

DANIEL — WEEK 10

HUMBLE YOURSELF



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The cover image is Daniel in the Lions' Den by Peter Paul Rubens

We begin with Gabriel being told to “make” this man understand the vision. While Daniel will learn a lot, he ultimately will **not** understand. This will bother him so much he becomes literally ill.

The he gets up and powers through anyway. With Darius now in charge Daniel see the approach of the end of Israel's captivity and he begins to pray.

We're pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at www.ailbe.org and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

Thank you.

All the individual weekly study guides are available for download here:

<https://www.ailbe.org/resources/itemlist/category/91-deep-studies>

Daniel, Week 10 — Humble Yourself
Copyright 2021 F. Michael Slay
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.

1 Daniel 8:15–17

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

In his must-see video series “He Gave Us Prophets,” Richard Pratt explains that a prophet is someone who can see into Heaven. This makes Chapter 8 of Daniel a treasure. We get to be a fly on the wall in Daniel’s head as he chats with the heavenly host.

What Daniel is told is important, but the bigger lesson is in how he interacts with the one who has the appearance of a man. For starters, notice that Daniel doesn’t begin by asking a question; he’s just thinking. *I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man.* He is merely *seeking the meaning* and suddenly this guy just pops up. Daniel hasn’t even formulated a question yet; he’s too confused.

This illustrates an exciting, if humbling, principle. We often don’t know where to start in understanding great things. But that’s okay; God expects this and will accommodate.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, — Ephesians 3:20

Then *a man's voice* gives the command, “*Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.*” Notice the verb “make.” All the strict translations agree on this. It isn’t “help” because Daniel isn’t close enough for mere help to do any good. This reinforces the point about Daniel’s total inability to understand his own dream.

If this sounds like the Calvinistic doctrine of “Total Inability,” good. The parallel is obvious. Our inability doesn’t relate to just one aspect of knowing God.

It’s total.

So, Gabriel approaches Daniel and, of course, Daniel is overcome with fear and falls on his face. That always seems to happen with angels. They can’t even announce Christ’s birth to shepherds without scaring them half to death.

But Gabriel has a simple note of encouragement to pass on. “*The vision refers to the time of the end.*”

By *the time of the end*, Gabriel does not mean the end of time. The translations say, “*time of the end*,” instead of “end of time,” or “the end-times,” because the original text says, “kets,” instead of “olam.” It’s some kind of ending but not the grand finale.

Gabriel is just telling Daniel not to fret because it’s not coming in his lifetime.

2 Daniel 8:18–22

Now, 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. And 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. The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As 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.”

This passage explains Daniel’s interpretation of the handwriting on the wall in Chapter 5. He already knew that the Medes and Persians were going to overrun Babylon—and soon.

While Chapter 5 doesn’t say how close the invading forces were, the fact that Belshazzar was killed that very night means they had to be within striking range of the palace. That means they had already invaded the nation.

Many battles had already been fought. There’s no way the king and his subjects could be unaware of that. While the king was feasting and showing off, his soldiers were fighting and dying, trying to halt an invasion.

But Daniel knew even more. He knew the invading forces couldn’t be stopped. Belshazzar, in his arrogance, assumed his army was strong enough to resist. He was wrong.

So, Daniel sees the writing—writing which everyone can read but no one can understand—with the foreknowledge of what is coming. This makes the king’s behavior in the presence of danger even more obviously incompetent. That’s how Daniel knew that *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN* meant.

“God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” — Daniel 5:26–28

This passage also illuminates Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream. Some skeptics want to postdate Daniel to after the Greek kingdom so as to deny that it’s prophetic. To do that, they interpret the four kingdoms represented by the statue parts as: Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks. They deny the interpretation of the four parts as Babylonian, Medes and Persians, Greeks, and Romans because the book of Daniel obviously predates the Roman empire, and thus wouldn’t be postdated.

But the Medes and the Persians are clearly one ram in this passage. They’ve been one kingdom throughout the book, but this passage makes their unity undeniable. It can’t be a matter of interpretation.

The denial of the obvious by the skeptics is puzzling. Back in the discussion of 6:14–18, I said, “People usually believe what they want to believe—what they hope is true. That’s where a lot of denial comes from. If you wish hard enough for something to be true, you won’t be open to contradictory evidence.”

This is creepy. Why would skeptics hope that the book of Daniel is bogus?

