

The sermon

Intro

Why give heed to the Bible's warnings? Why treasure the promises of God? Why should Christians be a confident people?

We've learned God wins! Daniel 8 reveals our confidence isn't baseless.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

We'll identify the historical events Daniel foresaw. Then we'll consider the supernatural nature of Scripture. Then we'll consider the nature of beastly kingdoms. Then we'll draw some applications on how to endure as a church.

Identifying the 2nd and 3rd beasts of Daniel 7

2nd beast = Medo-Persia

▪ The second beast's "*It was raised up on one side*" (7:5) corresponds to the ram's "*but one was higher than the other*" (8:3). 8:20 says, "*As for the ram that you saw with two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia.*" Medo-Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC. The second kingdom arises after Babylon ("*Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you*" – 2:39).

3rd Beast = Greece

▪ The third beast's "*And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it*" (7:6) corresponds to the goat's "*there came up four conspicuous horns towards the four winds of heaven*" (8:8), which represented "*four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not by his own power*" (8:22). "*a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground*" (8:5) indicates the speed of the goat. In Daniel 7, the 3rd beast was "*like a leopard,*" a fast animal that can run up to 36 miles per hour (7:6). "*with four wings of a bird on its back*" (7:6) lines up with "*without touching the ground*" (8:5). 8:21 says, "*And the goat is the king of Greece.*" And the goat overpowers the ram (8:7). Greece defeated Medo-Persia in 331 BC.

Historical background

"the great horn was broken" (8:8, 21-22)

The "*great horn*" was Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), the first king of Greece (8:21) who quickly conquered the Persian Empire between 334-331 BC. He was broken in that eight years after conquering Medo-Persia, in 323 BC, he died.

Four horns

When Alexander died, "*there came up four conspicuous horns towards the four winds of heaven*" (8:8). 8:22 identifies the four horns as "*four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.*" Meaning the kingdom of Greece was split in four following the death of Alexander the Great.

Historically, after Alexander died he left behind two sons. They were murdered and an internal struggle left the empire divided among four generals.

- 1) Ptolemy I Soter took over Egypt, the Ptolemaic Kingdom.
- 2) Seleucus I Nicator took over Asia Minor through Babylon, the Seleucid Empire.

- 3) Cassander took over Greece and Macedonia.
- 4) Lysimachus took over Thrace, Lydia, Ionia, Phrygia, and the north coast of Asia Minor.

[See Joe M. Sprinkle, *Daniel*, 208-9]

Little horn

In Daniel 7, the little horn was the end of time Antichrist who's destroyed at the 2nd coming of Christ. In Daniel 8, the little horn is Antiochus IV Epiphanes who ruled over the Seleucid branch of the empire from 175-164 BC. That's a past little horn who lived in 2nd century BC. Meaning there's more than one manifestation of the Antichrist. Antichrists come and go throughout history. There's a final Antichrist on the scene in the tribulation period preceding Jesus' return.

God's omniscience & the supernatural nature of Scripture

"In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me" (8:1) = 550 BC. Meaning God revealed what would happen in 331 BC (victory of Alexander the Great) and in the years following 323 BC (the state of the Greece Empire after Alexander's death) and in 175-164 BC (the activity of Antiochus Epiphanes), all in 550 BC!

That's God revealed to Daniel specific events that were over 200 years away and almost 400 years away! What shall we make of this?

- 1) God has exhaustive and perfect knowledge of the future.

He knows every last thing that will ever happen. When you'll die. Who you'll marry. Who will win the Presidential election.

- 2) God's foreknowledge isn't simply a passive knowledge of the future.

God didn't simply wind up the world, let it go, and see what would be. God doesn't simply predict the future. No, God is a planner. When God sees the future he sees what he's going to do.

He saw his curse after Adam's sin. He saw his flood. He saw his covenants with Abraham, Israel, and David. He saw his rescue of Israel in Egypt and his formation of the nation. He saw his exile of the people to Babylon. He saw his raising up Nebuchadnezzar and his bringing Nebuchadnezzar low. He saw his breaking of Antiochus Epiphanes (9:25). He saw the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). He saw Jesus building the church (Matt 16:18). He saw his destruction of the final Antichrist, his opening the books, his establishing the eternal kingdom.

