



*The Most High
God rules over
the kingdoms of
the world and
appoints anyone
he desires to
rule over them.*

(Dan 5:21b NLT)

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Interpretation of Daniel's Second Vision (8:15-27)

8:15 While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man. ¹⁶ And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision." ¹⁷ As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. "Son of man," he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end." ¹⁸ While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet. ¹⁹ He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end."

Interpretation of Daniel's Second Vision (8:15-27)

8:20 The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹ The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. ²² The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. ²³ "In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. ²⁴ 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 the mighty men and the holy people. ²⁵ 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.

Interpretation of Daniel's Second Vision (8:15-27)

8:26 *"The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."* ²⁷ I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding. (NIV)

8:15 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*. (ESV)

- While Daniel was gazing at the vision, and “*sought to understand it*,” suddenly he was confronted by an imposing figure who had the appearance of “*a man*”.
- The Hebrew word translated “*man*” here (*gāber*) is derived from a root that means “strong or mighty.” Here the term here describes a “mighty” being in human form.
- Though some understand this “*man*” to be the angel Gabriel, I’m inclined to think this being is **God himself** in human form.
- In the following verse, the “*voice*” of what *seems* to be this same person is heard ordering Gabriel to explain the vision, demonstrating his **superiority** over that important angel.
- Furthermore, Daniel does not seem to have feared the **angels** (cf. 7:16), not even Gabriel (cf. 9:21ff.), but in v. 17 we will see him exhibit extreme terror and fall on his face.
- Such fear is characteristic of those who have found themselves in the presence of the holy God (cf. Isaiah 6:5; Ezekiel 1:28; Rev 1:17).

8:16 And I heard a man's voice *between the banks of the Ulai*, and it called, "*Gabriel*, make this man understand the vision." (ESV)

- "*between the banks of the Ulai*" River depicts this being as hovering in the air above the middle of the river.
- A similar description occurs in 12:6–7, except there the river is the Tigris: "*And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, 'How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?'*" (Dan 12:6)"
- This verse is the first instance in Scripture where a holy angel is designated by ***name***.
- "*Gabriel*" is a prominent angel, also appearing to Zechariah, who was the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19) and to Mary (Luke 1:26).
- Michael (cf. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev 12:7), who is called "*the archangel*" in Jude 9 and represented as a leader among the holy angels in Rev 12:7, is the only other holy angel named in Scripture.

8:17 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.” (ESV)

- As Gabriel approached Daniel to interpret the vision, the prophet was “*frightened*” and fell on his face.
- As explained earlier, this reaction is probably due to the presence of God in the place (“*one having the appearance of a man*,” v. 15), rather than fear of the angel Gabriel.
- Immediately, the angel began to ***explain*** the vision, which would have ***reassured*** Daniel that he had no reason to be alarmed.
- Gabriel referred to Daniel as “*son of man*”, which is the Hebrew *ben-’ādām*
- This phrase emphasizes Daniel’s weakness and mortality, *’ādām* connoting that which is from the ground, earthly (a mere mortal).
- In Ezekiel the term is used ninety-three times with this same meaning.

8:17 *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.**” (ESV)*

- According to the heavenly messenger, “*the vision is for the time of the end.*”
- Yet if this vision describes Antiochus IV, so how can it speak of the “*end*”?
- “*time of the end*” is the general prophetic expression for the time which, as the period of fulfillment, lies at the end of the existing prophetic horizon, which in this case is the time of Antiochus.
- Some of the **futurist** scholars insist that the phrase does, in fact, speak of the eschatological “*end*” of the world (as in 11:40 and 12:4).
- These scholars will often interpret vv. 23–26 to be direct predictions of the Antichrist and the final tribulation period.
- Some futurist scholars understand the prophecy to have a **double** fulfillment that involves both Antiochus IV **and** Antichrist.
- But I believe in this context “*time of the end*” refers to the end of the events prophesied in **this chapter**, namely, the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV and their deliverance in the Maccabean period.

8:18 *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. (ESV)*

- While Gabriel was speaking to Daniel, the prophet had fallen into a “**deep sleep**” with his face to the ground.
- The Hebrew word translated here as “**deep sleep**” is the same word used to describe Jonah’s “**deep sleep**” as he slept through a violent storm (Jonah 1:5)
- And a related Hebrew word was used for the “**deep sleep**” God caused to come upon Adam when he took part of his flesh to create Eve (Gen 2:21).
- The angel roused Daniel from this state of unconsciousness by touching the prophet and helping him to his feet.
- The Apostle John had a similar experience when he was shown a vision of the Lord in Rev 1:17 – “*When I saw him, I **fell at his feet as though dead**. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last”*

8:19 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*. (ESV)

- The phrase “*at the latter end of the indignation*” means that the events described here will occur at the end of this particular period of *judgment*.
- The Hebrew word translated “*indignation*” almost always refers to the wrath of God – which is why the NIV translates this phrase: “*later in the time of wrath*”
- The idea is that God’s “*wrath*” is the demonstration of his righteous “*indignation*” against sin.
- In this context the recipients of this wrath are Antiochus and the unfaithful Israelites of the Maccabean period.
- Again, Gabriel asserts that this prophecy refers to the “*time of the end*” (cf. v. 17) and emphasizes that this “*appointed time*” has been set by the Lord of history.

