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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

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**Daniel's Vision**

**Daniel Part 18**

**Prayer:** *Father God, I just again thank you and praise you for your grace and your goodness, for your word which is a lamp unto our feet. We just again would not have any ability to even maneuver in the darkness that would envelope us without your word, and so we're thankful for it. And Lord, once again we are going to your word this morning, we're going to be opening up your book, we're going to be seeking to learn from it and so I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would guide and accompany us, and again, that you would enable us to make these words of permanent value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we spoke last week about the fears that are being engendered by this upcoming election, and I noted that I know an awful lot of folks who seem paralyzed by the possibility of this candidate or that candidate becoming our next president. And one of the things that I sought to do last week was point out the difference between the street level view of reality and a God's eye view of the very same situation. And so we looked at the street level view of

Daniel's situation that happened at the very beginning of the book of Daniel, and we saw that what appeared there to be a situation of great loss and great destruction and great chaos was in fact the hand of God playing itself out in history as he had already designated. And then we fast forwarded to Daniel's second dream in which we are introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ and all of his glory coming in the clouds with great power and we compared that to the street level view of Jesus mocked, flogged, and crucified, and we pointed out that God's greatest victory sometimes look anything but victorious. My point in last week's message was to emphasize the fact that God is sovereignly in control of every single aspect of history. And whether Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton wins this election, it's not a function of polling or of debates or of press coverage but of God's sovereign good pleasure. I want to point out the danger, however, in misconstruing or misunderstanding that kind of a perspective. You see, God is absolutely sovereign but he does use mankind to accomplish his sovereign will. And again, we have the example that Daniel gives us in chapter 7 and 8 of the book, I mean, nobody had more opportunity to sit back and do nothing than Daniel. Daniel studied the prophets and he learned from the prophet Jeremiah exactly how long the Babylonian captivity would be and if anyone really had the ability and maybe even the right to sit back and just let history unfold, well, it would have been Daniel. But that's not what he did at all. And this morning I

want to point out from the book of Daniel three things that should govern our attitudes when we encounter trying times such as these. We need to thoroughly grasp the what, the why, and the how of the kingdom of God operating through and above the kingdoms of this earth.

And so first we need to reiterate in our own mind the what. And the what is really this idea of two kingdoms, it's something that I spoke about last week, there's the present street level kingdom that you and I have to operate in, whether it's school, whether it's work, whether it's homemaking, all of us know we have this concrete universe that all of us have to operate and function in. Often times it is so concrete that we just assume that it is the ultimate reality. And for many it is the ultimate reality. But as Christians, we know that there's another kingdom that sits high and above this earthly kingdom, and it's the kingdom of God and it ultimately governs every single thing that happens here on earth and it governs it towards one specific end and that's the final culmination of this kingdom and the return of Christ to establish his kingdom once and for all on earth.

Now we get reintroduced to this kingdom through Daniel's second dream. And once again Daniel is seeing visions of animals and these animals represent kingdoms and the dream that we're looking

at now involves a ram and it's a ram of exceeding strength and power, and it's charging westward and northward and southward until it gets confronted by a male goat. This is *Daniel 8:5*. It says: *As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath. I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him and there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power. Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. Out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper.*

These are truly inscrutable words and so we're fortunate in that just like the other dream we're not left to guess whether or not these animals represent political kingdoms because Daniel's given the interpretation of the dream in *Daniel 8:20*. It says: *As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.*