3 Daniel 8:23–25

*“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.*

*His 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.*

*“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.”*

Now Gabriel explains *the time of the end* that he mentioned back in verse 17 while Daniel was still face down. It describes the time of the end of these kingdoms (“*in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness*”) and it’s beyond creepy.

It describes a powerful king, *having fierce features*, [and] *who understands sinister schemes*. He’ll do a lot of damage. *He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people*.

But that’s not the worst part. *His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power*. The real power behind this sinister king is spiritual evil.

But that’s not the worst part either. *He shall even rise against the Prince of princes*. This is a specific reference to God. This idiot will actually rise up against God. Oops.

So, the worst part becomes the best part. *But he shall be broken without human means*.

Pride goeth before the fall.

While this happens most spectacularly to the enemies of God, we must always beware of our own pride. Service to the Lord must be humble or it’s not to His glory and thus not service.

4 Daniel 8:26–27 (ESV)

*“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.”*

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.

Despite Gabriel’s comforting words, Daniel still *was appalled by the vision and did not understand it*. Why? Gabriel was told back in verse 16 to, “*Make this man understand the vision.*”? Why did he fail?

This adds to the earlier point about Daniel’s total inability to understand the dream. The final instruction— “*Therefore seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future*”—at least gives Daniel the comfort that this prophesy is far off.

But that’s little help. He knew it was about times of the end already. The instruction to seal up the vision is shocking. Daniel is ordered to keep what he knows a secret. What’s a prophet supposed to do if he can’t prophesy?

Daniel ends up literally worried sick over this. Why couldn’t Gabriel at least comfort Daniel enough that he can continue functioning as a prophet?

Then again, he’s been ordered to not “function as a prophet” anyway, at least with respect to this vision.

This feels like failure. If Daniel doesn’t understand his own vision, the only safe way to avoid speaking falsehoods is to keep quiet. Prophets aren’t supposed to find themselves in this position. Speaking a falsehood is the signature of a false prophet. That’s not supposed to be a temporary condition that befalls the real ones.

So, not understanding his vision, plus being ordered to keep quiet, is an emotional train wreck for Daniel. What’s killing Daniel isn’t just that he doesn’t understand the vision.

He can’t even figure out why he doesn’t understand the vision.

Suck it up buttercup.

And that is exactly what Daniel does. *Then I rose and went about the king’s business*. He got up and went back to work. Daniel was crushed, but he soldiered on.

This is a critical lesson for us. God doesn’t promise perfect understanding—to Daniel or to us. Life in Christ includes disappointment. That’s no excuse to drop the ball.

Sometimes you just have to trust God to run His universe. Our job is to do our job.

5 Daniel 9:1–6

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, “O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land.

When Darius takes over, Daniel gets excited. Israel’s captors are gone and the 70 years of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah are almost up. Daniel responds with a model prayer. If you want to learn how to pray in conformity with God’s will, study this prayer. But why pray for God to keep His promises?

There is plenty of precedent for praying about the fulfillment of existing prophesy. After Nathan rebuked David for his sin with Bathsheba, David prayed for God’s sentence against the child to be revoked.

However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.” Then Nathan departed to his house.

And the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and it became ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. — 2 Samuel 12:14–16

Prophecies can change. As Isho’dad of Merv notes in his commentary on this passage, “*At the same time he thought that the Jews might stay a longer time in captivity because of their sins, according to the fact that God had added thirty years to the Jews in Egypt and had reduced [the time for repentance conceded] to the generation of Noah of twenty years and of fifty in the case of the house of Ephrem.*”

So, praying about the fulfillment of prophesy is normal and in conformity with His will. Thus, the question becomes, how should we pray for God to keep His promises?

And this passage reduces the answer down to one word—honestly.

Daniel is being brutally honest about the sins of his people. If he were a lawyer trying to convince God to relent, he’d be the worst lawyer ever. He’s making a great case **against** leniency.

But God doesn’t grant leniency; He grants grace. The difference is glorious beyond measure.

Don’t pray to God like He’s a human judge. He wants repentance, not spin.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Has God ever answered a prayer (or question) you didn't ask?
2. Has your knowledge of scripture ever helped you know what's coming?
3. When/how is service to the Lord not humble?
4. As we soldier on, what should we **stop** doing?
5. Do we confess our sins to God enough?

Items for prayer: