

Conversations With Angels

Daniel 8:15-27

Introduction

In chapters 8 and 9 Daniel receives two separate visions at two separate times. The first vision in chapter 7 includes bizarre animals; a lionlike creature with wings (7:1-4); a bear-like beast with bloody ribs (v.5); a leopard like animal with four heads and great authority (v.6); and finally a 10-horned beast; dreadful, terrifying; a single small horn grows out of the head; yanks out 3 of the horns. The interpretation is given (vv.15-28). In these visions Daniel sees the unfolding of Gentile World powers in relationship to the land of Israel and the Jewish people. In chapter 8 Daniel receives his second vision. The vision amplifies and explains in more details the two kingdoms in Israel's immediate future; the kingdoms of the Medo-Persians and Greeks.

The question was asked; "How long will it take for Daniel's vision to be fulfilled (v.13)? How long will the defiled Jewish Temple take to be purified and how long will it take for the daily sacrifices to resume? The answer is given; 2300 days (v.14).

When Daniel received this vision the Temple was in ruins. It was destroyed years earlier by the armies of Babylon (the siege took place between 589-587 B.C.).

The Temple of the Lord required ritual purity. We are the Temple of the Lord. For Daniel personal purity was a priority in his life. It begins in the opening chapter of the Book of Daniel. But the theme of purity comes up again and again. And note—purity precedes the future prophecies.

This section finds Daniel curious about the meaning of all that he has seen. In chapter 2 Daniel is asked to discern a dream of Nebuchadnezzar with no details given to him by the king. The Lord reveals the secret to Daniel (2:19-35) and the interpretation and meaning of the dream (vv. 36-45). In chapter 4 we read of the vision and humiliation of King Nebuchadnezzar. A large tree was cut down but eventually restored. The events of chapter 5 and the writing on the wall were still future when Daniel received his visions in chapters 7-8.

The Angel's Identity (vv.15-19)

Daniel 8:15–19(NKJV) 15 Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man.

The prophet found himself either in person or in the spirit in the Citadel of Shushan in the Province of Elam the future Capital of Persia and future home of Queen Esther (v.2). He saw a vision (vv.3-14). How was Daniel seeking the meaning? Clearly he thinks about what he has seen in chapters 7-8. But perhaps he prays. While he thinks/prays a being appears. It looks like a human being. Only later do we discover that this being is an angelic being.

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

Daniel hears a man's voice. The expression "between the banks of the Ulai" gives the impression that the sound is heard hovering between the banks of the canal.

We are given the angel's name; Gabriel. This is the first mention of Gabriel by name. He seems to stand with Michael in some kind of special relationship to Israel. In the Bible angels often appear to look like human beings. The writer of Hebrews appeals to this very thing when he writes (13:2); *"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."*

17So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end."

18Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright.

19And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be."

Who came near?

In the passage there are three characters; Daniel, Gabriel and the Voice. I am convinced The Voice Daniel heard was Israel's Messiah. In the Bible human beings do not order divine beings. Divine Beings receive their instructions from God.

The voice Daniel hears is the voice of the Lord.

The angel is tasked with helping Daniel understand the vision (vv.16-17). This same Gabriel returns and reprises his role as one who gives revelation to his people. Later Gabriel will appear to Zechariah and reveal the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25) and appear to the young virgin; Mary (Luke 1:26-38).

"The vision refers to the time of the end" (v.17). The vision seems to reference two things; "the end" of these two kingdoms with a particular emphasis on the end of the Greek power and hegemony over Israel. But there seems to be another end—a far future end. The vision seems to push past the Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. The vision extends to that final time when God's dealings with Israel and the nations comes to a final consummation.

This has prompted many Bible scholars and teachers to conclude the prophecy has a dual fulfillment (Walvoord etc.); both near and far fulfillment—near as it pertains to Antiochus Epiphanes and far as it pertains to the antichrist in the last days (see Ron Rhodes p.210; *40 Days Through Daniel*).

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Others insist the prophetic passage has a singular prophetic meaning.

We are left with the impression that Daniel is weak as a result of the supernatural encounter (v. 18) but the angel touches him and strengthens him (v.18). One of the many ministries of angels in the Scriptures is to provide comfort and strength in times of severe testing or catastrophic weakness. Psalm 91:11-12 promises that God's angels "will bear you up." Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane struggles under the enormous pressure that he will bear the sin of the world prays to the Father and an angel appeared from heaven and strengthened Him (Luke 22:43).

The angel speaks. Daniel tells us he was in a deep sleep with his face to the ground but the angel touched him and stood him upright. The angel explains; "Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time (the end) of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be" (v.19).

What indignation? Which indignation? Whenever and whatever this is—it is according to God's divine plan of the ages

The Angel's Information (vv.20-22)

20The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia.

21And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king.

The ram with two horns is represented by the vast Persian Kingdom (v.20).

The first king is Alexander IV or most often referred to as Alexander the Great. He was the son of Philip of Macedon.

22As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.

The Generals of Alexander will not immediately divide the kingdom. Struggles for territory, power and supremacy ensue. There was bitter fighting that lasted some 22 years after the death of Alexander. In history they are known as the *Diodochi* (a term that means the Successors).

The four generals are;

1. Cassander: Occupies Macedonia and Greece proper.
2. Lysimachus: Thrace and Asia Minor
3. Seleucus: Syria, Babylonia, and India

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4. Ptolemy: Egypt and the Levant (the land bridge north to Syria).

