

Lesson 21

Last week we read Daniel 8:15-17 in which the angel Gabriel is instructed to explain the vision to Daniel, and when we ended we were looking at verse 17 in which Gabriel tells Daniel, "Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision."

We have two questions about that statement.

First, why did Gabriel call Daniel "son of man"? I thought that was a title for Christ?

The phrase "son of man" means just what it says - a human. Literally, the Hebrew is *ben-Adam*, son of Adam. With Christ, the Messianic title Son of Man stresses the humanity of Christ. Jesus is both entirely God and entirely man. He is not part God and part man; Jesus is both God and man. The title "Son of God" stresses the divinity of Christ, while the title "Son of Man" stresses the humanity of Christ. Both titles apply to Christ, and Christ is the one and only person to which both of those titles apply. But the description "son of man" applies to everyone.

Daniel, like us but unlike Christ, is just a man, and calling Daniel "son of man" is a reminder of that fact. And Daniel was not the only prophet to get that reminder. Ezekiel is called "son of man" 93 times in his book. With Christ, the title "son of man" is a reminder that, although God, Jesus is also a man. With Daniel and Ezekiel, the phrase is a reminder that they are merely mortal. They are not divine. What they are seeing and speaking is coming from God; the power is not within themselves.

Second, Gabriel tells Daniel that "at the time of the end shall be the vision." What does he mean by this?

The phrase "time of the end" is one of those phrases that requires us to examine the context very carefully. Although we might be tempted to think "the end" must always refer to the end of the world, that could not be the case here. Why? Because the vision ends with the cleansing of the temple after its desecration by Antiochus. That means this "end" refers to something that ended even before the birth of Christ. We see similar uses of the word "end" elsewhere in the Bible.

Ezekiel describes the end of Jerusalem under the Babylonians.

Ezekiel 7:2-3 - Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel; **An end, the end is come** upon the four corners of the land. Now is **the end come upon thee**, and I will

send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.

Habakkuk describes the end of the Babylonians 70 years later.

Habakkuk 2:2-3 - And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but **at the end** it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

These uses of the word "end" mean the same thing - the end of whatever is being described in the vision or the prophecy. Here in Daniel 8 the focus is on Greece and specifically on the little horn, Antiochus.

In each of these examples, the statement about the "end" is made to show that God is in charge of the timing and that God will determine when the "end" occurs. The fulfillment is sure and will not occur by accident.

And the "end" may have an even more particular significance - it may refer to the end of Antiochus.

When was the temple cleansed? On the 25th of the month Kislev in 164 BC, which is where Hanukkah started and also where the world gets December 25 for Christmas.

What else happened in 164 BC? Antiochus Epiphanes died that same year. The angel Gabriel may have been making a remarkable prophecy in verse 17.

The book of Second Maccabees describes the death of Antiochus.

2 Maccabees 9:5-9 - But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him with an incurable and invisible blow. As soon as he stopped speaking he was seized with a pain in his bowels, for which there was no relief, and with sharp internal tortures- and that very justly, for he had tortured the bowels of others with many and strange inflictions. Yet he did not in any way stop his insolence, but was even more filled with arrogance, breathing fire in his rage against the Jews, and giving orders to drive even faster. And so it came about that he fell out of his chariot as it was rushing along, and the fall was so hard as to torture every limb of his body. Thus he who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea, and had imagined that he could weigh the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all. And so

the ungodly man's body swarmed with worms, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of the stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay.

That is not an inspired account, but we will get an inspired confirmation of its basic premise when we get to verse 25. In fact, this description reminds us of what happened later to another little horn who thought he was a god - Herod in Acts 12:23, who was eaten of worms.

Daniel 8:18-19

18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.

In verse 18, Daniel is in a deep sleep. What happened?

The same Hebrew verb used here is used to describe Jonah's "deep sleep" as he slept through a violent storm in Jonah 1:5, and a related Hebrew word is used for the "deep sleep" that God caused to come upon Adam when he took part of his flesh to create Eve in Genesis 2:21.

It is not clear whether Daniel fainted or was just exhausted from all that he had seen. From verse 17, where Daniel fell on his face, I think it is most likely that Daniel fainted, but when he faints in verse 27, the word "fainted" is used, so maybe something else is in view here.

Daniel had stood before earthly kings without wavering, but standing before the angel Gabriel it seems is a different matter!

And again, verse 18 suggests to me that Daniel is not having a second vision here unless the intent is to tell us that he was asleep in the vision but not in real life, which seems odd.

In any event, the angel sets Daniel on his feet again, and says: "Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be."

Here we see even more clearly what is meant by the time of the end. The "time of the end" in verse 17 is called "the last end of the indignation" and "the time appointed the end" in verse 19. Those descriptions reinforce what we said about verse 17 - this "end" is the end of the indignation (not the end of the world), and this "end" is a time appointed by God.

What is the indignation?

The indignation is the sentence of God that must eventually fall on those who rebel against him and who fail to repent. His own people were not exempt, and neither were the nations.