God sees the things he planned to do before the foundation of the world.

- 3) God has revealed the future in advance to us.

God is a revealing God. He doesn't keep us in the dark. Yes some things are hidden from us (Deut 29:29), but God has chosen to reveal much to us. Things like the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus coming on the clouds of heaven, the destruction of the final Antichrist, the books opened, the saints given an eternal kingdom.

He's also revealed his stance on sin and how we can be reconciled to himself. Through Jesus Christ alone. Jesus died as a substitute such that whoever believes will be forgiven of their sins and heirs of eternal life. On the cross God treated Jesus as if he lived our sinful lives. If we turn to God for mercy in Christ, God treats us as if we lived Jesus' perfect, obedient life.

How do we respond to God's offer of mercy in Christ? Faith and repentance. That's turning from sin to trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, not ourselves or anything else.

- 4) We can be sure the kingdom will come.

The fact that God has successfully revealed past historical events before they happened gives us confidence that future events he's revealed, things that haven't happened yet are certain to come to pass.

Our faith isn't a blind or baseless faith. The truthfulness of God's word has been proven already!

5) The Bible is a divine book.

The Bible isn't a normal book like others you'd find in Barnes and Noble. "*All Scripture [the entire Bible] is breathed out by God*" (2 Tim 3:16) meaning God is the source behind every word in the 66 books you have in your Bible. God superintended the writing process such that human authors wrote from their own personality and education level while, at the same time, God ensured every word they wrote was what he wanted them to write.

What I'm saying is Daniel 8 proves the divine nature of the Bible. Daniel 8 proves there is a divine source behind the 66 books in our Bible. Daniel 8 proves the Christian faith is intellectually credible. Daniel 8 proves we can trust Jesus' promises! Daniel 8 says don't take God's warnings casually!

When someone asks me questions like, how can you be sure there's an afterlife? How can you be sure Christianity is the only true religion? How can you be sure God exists? How can you be sure the Bible is true?

One answer, not the only answer (e.g., resurrection), is I have Daniel 8.

The nature of earthly beasts

Point 1: Beasts throw truth to the ground (8:12)

"it will throw truth to the ground" (8:12) refers to the activity of the *"little horn"* (8:9) = Antiochus Epiphanes.

Antiochus threw truth to the ground in two ways. **First**, he interrupted the offerings in the Jewish sanctuary. Recall the Jerusalem temple was destroyed by Babylon in 586 BC. God's saying the temple will be rebuilt. The *"glorious land"* (8:9) is Israel. Antiochus entered the sanctuary (1 Macc 1:21) and turned the sanctuary into a temple for Zeus (2 Macc 6:1-2). Antiochus defiled the temple, encouraged idolatry, and prevented the Jews from obeying the the law of Moses.

Second, Antiochus made war on the Scriptures. Any books of the law that were found were torn to pieces and burned by fire (1 Macc 1:56). Anyone found possessing these Scriptures was condemned to death (1 Macc 1:57).

Beasts oppose God's word.

Point 2: Beasts prosper and succeed (8:12, 24)

"it will act and prosper" (8:12). *"and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does"* (8:24).

Antiochus opposes God and harms God's people and yet he finds success? Yes.

It's the reverse of Job. Job was faithful and he suffered. Antiochus is wicked and he prospers. God allows the righteous to suffer. God allows the wicked to prosper.

The prosperity of a nation or president is no sign of God's favor.

Point 3: Beast rule is temporary (8:13-14)

"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" (8:13)? *"For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state"* (8:14).

In other words, Antiochus' reign of terror is temporary. Temple order will be restored. Antiochus' rebellion won't last forever.

The duration of his destruction has been determined by God. He's on God's leash.

"2,300 evenings and mornings" = sacrifices interrupted for around six years.

