



The Landing

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“Gabriel, Make This Man Understand the Vision”
Daniel 8

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Daniel 8:1-27

“In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. [2] And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the citadel, which is in the province of Elam. And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai canal. [3] I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal. It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. [4] I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

[5] As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. [6] He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath. [7] I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him. And there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power. [8] Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

[9] Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. [10] It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. [11] It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. [12] And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. [13] Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, “For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?” [14] And he said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.”

[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."

Introduction: How to Last Till the End?

Here's the question Daniel 8 raises in our hearts: Will your faith last till the end of time? Will your confidence in the goodness of God, the truth of His Word, the love of His Son and the power of His Holy Spirit remain strong in you, though your faith be opposed by attacks from without and doubts from within? God means for you to persevere to the end. He promises he will cause you to persevere.

Listen: Psalm 121:7-8,

“The LORD will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life.
The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in,
from this time forth and forevermore.”

Jesus promises in Luke 21, “You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. [17] You will be hated by all for my name's sake. [18] But not a hair of your head will perish. [19] By your endurance you will gain your lives.” (Luke 21:16-19)

And again, 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 says, “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24] He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”

How Will I Persevere?

How will he cause you to persevere? In part, he will cause you to look carefully at His Word and understand all that he was written there for the encouragement of your faith; and that of your children, your friends, church members and friend.

Listen to Romans 15:4, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

Daniel 8 is meant to give you hope because it gives you and I encouragement through the careful reading of the Scriptures. Daniel 8 is meant to steel our spiritual spine; to fortify the fiber of our faith; to cause us to persevere right now today. By the hearing and savoring of this Scripture, God will cause you to persevere to the end!

God gives to Daniel an amazing vision of a ram, a goat, a small horn who grows to become a man great with power and even greater in the evil use of that power. Then more quickly than he rises, this evil enemy of God’s people will be struck down and destroyed. Finally God shows Daniel that the vision is for a specific time, even if the date of that time remains unclear.

All of this reveals three massive truths:

1. God ordains what he despises to fulfill what He promises.
2. Evil displays the insanity of sin and is doomed to fail.
3. God restores all that evil takes away through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ
 - The glorious land
 - The sacrifice ended.
 - Desecration of the altar
 - And the truth opposed
 - God’s people trampled

A Vision of Comfort to the People of God

This entire vision, with its massive truths, is a pastoral vision, meant by God to comfort and encourage Daniel and his people while they are at the height of their oppression in exile.

Verse 1 says the vision came to Daniel in the third year of King Belshazzar, two years after the dream of chapter 7. This was the worst king God permitted to oppress the Israelites. And under him, they suffered the greatest persecution they had known. They were a people without a country; without their worship; or culture or identity and by now without hope that they would even exist as God's people much longer.

Surely the Israelites were wondering, "How long will we be made to endure such wicked oppression? How long, God, will your land and your temple be decimated? How long will your promise go unfulfilled? How long will it take for your descendent of David to rise to the throne of Israel? How long will you leave us here to die? Can we even trust your promises? We have no hope!"

We wonder the same thing here and now in current day United States. We don't need to be taken into exile by our enemies; they can strike us from thousands of miles away by sending a nuclear missile or a maniacal jet-pilot to fly our citizens into our buildings. Our leaders are untrustworthy and many have proven failures as examples of goodness.

Or in your marriage, or your family, or another relationship; or your finances or your health difficulties, or battles with anxiety, depression, spiritual darkness of some kind, it seems to go on with no hope in sight and you cry in a desperate whisper, "How long, Lord?" Sorrow in this life is a universal experience for thoughtful, kind and good people, especially those who seek God.

Daniel Addresses His People

By the kind inspiration of the Spirit, Daniel is led to turn his focus toward his Israelite brothers and in this vision grant them a bright ray of hope. How do I know the focus has turned on comforting God's people, the Israelites?

Four ways:

1. Change to Hebrew language from Aramaic in chapters 2-7. It is as if Daniel turns to his Hebrew brothers and speaks in the precious mother tongue that so many longed to hear.
2. The vision gives special place to Jerusalem by calling it the glorious land (v.9). It will be painful for these Hebrews to hear of the horrible things that will happen to Jerusalem, but of great comfort to hear how God restores his people to their land.
3. And it grieves over the destruction of the altar and the end of the sacrifices (v.11).

4. God, Yahweh, the covenantal God of Israel is pictured in subtle and glorious ways that only the faithful listener would fully recognize and delight in. You'll see examples of this along the way.

All these show that Daniel's vision is meant to comfort and sustain the faith of the people of God when the end seems a long way off.

