

(Scriptures quoted are from the English Standard Version, unless noted otherwise)

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Introduction

In this chapter (and in chapter 11), the prophetic message telescopes from the ancient Greek empire into the distant future (our present day). It is a prophetic glimpse from ancient times at the End of the Age empire of the Antichrist. In the process the message accomplishes two things:

- 1) It provides guidance and reassurance, both to the people of God (the followers of Christ) in a distant future Age (our present day), and also, to the ancient Israeli nation.
- 2) We learn also, from God's perspective, what special features will stand out in the oppressive rulers of both the ancient Greek kingdom and the world's final empire.

So how does a message like this - from the Celestial Realm - get transmitted into our earthly realm? Well, the first requirement is to have a yielded and competent vessel (Daniel) to whom the message can be given. The next requirement is interpretation - how to understand accurately the message that was transmitted to Daniel.

Here it will help to remember that in the Celestial Dimension time and history are perceived differently. We know that history repeats itself, so rather than being widely separated events in time (as they appear to us), in God's mind and in the minds of His angelic beings, these events stream together, viewed in a sort of concentrated form. Whereas in our realm historical events are more diluted, that is, spread out over centuries of time. "Time is God's way of not letting everything happen all at once," as the saying goes.

For us, of course, we can have only a dim understanding of how the time-separated events of history can be conceived of in this way as one event. But the differing reactions of Daniel and the angel Gabriel seem to illustrate this unusual feature of how a vision from God can find fulfilment in more than one historical situation: Daniel understood it as applying to the fortunes of his own nation, the Jewish people. Gabriel, who was capable of the long-distance view, asserts that, ultimately, the vision applied to the events coming in the distant future at the End of the Age.

We would expect that the perspective of those from the spiritual realm should be different and far more comprehensive than ours. And the angel Gabriel, who helped Daniel to understand the vision, dwells in that Eternal Realm where time is experienced differently; he is a being whose mind would possess tremendous foresight, insight, and multi-levelled comprehension.

What we have then is both a short-term and a long-term view of the historical situation. Daniel's explanation of the vision emphasizes his short-term point of view - the fate of his own people, the Israeli nation. Gabriel, on the other hand, emphasizes the long-term point of view - what is to befall God's people in the End of the Age.

To understand this better, we might consider what happens sometimes in photography. In cameras of several years ago, if you forgot to advance the film, you would end up with a double exposure - two images in one. A double-exposure photograph can be confusing, especially if you don't know that it is a composite of two pictures. In this vision in chapter 8, it seems we have something similar - a double exposure that is like two snapshots in one of what will happen in two different eras of history.

So with this guideline in mind, let us proceed to see if we can get an accurate understanding of what this unusual vision was communicating to the people of God in ancient times and to us nowadays.

1 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.

Daniel received the revelation, probably during a meditation session, while he ***“was at the Ulai canal”***. (8:2) Unlike the previous revelations (in chapters 2 and 7), this did not come as a dream while he was asleep. Rather, Daniel was fully awake. His experience with the angel Gabriel (in verses 17-18), after seeing the vision, shows this. Difficult as it was for him to stay awake, Daniel was kept in a fully conscious state.

When he [Gabriel] came, I was frightened and fell on my face... 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. (8:17-18)

Various details about the setting are mentioned: the date (***“in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar”***, king of Babylon, which would place it in about 550 B.C.), and the place (***“in Susa the citadel, which is in the province of Elam... at the Ulai canal”***). (8:1-2)

Though seemingly unimportant, these minor details reveal that this was an actual, recorded account - not some invented story or fable. It was a real experience that happened at a known historical time and place to a real person who was known to be well educated and diligent in his affairs, someone who, in fact, had once been prime minister under Nebuchadnezzar, former emperor of the Babylonian empire. In other words, this is a genuine, authentic account, which carries the full weight of authority; it is expected then that we pay close attention to these words in the Book of Daniel.

The vision starts off by foretelling the rise and fall of two empires that were soon to rise on the horizon of history - Medo-Persia and Greece. Then from there, and using the example of one of the Greek rulers, a picture is drawn for Daniel of future persecution to befall the Israeli nation. This is Part One. Then in Part Two Gabriel steps in to explain how the vision applies to the End of the Age - the final empire and its ruler (who, ever since the time of Christ, has been referred to as the Antichrist).

Continue to: [Part 1 \(Ram and Male Goat\)](#)