Jeremiah 10:10 - But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

The question here was how long God would allow his earthly sanctuary to be trampled on, and the answer (as both we and Daniel should have expected) is not long. There will be an appointed end and which time the desecration will end and the persecutors, and specifically this little horn, will experience the indignation of God.

Daniel 8:20-22

20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

Here we have the explanation of the vision, which we have already referred to a number of times to make sure we stayed on the right track.

Recall that the ram was Medo-Persia and the goat was Greece. As history tells us, Greece defeated Medo-Persia and then split into four pieces after the death of Alexander the Great.

These four kingdoms did not arise "with his power," meaning they were ruled by Alexander's generals and not by Alexander's sons. Alexander had a son that was born after Alexander's death, but that son and his mother were soon murdered.

Verse 20 speaks of the "kings of Media and Persia." Does the plural word "kings" mean that Daniel believed that the Medes and the Persians were separate kingdoms when these events occurred? No. We know that is not the case because Media and Persia are represented by a single ram. And elsewhere Daniel refers to the law (singular) of the Medes and the Persians, which makes no sense if they were separate kingdoms with separate kings.

So why, then, does Daniel refer to the "kings" (plural) of Media and Persia when in fact Cyrus was in charge of both? There are at least two possibilities.

First, as we have already seen, the word "king" is sometimes used in Daniel to mean "kingdom," and so perhaps verse 20 just means that the ram denotes the combined **kingdoms** of Media and Persia.

A second possibility goes back to our study of Darius the Mede. We considered the possibility that Darius was the last king of Media who ruled with Cyrus as his prince regent. Perhaps these two kings are those two kings. But I am not a fan of that theory because Cyrus died in 530 BC and Alexander conquered Persia in 334 BC, 200 years later.

I don't think the focus would still be on Cyrus in this vision, which is why I favor the simpler view - that king and kingdom are being used interchangeably here, as we know those words are being used elsewhere in this book. If Cyrus is in view here, then God is using him to represent the kings who came later.

Daniel 8:23-25

23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.

Here we have a description of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and, as we have seen, each of these descriptions fits Antiochus precisely. In Jewish writings, Antiochus is referred to as Antiochus the Wicked.

Verse 23 tells us that Antiochus would arise in the latter time of their kingdom. Although, chronologically he ruled about midway in the timespan of the Seleucid kingdom, God's interest in the Seleucids ends with Antiochus IV (as we will see clearly in Daniel 11). The kingdom began to decline with the death of his father Antiochus III.

This type of focus is not unusual in the Bible. There were many Roman emperors, but as far as God was concerned there were only eleven. God talks about the first eleven in Daniel and in Revelation, but says nothing about all the others that followed. God's interest in Rome (and in the Seleucids) seems to have ended as soon as they were judged and sentenced - and that may be the most frightening thing about these visions!

In the Bible, nations rise against God's people, and those nations are judged and sentenced by God, often when they are still at the height of their power. But powerful or not, their fate is sealed and their downfall is certain once God judges and sentences those nations. God's attention moves elsewhere, while the judged nation lingers on and eventually leaves the stage. This should serve as a warning for any nation that shakes its fist at God and at the people of God, but sadly very few nations have ever heeded that warning.

Something interesting happens between verses 22 and 23 that we should pause to note because it will be helpful to us later. What is it?

Without warning there is about a 150 year break between verse 22 and verse 23. Alexander died in 323 BC, and Antiochus came to power in 175 BC. How do we know about that break in time? It would not have been clear in Daniel's time, but it is clear to us because we can compare the prophecy with what actually happened. We need to keep this point in mind as we get closer to Daniel 11, where we will again see such sudden and unannounced breaks in time.

Verses 24 and 25 have some curious phrases, especially in the King James Version.

- "He shall destroy wonderfully" - that means he shall cause fearful or extraordinary destruction.
- "He shall cause craft to prosper in his hand" - that means he will cause deceit or trickery to succeed.
- "By peace shall destroy many" - that means he will destroy many without warning or while they are at ease.

Verse 25 tells us that "he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes." Who is the Prince of princes?

We saw the Prince of the host in verse 11 and said that it could be a reference to God or to Jesus. I think we see the same Prince here, and again this could be a reference to Jesus. If these are not

references to God the Son, then they must be references to God the Father. Why? Because the use of the phrase "without hand" at the end of verse 25 suggests that Antiochus is standing up against God and then being broken by God.

But how did Antiochus fight against God? Simple. He fought against the people of God. Remember what Jesus said to Saul on the road to Damascus after Saul had been persecuting the church - "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou **me**?" (Acts 22:7) An assault against God's people is an assault against God.

Verse 25 tells us that Antiochus IV would be broken by no human hand. As we saw earlier, history tells us that after making an unsuccessful attempt to pillage a wealthy temple in Elymais, Antiochus died of a sudden mysterious illness. Daniel is telling us here that the illness was anything but mysterious!

God removed Antiochus from the scene just as God removed Alexander from the scene and would later remove Herod from the scene and Domitian from the scene. The Bible, and particularly the book of Daniel, is full of men who thought they were God, but who learned otherwise.

