Their method of interpretation involves detailed schemes that take each passage as pointing to some literal fulfillment in the future.

- B. Postmillennialism on the other hand sees Christ return *after* the millennial reign which is of an indeterminate figurative duration. Jesus will come back to a world that has been Christianized by the power of the Gospel. They maintain a very optimistic view of the world and place great emphasis upon social involvement and claiming culture for Christ. Their system of interpretation takes into account the symbolic nature of the apocalyptic genre.
- C. Amillennialism does not see a literal millennial reign of Christ but rather a realized millennium characterized by both suffering and trial for the church and marvelous increase and advancement. We are already reigning with Christ and seated in the heavenlies. While we will see a great apostasy we will also see great Gospel increase. God's people recognize their significance in this world and continue to stand forth as a light in this world of darkness. Like Postmillennialists, Amillennialists also give careful treatment to the apocalyptic genre.
4. Which view is correct? While Daniel doesn't address any particular millennial view Daniel's response to the vision of **Chapter 8** sheds some important light on the subject of eschatology in general.
- Tonight I want to point out three things we should note in **Verse 27**
 "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 none to explain *it*."
- I. Daniel didn't understand his own vision
- A. This is amazing as we remember Daniel's significance as a prophet
1. This is the Daniel who interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream when no one else could. Nebuchadnezzar said of Daniel:
Daniel 2:47 NAU - "The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."
Daniel 4:9 NAU - " I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell *me* the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation."
 2. In **Chapter 5** when no one else in Babylon could interpret the handwriting on the wall the queen spoke of Daniel:
Daniel 5:11-12 NAU - "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans *and* diviners. ¹² "This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."

3. If anyone could give us a full interpretation of these passages it would surely be Daniel. Yet Daniel declared in **Verse 27**:
"I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain *it*."
Again, in **Chapter 12**:
Daniel 12:8 NAU - "As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what *will be* the outcome of these *events*?"
 4. In **Chapter 12** we are told that the wicked would not understand these visions but the wise would.
Daniel 12:10 NAU - "none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand."
 - a. Daniel was one of the wisest men of his generation.
Daniel 1:17 NAU - " God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of* literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all *kinds of* visions and dreams."
 - b. Daniel with all of his wisdom did not have full understanding of these visions—he had *some* understanding but many of these visions left him confused
 - c. And no one could describe Daniel as a wicked man—his piety could not be questioned. His life was that of righteousness.
Daniel 6:4 NAU - "Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or *evidence of* corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was *to be* found in him."
- B. If Daniel could not interpret his own vision should we not be wary of claiming full understanding of Daniel’s visions?
1. There are 12 volumes in the Left Behind series with several prequels and a sequel. There are 40 books in the Left Behind for Kids Series. The authors claim to have it all figured out to the last detail.
 2. At the very least, we need to approach these passages of Scripture with great humility and confess that we do not have it all figured out.
 3. I confess that I don’t understanding the full meaning of the 2300 evenings and mornings in **Verse 14**. But neither did Daniel, even after Gabriel came to give him the meaning.
 4. All of Scripture is given to us for our profit
2 Timothy 3:16-4:1 NAU - " All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. "
 - a. Not all Scripture is equally clear.
LBC: Chapter 1:7 – “All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only learned, but the unlearned, in due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them.”

b. The words of **Deut. 29** should be heeded. God reveals some things to us while concealing others.

Deut. 29:29 NAU - "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

5. Whatever your eschatological view you must conclude there is much about the end times that remains a mystery. There will be no signs preceding the second coming. That day and that hour is for God alone to know.

II. Daniel was greatly stirred over what he saw

"Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days"

A. What Daniel saw left him exhausted spiritually, physically, and emotionally

1. What was it that had such an intense effect upon him?

a. The visions themselves were fearful to gaze upon. In **Chapter 7** they were described as beastly forms.

(1) He described the fourth beast as particularly terrifying.
Daniel 7:7 NAU - "After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet"

(2) Daniel described the effect it had upon him
Daniel 7:28 NAU - "At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

b. The greatest effect, however, was what these visions pointed to – the suffering of God’s people

Daniel 8:23-24 NAU - "In the latter period of their rule, When the transgressors have run *their course*, A king will arise, Insolent and skilled in intrigue. ²⁴ "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."

2. Although these things would be in the future Daniel was smitten at the thought of God’s people suffering.

Daniel 8:17 NAU - "Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end."

Daniel 8:19 NAU - "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for *it* pertains to the appointed time of the end."

3. There were many things about the vision Daniel did not understand but one thing was clear. Great trial was to come upon God’s people. This brought Daniel to fall on his knees in prayer and fasting.

Daniel 10:1-3 NAU - " In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and *one of great conflict*, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision. ² In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. ³ I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed."

- B. Are we as concerned about God's people today?
1. Too often we are driven by what affects us. Little regard is given to the wellbeing of the local church today. Little regard is given to the wellbeing of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 2. What effect does it have upon you when you hear about Christians being persecuted in Iraq or Somalia?
 3. It is our love for one another that causes the world to take notice more than anything else.
 4. Whatever your eschatological view, your heart must always be fixed upon the wellbeing of God's people.

III. Daniel's response was to rise up and be about his work in this world
"Then I got up *again* and carried on the king's business"

- A. Daniel was not preoccupied with what he saw in his visions
1. He was stirred by what he saw. It affected him greatly. It left him sick for days.
 2. But he did not allow the visions to distract him from his earthly duty. He didn't isolate himself from the world around him.
 3. This had been true of Daniel from the very beginning of his sojourn in Babylon. He was faithful in his duties, even to the pagan governments that surrounded him.
 4. There was never any doubt where his chief allegiance was and he was never willing to compromise. You could put a capital K on the word King.
 - a. Jesus expressed this to his mother
Luke 2:49 NKJ - "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"
 - b. It most likely should be kept as a lower case as with every English translation. Daniel labored in service to the worldly king.
- B. Your eschatological view must not diminish your earthly duties
1. There have been those who have sold all their possessions because they thought the end was near.
 2. Our duty is to continue faithfully in this world. We are to live with excellence in every place God puts us. It may be in labors with our students as teachers or in our vocation changing diapers as moms. There are farmers, doctors, electricians, magistrates, soldiers and store clerks. We are to be faithful in whatever vocation God has placed us.

3. After Paul revealed the great apostasy and the rising of the man of sin he gave the proper response of God's people.
2 Thessalonians 2:15-17 NAU - "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of *mouth* or by letter from us. ¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, ¹⁷ comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word."
4. Premils are often hesitant to give focus upon duty in this world. With a theology that teaches the church will soon be taken away and the world is soon to be judged there is little incentive for earthly involvement.
5. Postmils, on the other hand, give great energy in claiming this world for Christ, yet there is little confidence from Daniel that this world will go through a period of great improvement or gradual Christianization.
6. Daniel teaches us that we are to expect continued trial and tribulation. Our duty is clear. We don't know how long it will be before Christ returns. We are not told of any signs that will tell us to lay aside our earthly duties and go to receive our King. Rather, we are to be faithful until the end.

Conclusion:

1. Daniel confessed that there was much about the future that he did not understand.
 "I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain *it*."
2. He was troubled at what he saw would take place in the future.
 "Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days."
3. But he continued to give himself to his earthly duties living for the glory of God.
 Then I got up *again* and carried on the king's business"
4. This has much to say to us regarding our view of the future. We must always live for God's glory seeking to honor Him in all that we do, and seeking to live in this world while always looking for His return. Or as we read at the end of the Book of Revelation:
Revelation 22:20 NAU - "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."