Point 4: Beasts are satanically empowered (8:24)

Like the man of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:9) and the beast of Revelation 13 (Rev 13:2), the source of Antiochus' power was Satanic.

"His power shall be great—but not by his own power" (8:24). An outside power drove Antiochus.

In Ephesians 6:12, we wrestle *"against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."*

When beastly activity is present, evil spiritual forces stand behind them. Satan empowers world leaders, governments, and human institutions!

Point 5: Beasts inspire fear (8:24)

"and he shall cause fearful destruction" (8:24).

There are reasons to be afraid. Would you be afraid if Bibles were being burned by the President? Would you be afraid if Bible possession earned you lethal injection?

These fears created are real rather than imagined. Thus, the need to endure, the need for divine strengthening, the need for promises of God's eternal kingdom.

Point 6: Beasts make war on the saints (8:24)

"and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints" (8:24).

In Daniel 7, the end of time *"little horn"* wore out the saints (7:24) when he *"made war with the saints and prevailed over them"* (7:21). In Revelation 13:7, the beast (acting through Rome) *"was allowed to make war on the saints, and to conquer them."*

Evil triumphs over God's people. Beasts go after God's people. They're satanically inspired.

This pattern happened in 2nd century BC, 1st century AD, it happens in North Korea today, it will happen in the period prior to Christ's return.

Point 7: Beasts deceive (8:25)

"By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand" (8:25).

Satan deceived Eve in the garden (2 Cor 11:3). Satan deceived in the 1st century through false teachers (1 Tim 4:1-3).

Satan continues to deceive through celebrities and social influencers and self-help gurus. Today's lies include, "you do you." "Follow your heart." "Love is love."

Point 8: Beasts are prideful (8:25)

"and in his own mind he shall become great...And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes" (8:25). It was Satan's pride that brought him low (Ezek 28:14-17; 1 Tim 3:6).

If humility is a low self-estimation, pride is a high assessment of ourselves. Pride forgets that we are but creatures. Humility remembers the Creator-creature distinction. Jesus is Lord. We are not. Pride thinks we're sovereign and indestructible. Humility remembers the books will be opened.

Rebellion runs wild in the hearts of men.

Point 9: Beasts are broken by God (8:25)

“and he shall be broken—but by no human hand” (8:25).

Antiochus won't be broken by a human. God will take his life. He'll exalt himself against God and God will bring him low. He died in 164 BC.

God breaks beasts in history. Their reign of terror is temporary. God breaks the Antichrist and Satan himself at the end of time. God wins! All opposition will be vanquished. War on the saints will come to an end.

Does any of this sound familiar? These patterns repeat themselves throughout history. **Satan destroys in fresh ways through fresh faces and fresh institutions.** But the deceit and destruction lives on in every age.

Application

Hebrews 10 speaks to saints under attack.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. – Hebrews 10:23-25

Why were the saints wavering and neglecting the weekly meetings?

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. – Hebrews 10:32-36

The saints were wavering because of public insults, slander, threats, physical assault (affliction), imprisonment, and destruction of property was tempting them to turn away from Jesus. So there were empty seats at the Sunday service.

The Hebrews author renders his diagnosis: ***“For you have need of endurance.”*** **How do we go about enduring as a church?**

Application 1: Keeping gathering together (Heb 10:25)

God has provided for our endurance in the weekly meetings of the church. These shouldn't be treated casually and neglected.

Application 2: Keeping encouraging one another (Heb 10:24)

God has provided for our endurance in the weekly conversations that take place when we meet weekly.

Yes, we don't gather just to sing songs and hear sermons. We also gather to speak into each other's lives.

Application 3: Keeping supporting one another practically (Heb 10:34)

God provides for our endurance when our brothers and sisters meet our practical needs. Here Christians brought food, clothing, bedding, medicine, etc. to their imprisoned brothers and sisters.

Conclusion

What I'm saying is God designed the local church to meet the needs of weary saints who are worn out by beastly assaults on the church. Endurance is found in the local church. **Enduring beasts requires the local church.**