Chapter 11 will deal in detail with the king of the North (Syria) and the king of the South (Egypt) since these two ambitious kingdoms will struggle for control over Israel.

What is it about that place and those people that so occupy the earthly kingdoms for its control?

The Angel's Revelation (vv.23-26)

23 "And in the latter time of their kingdom, When the transgressors have reached their fullness, A king shall arise, Having fierce features, Who understands sinister schemes.

The verses 23-25 given to us by Gabriel is the interpretation and explanation of the previous verses in the chapter (vv.9-14).

The little horn is the main character in the vision and a king of fierce countenance (bold—shameless) is center stage; in the interpretation it makes perfect sense that they must be the same person or that they are somehow related to the same situation (the abomination which makes desolate). Who are the transgressors? In the broadest terms possible it includes everyone who resists and rebels against God and His plans. In a more narrow sense it may mean the kings in the visions and the close of their kingdoms.

Some scholars maintain the description given by Gabriel concerning this creature does not resemble the Antiochus Epiphanes of history.

The description is of a blasphemous, despicable, egotistical, ruthless leader who neither fears God or man. It is a description of a person who will use any and all means; diplomacy, deceit, trickery, misdirection, war—to destroy all opposition. Most specifically—Jewish opposition.

The interpretation and revelation given by the Angel Gabriel is in reference to Daniel's vision (vv.9-14). Can the vision refer to both Antiochus in the past and the Antichrist in the future?

The little horn in chapter 7:8 grew out of a revived Roman Empire. This horn comes from one of the horns attributed to the Greek Empire.

I think the prophecy given in the book of Ezekiel 28 gives us a clue and insight. In that prophecy Ezekiel gives a description of the Prince of Tyre; proud, rich, impressed with his own wisdom and consumed with his own ambitions. The Prince of Tyre imagines himself a god—immortal and worthy of human adoration and divine worship (vv.2-9). This is the human—visible ruler of Tyre. But then we have a lamentation on the King of Tyre (vv.12-19) which could not possibly apply to any human being. He is Satan "the anointed cherub" "full of wisdom and perfect in

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beauty until iniquity was found” in this creature. Why do these two passages begin with a human and end with a Satanic Creature? No doubt—the Prince of Tyre is energized and informed by another Creature—a malevolent being who stands in opposition to God and to the people of God. The real king of Tyre is not simply the man sitting on his throne—but the evil occupant of that evil man’s heart. He is the Prince of the power of the air. He is the god of this world. He is the one who heads “the principalities and powers, rulers of darkness of this world.”

Satan inspires and informs and empowers and enables the little horn to resist and rebel and reduce God’s people to ashes.

The latter time of their kingdom has been interpreted in various ways.

The first and most obvious is the closing moments of Greece’s control of the glorious land, the Holy Land, the Promised Land.

In the vision Daniel sees a king arise; Daniel receives a glimpse of his face and a glimpse of his heart.

In history Antiochus Epiphanes will take control through deceit and guile. The description that follows is breathtaking in both depth and scope.

24His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; He shall destroy fearfully, And shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people.

In what way will his power be mighty? What is the source of his power?

We are repeatedly told in the Scriptures that God is sovereign over the world; He controls civilizations; nations; leaders; Kings and Kingdoms. Psalm 113:4; “The Lord is high above all nations.” Psalm 22:28 “Kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.” Job 12:23; “He makes nations great, and he destroys them; he enlarges nations, and leads them away” (apparently into captivity). Jehoshaphat says “In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you” (2 Chronicles 20:6 and Jeremiah 27:5-6).

Why would God do such a thing? Why would God allow the likes of Antiochus and this future Antichrist figure on the world scene?

The same God who allows the rise to power and the exercise of that power will confront them, judge them and destroy them. The description given is terrifying; he shall destroy fearfully; prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty and also the holy people (God’s people).

In history past Antiochus was intent on destroying both Judaism and Jews.

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25 “Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; And he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; But he shall be broken without human means.

26 “And the vision of the evenings and mornings Which was told is true; Therefore seal up the vision, For it refers to many days in the future.”

The vision of the evenings and mornings are a reference to the defilement of the Temple and its subsequent cleansing.

Many Bible teachers believe that Antiochus Epiphanes is a type or shadow or picture of a far future antichrist. What is a Biblical type? “A type is an Old Testament institution, event, person, object or ceremony that reality and purpose in biblical history but also by divine design foreshadows something yet to be revealed” (Ron Rhodes; *40 Days Through Daniel*; p.211).

The Prophet’s Illness (v.27)

27 And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king’s business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

When heavenly beings approached Daniel it generated fear and loss of consciousness (vv.17-18). This is repeated in the experiences of Abram (Genesis 17:3); Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:22); Ezekiel (1:28) and John (Revelation 1:17) and Paul (Acts 9:4).

For Daniel part of the vision was explained, but part remained unexplained. Daniel reminds the reader that he was “astonished” by the vision and that “no one understood it;” not even him.

It is foolish for me to say that I understand what Daniel could not understand.

The Lord Jesus in Matthew 24 gives His disciples a sneak peak into Israel’s future. “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), then those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! “And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath” (see vv.15-20).

Conclusion

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