Wideness in God's Mercy

Because of the surprising way that God brings resolution and justice and restoration to his people, we can draw a further conclusion: God doesn't mean to be merciful to Israelites only. But he means to throw wide the door of his mercy to the nations of the earth. Even peoples who have made war against him and his people, he will pardon if they seek him. God will be the deliverance of the victim and the victimizer.

We, who are the eternal people of God by faith, can take great comfort in this vision as well. By the time we are done, you will see the hope is for all who trust in God and the practical help for our lives will surprise you.

The Vision

Verse 1, as you remember, tells us that Daniel has a vision to explain the dream he had 2 years earlier in chapter 7. There we were given an impressionist painting of grand vistas and glorious promises of God's Son of Man over-coming with his dominion the evil of the beastly kingdoms of the world.

Now in chapter 8 we are given, not an artist's painting; but a political cartoon communicating the same information. A ram with two horns rages toward the east, north and west and becomes militarily great (v. 3-4). Then it is defeated by a goat which swiftly arrives without even touching the ground, like he is flying. And the goat with one great horn conquers the ram with his two horns (5-7).

Then the goat becomes strong and but his singular horn is broken and four small horns arise (v.8). Out of one of the four horns a small horn grew and became great toward the south, the east and toward the glorious land (Jerusalem and Palestine).

This little horn becomes as great as God and wipes out some of the stars of heaven and tramples them. He removes the sacrificial system and overthrows the sanctuary of the Temple (v.11). And more of the host are given (by God?) to this little horn who destroys them and he even throws truth to the ground.

Then in the vision Daniel sees one angel speak to another angel saying, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the

transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?

The one angel turned and spoke his answer directly to Daniel, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.”

The Fulfillment: Daniel’s Understanding

Daniel is understandably confused and he describes two beings standing before him (v.15-16). One is like a son of man (I believe this is the pre-incarnate Christ) and the other the highest angel Gabriel with him who stands in the presence of God (Luke 1:19). This description of Gabriel is one reason I believe the former figure is the Son of Man. And the Son of man commands Gabriel (which is why it is likely the Son speaking), “Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.” God wants Daniel and us to understand the vision. Why? So we can chart out the future in our timelines and thus sit back with lazy arrogance until the historical clock ticks down? No. It is so that we would trust the God of the ages who holds time in his hands.

Gabriel comes near to Daniel and in holy fear Daniel falls to the ground. He didn’t run away, or seek to fight Gabriel, he worshipped. Verse 17 says, “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.”

Gabriel tells Daniel all this is for the end. Not the end of all time, but the end of Israel’s persecution. What becomes the end of the era before Christ is born. In 8 years from this time, Babylon falls, to the Medes and Persians. And the Persians rise in power and ultimately fall to Greece. And out of Greece comes an evil little man named Antiochus Epiphanes who directly opposes the Jews exactly as this prophecy foretells.

Look what happens next in verse 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.” Notice how kind, how merciful, how honoring, how comforting the angel Gabriel is to Daniel. Just like when Gabriel would later say to Mary when he appeared to her to tell her she would bear the Son of God; she was terrified and he said, “Fear not...” (Luke 1:30). God humbles you; but he will never humiliate you.

Verse 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.”

This is the end of the time of the Old Covenant. This is the end of Israel’s time as God’s chosen people by their national identity. When Gabriel calls this the time of the end; it is similar to what the New Testament writers call “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4-7). God allows a great persecution; and then

he restores his people just as he promised, but in greater fashion than they expected; in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prophecy Becomes History

What was surely prophetic future to Daniel and his people is accomplished history to us. As four beasts symbolized four kingdoms in Daniel 7, the middle two kingdoms are symbolized by two other beasts: a ram and goat here in Daniel 8. We cannot help but notice how beastly God views the kingdoms of the world. Evil makes God's highest creation, humankind, into mere violent and brutish beasts.

The two-horned ram was a symbol for the Kingdom of the Medes and Persians. The Medes and Persians violently took over a massive portion of land and cities and wealth from 539 B.C. to 330 B.C. over 200 years. Verse 20, "As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia."

The single horned goat symbolizes Greece and the large horn is Alexander the Great. He is cut down swiftly even as we see Alexander the Great dying at age 33. Look at verse 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." So also when Alexander died, his kingdom was divided among his four generals.

But when God determines; those four weak Greek kingdoms will give rise to a very strong and evil one: called the little horn. Verse 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."

His power is derived of God. But his power is used for evil to cause destruction and destroy armies and kill the saints.

Verse 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."