Daniel 8:26

26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.

Daniel is told to seal up this vision because it pertains to many days hence. How many days hence?

The vision was received in 550 BC, and it was fulfilled in 164 BC. So the "many days" in verse 26 refers to 386 years.

Daniel was told to seal the vision up because it dealt with events that would pertain to people who would live much later. This vision was not directly applicable to the people of his own day, and so Daniel was told to seal it up.

Now let's take a little side trip and fast forward to the book of Revelation. Is that book all about the end of the world? If you ask most religious people, they will say yes. If you ask the man of the street, he will say yes. If you ask Hollywood, they will say yes. But what does the Bible say?

Here Daniel is told to seal up a vision because it won't happen for nearly 400 years. What was John

told to do with his own vision?

Revelation 22:10 - And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

And in fact the book of Revelation opens with the same message.

Revelation 1:1 - The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.

The next time a premillennialist tells you that he takes every word in the book of Revelation literally, ask him if that applies to the very first verse! I suspect it does not!

Daniel was told to seal up a vision that referred to a time less than 400 years after he received it, but John was told not to seal up his vision. Does it make any sense at all to teach (as most do) that nothing in Revelation has yet been fulfilled 2000 years later and counting?

Those who begin their study of Revelation by ignoring the time frame in the opening verse of the book have no chance of correctly interpreting the book - and most commentaries begin just that way. Daniel 8:26 and Revelation 22:10 provide a very good starting point for discussing the prophecies in these two books and especially the prophecy in Revelation, which I believe is focused on the fourth kingdom of Daniel and its war against the people of God, just as Daniel 7 was focused on the same fourth kingdom and Daniel 8 was focused on the third kingdom that preceded it.

Daniel 8:27

27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

Daniel fainted due to the vision and was sick for some days. Why? Because he saw what would one day happen to God's people. Even though it would not happen to him or to anyone he knew, Daniel was still disturbed. This again is certainly a lesson for us. We should be concerned for God's people everywhere and for all time - present and future.

We should be distressed by the persecutions directed around the world at Christians and at those who profess to be Christians. And we should be very thankful for the freedoms we enjoy, while

understanding that those freedoms will not last forever. There is but one eternal kingdom, and the United States is not it. During the time we enjoy these freedoms today we have a tremendous responsibility to take advantage of them to spread the word. God has opened a door of freedom for us, and he expects us to go through it while we can, because one day that door will close.

How can we show our concern for future Christians? One way is by carefully guarding the truth that has been entrusted to us. That is how we show our care and concern for God's people in the future.

■ **1 Timothy 6:20** - O Timothy, keep that [or guard that] which is committed to thy trust.

■ **Jude 3** - Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Another way to show our concern for God's people is by prayer - and we will see Daniel doing that very soon.

Notice that even after the explanation, Daniel confesses in verse 27 that he still did not fully understand the vision. That confession should provide some comfort to us in our efforts to understand these visions, although we have a lot more information today than did Daniel.

Daniel was about 70 when he received this vision, but verse 27 tells us that he got back to work doing the king's business as soon as he recovered from his illness, and we know that Daniel was doing God's business in his work for the king. There is no retirement from our service to God!

Chapter 9

Daniel Chapter 9 wins my award for the most difficult chapter in the Bible, but most of Chapter 9 is not difficult at all. The difficulty comes with the final four verses of the chapter in which we will find the famous prophecy of the 70 weeks.

What happens in the first 23 verses of Chapter 9? What we find in those verses is one of the most beautiful and powerful prayers to be found anywhere in the Bible. In those verses we discover the secret of Daniel's success.

Yes, the final four verses of Chapter 9 are difficult and yes, their meaning is hotly debated, but I think the greatest benefit to the modern reader from Daniel 9 likely comes from the first 23 verses and what they tell us about Daniel, about God, and about prayer.

Daniel 9:1-2

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

As with Chapters 7 and 8, Chapter 9 begins by giving us a time frame.

With Chapter 9, the time frame is the first year of Darius. We discussed Darius at length when we met him at the end of Chapter 5. I suggested that either Darius was the last Median king, who reigned for a time with Cyrus as his prince regent, or Darius and Cyrus were the same person.

Chapter 10 will begin "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia," and Chapter 11 will begin "in the first year of Darius the Mede" (as does this chapter). It might seem odd that Daniel would use both names to refer to a single person, but Cyrus would not be the only person in this book with two names. In fact, it seems to be the norm in this book (written in two languages!) for people to have two names! So perhaps Darius and Cyrus were the same person.

Either way, the first year of Darius in this context would have been the first year of the Persian rule over the Chaldeans, which began in 539 BC. We saw that transition of power occur in Chapter 5 during the drunken feast of Belshazzar, the last Chaldean king.

Who "made" Darius king as verse 1 tells us? The best answer to that question in the context of the book of Daniel is to simply repeat the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way in Chapter 4. "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Daniel 4:32)

#daniel