8:20 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. (ESV)

- The details of the vision are now explained to Daniel.
- It is interesting to note that in this verse the same term “king” (*melek*) can be used to refer to either a kingdom (“*the goat is the king of Greece*”) or an individual reigning over a kingdom (its “*first king*,” i.e., Alexander).
- Also worth noting here is the accuracy of the prophecy in vs.22 that none of the four kingdoms ever attained the power of Alexander’s empire.

8:23 *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. (ESV)*

- Verses 23–26 are the heart of the vision and the reason that this revelation was given to Daniel.
- God disclosed this historical summary to the prophet in order to prepare the Jewish people for the coming crisis – Antiochus’s persecution.
- Biblical revelations of the future are given by the Lord to his people to encourage faithfulness, to exhort them during difficult times, and to comfort them in suffering.
- Antiochus would come to power toward the end of the time when the Greeks ruled.
- The “*transgressors*” are those who have rebelled against God’s law.
- As I explained in the discussion of v. 12, these rebels are probably best understood to be Jews of that time who have rebelled against God.
- “*when the transgressors have reached their limit*” may indicate the time when the sin of these rebels has reached the point where God deems punishment to be appropriate (cf. Gen 15:16; Matt 23:32; 1 Thess 2:16).

8:23 *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. (ESV)*

- A “*king of bold face*” means that the king who will arise will be harsh in manner and in his treatment of those who oppose him.
- This same Hebrew word is used in Deut 28:50 where we read: “*a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young.*”
- “*one who understands riddles*” – in 1 Kings 10:1 the word translated here as “*riddles*” is used of the perplexing questions that the Queen of Sheba put to Solomon.
- Here the phrase may signify that the king will be a “*master of [political] intrigue*”
- Scholars agree that this wicked king, Antiochus IV, was indeed a “*master of intrigue.*” (which is how the NIV translates this phrase)

8:24 *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.* (ESV)

- Antiochus began to rule a rather weak kingdom in 175 B.C. but, over time, he attained great power through military conquests.¹
- “*but not by his own power*” could be a reference to the fact that **God**, in his **sovereignty**, allowed Antiochus to rise to his place of prominence.¹
- Or perhaps Daniel is saying that, Antiochus rose to prominence **not** by “*power*” or strength, but by craftiness.²
- Since the latter idea is conveyed in the next verse by the remark that he was “*cunning*,” perhaps the idea here is that God allowed this man to achieve what his measure of talents would never have warranted.²
- We are further told here that through his numerous wars with Egypt and other nations and his persecution of the Jews in Palestine, Antiochus would “*cause fearful destruction*.”¹

¹ Miller, Stephen R., *Daniel*, vol. 18, *The New American Commentary* (pp. 234–235)

² Leupold, H. C.; *Exposition of Daniel* (1949); (pp. 366–367)

8:24 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*. (ESV)

- He “*shall succeed in what he does*” might be better translated, “He will prosper and do what he pleases.”
- Antiochus will “*succeed*” in the sense that he will be successful in his conquests, achieve power, and gain wealth.
- For a while he will appear invincible.
- The “*mighty men*” Antiochus would “*destroy*” refers to the many important persons throughout the world, military and otherwise, who were killed by Antiochus and his armies.
- The evil tyrant would also destroy the “*the saints*,” an allusion to his severe persecution of the Jews.
- Many of the Jewish believers who would not follow Antiochus’s commands to accept the Greek gods were slaughtered.

8:25 *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. (ESV)*

- “*By his cunning*” – the word translated “*cunning*” here usually means “prudence” or “understanding,” but wisdom terms typically also can be used of the dark side of human ability, and that is the case here.
- Antiochus would be a shrewd individual who would employ ***deceit*** to achieve his goals.
- And he was known for his deceptive tactics.
- “*he shall make deceit prosper under his hand*” means that deceit would prosper during Antiochus’s rule, “*his hand*” representing his power or reign.
- So while, as we saw in verse 12, ***truth*** will be “*thrown to the ground*”, ***deceit*** will be ***exalted*** under his rule.

8:25 *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. (ESV)*

- “*in his own mind he shall become great*” – Antiochus was a proud, self-exalting ruler; in his own opinion he was great.
- Antiochus’s coins were inscribed with the phrase “God made manifest”, by which the king did not ***literally*** attribute deity to himself (he was devoted to the Greek gods).
- But he ***did*** understand himself to be the ***earthly representative*** of deity.
- In addition, this vain ruler assumed the title “Epiphanes,” which means, “the illustrious one.”
- “*Without warning he shall destroy many*” – Antiochus attacked the people and destroyed “*many*” of them when the people were at ease because they felt secure.
- They may have been lulled into a feeling of security by the deceitful tactics of Antiochus.
- Then he attacked “*without warning*” in the spring of 167 B.C. and slaughtered many of them (cf. 1 Macc 1:29–32).