Antiochus Epiphanes wrecked the Jewish Temple in 175 B.C. He took control of Palestine. He abolished the priesthood. And planned to remove everything Jewish and make it all into Greek; a process called Hellenization. No circumcision was allowed. Which was forced covenant breaking. The Sabbath was taken away. He made every Jew eat unclean food: pork. He killed everyone who resisted. He killed every person who looked like they

might become a leader. He set up an altar to Zeus in the Holy of holies, and he sacrificed a pig on the altar of God and scattered its remain throughout the Temple. He also made it illegal to own or read the Torah during his evil reign. He did this for 1,150 days. This equals 2300 morning and evening sacrifices, just as Daniel's vision prophesied.

He destroyed God's people and he defied God by saying I am equal to God. That is why he is called the little horn in this vision. He is an example, an expression of the little horn we saw in chapter 7 dream, where the little horn was the Anti-christ.

Everything Daniel envisioned in the 6th century before Christ came to pass four hundred years later in the 2nd century before Christ. Everything, in every detail. Why are we given this? So we would trust in God. So we would look at all of history and not count it a chaotic waste; but see God's hand guiding it. And we would look at the future with hope in God and so that we would look at our present circumstances and speak boldly to evil forces around us: "you would have no power to even exist if it were not given you by God." Hope in God. That's the point of Daniel 8 and the whole Bible.

Three Truths to Encourage

All of this reveals three massive truths I shared at the beginning. Here they are again:

1. God ordains what he despises to fulfill what He promises.
2. Evil displays the insanity of sin and is doomed to fail.
3. God restores all that evil takes away through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ

God ordains what he despises to fulfill what He promises.

God had said that his prophecies would come to an end. That his people had remained stiff and resistant and hardened against his word and his mercy and his covenant love, so there would be a time of silence. 400 years in fact, from 400 B.C. to 4 A.D. when Jesus Christ was born, foretold by John the Baptist.

This period God made clear was coming. Listen to Amos 8:11, "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD."

Or Micah 3:4, "Then they will cry to the LORD, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil." (cf. v. 7).

It's not just that prophecies will cease. It's that the Israelites enemies have gained power and used it to crush God's people. Not just their religion, but

their very identity. It's not that they cannot worship the way they used to; it's that they don't know who they are anymore. This is simply stultifying.

Evil displays the insanity of sin and is doomed to fail.

Satan and his minions know the outcome of history. They know they are destroyed. They know the cross of Christ sealed their destruction and removed their final weapon; un-forgiven sin in our hearts. If you have confessed and been cleansed of sin; you are clean and forgiven before God, then no matter what Satan tries, he can never condemn you. He has no grip on you. His only grip on you is the sin you refuse to confess.

Satan knows this yet still he successfully inspires evil in the human heart. Foolish tyrants still rise to power and defeating the one before them, only to be defeated by the one to follow. Sin is moronic and sinners are before all else fools.

God restores all that evil takes away through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ

The Glorious Land – Now the land is not a dot on the globe, but wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name, he is there in the midst of them. Worship of God happens not on some holy mountain, but in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23). No longer is the Temple restored as a mere building, but Jesus, the true Temple and meeting place with God has been raised to reign! The Sacrifice Ended – but Jesus Christ made sacrifice of himself once and for all when he hung on Calvary's tree. No more sacrifice dare ever be added to his perfect sacrifice for sin. Jesus Christ is the final Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Desecration of the Altar – “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) [12] he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:11–12).

And the truth opposed – Now the ever-living, ever-reigning Christ is the ever-speaking Truth of God. Books can be burned, but Truth never dies; for Christ never dies.

God's people trampled – And because Christ is invincible; all who are in Christ are healed, sustained and protected.

I Peter 1:3-9, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an

inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. [6] In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, [7] so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. [8] Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, [9] obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

How Does Daniel Respond? Illness then Faithfulness

Remember I said you would be surprised at how practical God's word is for us here in Daniel 8? Look with me to the last verse. Here is Daniel's response to the vision. Verse 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.”

How does Daniel respond? Illness, then faithfulness. He carries around in his heart this ache for God's people and for the truth of the things he has seen; but he keeps on doing the king's business. Why? Because he knows that the king's business is supernaturally given and sustained and purposed by God and his divine business. Daniel doesn't flee his job in an unclean world; he is faithful at it.

Does that surprise you? Go back to your job, even if you work for lost and ungodly people. Love them. Be faithful to your task. Serve them. Serve God. Work hard. Knowing this: God is up to 10,000 more things in the world than any of us can see, to magnify his sovereignty, to spread wide his mercy and to vindicate Christ's glory.

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