8:25 *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.* (ESV)

- Antiochus even dared to “*rise up against the Prince of princes*,” that is, the “greatest Prince,” an allusion to God himself.
- The Greek ruler gave homage to the Greek gods, but his actions against God’s holy people, the Jews, and their religion constituted an assault upon the Lord himself.
- Yet God’s saints were promised that their persecutor would not continue.
- “*but by no human hand*” means that Antiochus would not be killed in battle or by assassination.
- According to 1 Macc 6:1–16, Antiochus died (163 B.C.) of grief and remorse in Persia after being defeated in the siege of the city of Elymais and receiving word that his forces had been routed by the Jews in Palestine.

8:26 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." (ESV)

- Gabriel then assured Daniel that the “*vision of the evenings and the mornings*” was true and would be fulfilled.
- Of course, the contents of the entire vision were true, but the detail concerning the “*evenings and the mornings*” evidently was singled out because it told the ***exact length of time the persecution would last***, information that would be of great interest to those suffering this ordeal.
- “*seal up*” is a translation of a Hebrew word, which means “stop up, shut up, keep closed.”
- Ancient documents were sealed for their preservation, and that is the idea here.
- Daniel was being instructed to take measures to ensure that the vision’s contents would be available for generations in the “distant future.”
- Antiochus IV lived almost four hundred years after Daniel.
- Here it should be noted that the writer claimed to be predicting the future.
- This prophecy cannot be “*true*” as Gabriel declared, unless it actually was delivered to Daniel and written many years before the events took place.

8:27 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. (ESV)

- By this time Daniel was quite old, and he suffered a severe emotional and physical reaction to the vision.
- Because of the intense nature of the experience he “*was overcome*”, and he even became “*sick*,” a condition that lasted “*for some days*.”
- Afterward the prophet “*rose*” from his sick bed and “*went about the king's business*.”
- This statement indicates that Daniel, at least on occasion, must have engaged in some kind of work on the government’s behalf during the time of Belshazzar.
- His assignments evidently were made not by Belshazzar but by his father, Nabonidus, who had served with Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar’s administration.
- The old prophet obviously was not the leader of the wise men at this time since Belshazzar did not seem to be familiar with him later (cf. 5:11–14).

8:27 *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. (ESV)*

- Daniel was “*appalled*” by what he had seen and did not fully understand it.
- It may seem odd that Daniel did not understand the interpretation, but although Gabriel had interpreted the vision, Daniel still did not grasp the full significance of all that he had seen and heard.
- For example, when would these things happen and who was this evil king who would oppress his people?
- Unfortunately Daniel was not the last person to remain bewildered by this vision after an explanation had been given!
- The message of Daniel chapter 8 concerns a distant time and place for Daniel, but it illustrates pertinent truths for us today.
- For example, God’s omniscience is set forth; he knows the future.
- Believers are also warned that at times they may be called upon to endure suffering, even martyrdom, for the Lord.

Class Discussion Time

- We see again in today's lesson the involvement of God's angels in the affairs of men.
- Last week we saw an angel showing concern by asking how long certain difficult events were to continue (vs. 13)
- Even in the New Testament we have indications that angels are concerned about things that are happening with the outworking of the kingdom of God on earth:
 - *It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*
(1Pet 1:12)
- Do you think angels, though we obviously cannot see them, are still active behind the scenes today?

Class Discussion Time

- We saw in today's text where Daniel falls on his face in the presence of God (verse 17).
- And we see numerous other examples of this kind of response in those who come into the presence of God. (Isaiah 6:5; Ezekiel 1:28; Rev 1:17)
- This is in marked contrast to the modern casual attitude towards God.
- And yet in Hebrews 4:16 we're told to "*come boldly before the throne of grace*".
- How do we balance these two ideas?

Class Discussion Time

- I observed in today's lesson that the phrase found in verse 23, "*when the transgressors have reached their limit*" may indicate the time when the sin of these rebels has reached the point where God deems punishment to be appropriate.
- There are several other places in scripture where this idea is hinted at:
 - *And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for **the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete**.* (Gen 15:16 ESV)
 - *Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. **Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.** You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?* (Mat 23:31-33)
 - *For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved--so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!* (1Th 2:14-16)
- What do you think this means, exactly?

Class Discussion Time

- I observed in today's lesson that the believers are warned that at times (as the Jews were warned by Daniel of the coming of Antiochus) they may be called upon to endure suffering, even martyrdom, for the Lord.
- For example, we are told in 2 Tim 3:12, "*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*".
- Does this mean that Christians who are not being constantly persecuted are not godly?
- Can a Christian be godly and **not** be persecuted?