Well, what we're seeing here, what we're encountering here is the perspective of history from the world as well as the perspective from the kingdom of God. This male goat also has four horns and the little horn and the little horn grows in power and hatred towards the things of the kingdom of God, and if you remember from the very first dream there was also a little horn. Now, interpreters are divided as to what this second little horn really is, and many interpreters don't believe it is just Antiochus Epiphanes who represented the horn, the little horn in the first dream, although there are certainly references to him in the second dream, this reference to the glorious land, the host of heaven and the stars, that's all pointing to this little horn's attack, once again, on Jerusalem and God's people. Now all of that points to Antiochus Epiphanes who we learned last week was this hate-filled

madman who did these incredibly horrible things to the people of God. He put Zeus, a statute of Zeus in the temple, he offered up a pig and slaughtered a pig on the altar and he butchered thousands of Jews in his hatred of God's people. So he's clearly represented here in this dream. But we know that he's not the one and only that is referred to as the antichrist. And we understand it best to understand it as a type and model of all the subsequent antichrists that would follow after him, because they're all marked by this intense hatred of all things having to do with God and the kingdom of God and his chosen people. You see, Antiochus Epiphanes is just one of many antichrists that have appeared in history. And these enemies of the kingdom, we think that they're operating with impunity but they all have a pivotal role in history's end. It was John who pointed out in the New Testament that there are going to be many antichrists. He said this in *1 John 2:18*, he said: *Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.*

Well, as I'm looking at this, there's something else besides antichrists that is here though, and what stands out for me is I'm looking at Daniel's dream and his visions and his interpretation is the way this interpretation is delivered. Let me just explain this to you. This is *Daniel 8:15*. Daniel has this incredible vision

and he goes on to say this, he says: *When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, "Understand, O Son of Man, that the vision is for the time of the end." 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. He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end."* Now understand what's taking place here.

There's not one but there's two individuals who most definitely are not human and they're interacting with Daniel here. And they're telling him not just the events that's going to take place in the near present but of events that are scheduled to take place up to and including the very end of time. Verse 17: *So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, "Understand, O Son of Man, that the vision is for the time of the end."*

Now we're looking at these two kingdoms that are operating together at the same time, the kingdom of God in heaven and the kingdom of earth that we're a part of and if you ever want to see this insight

into the presence of these two kingdoms, just consider the interaction that takes place between Daniel and these creatures. I mean Daniel has had an alien encounter. It's amazing to me how desperately we are searching for alien life. We have these organizations like SETI which is the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence and we have all these different UFO organizations and we are dead set on locating aliens living among us. Well there's a reason for that as well, I mean, if you believe in evolution, if you believe that evolution took place completely by chance and you start to grasp the enormity of the amount of planets in our universe, well then statistics alone demand that there would be hundreds of different evolutionary schemes that are producing thousands and thousands of types of different aliens, again, all by chance. And so hence we have this almost desperate need to find and identify alien life. Well, I would love to tell the alien seekers they need look no further than the pages of scripture if they really want to find intelligent life that's not human. See, the Bible is very clear in stating that on multiple occasions, we human beings have had interactions with creatures that were not even remotely human. In fact they were creatures from another realm and another dimension, one of who is called out for the first time in this book of Daniel. He's given a name. His name is Gabriel. And you think about Gabriel, we think, well, Gabriel's kind of a mythological figure, he's always blowing his trumpet,



he's always heralding something and we think of Gabriel and we've grown very comfortable with Gabriel and his horn. And in a sense we've kind of tucked him away to a largely mythical status, more cartoon-like than real. But I want you to consider Daniel's reaction. He's encountering an alien creature and his reaction is quite typical for us. He says: *I was frightened and he fell on my face.* You see, almost every single time a human comes in contact with one of these creatures they're almost always terrifying. Candida Moss writing in *The Daily Beast* says this about angels: "In the fifteen hundred years since the Bible was put together, angels have been made over into the shoulder-length-haired, white-robed Caucasians that adorn laminated prayer cards." So true. "They've been identified as supernatural figures who provide assistance in times of trouble. But, biblically speaking, angels are as likely to be sending a message as delivering one. If you're looking for a spiritual assistance then you should call upon a saint. If you meet an angel you should probably run."

You know Balaam the prophet saw the angel of the Lord and he saw it with a drawn sword in his hand and he had a similar reaction to Daniel's. In *Numbers 22:31* it says: *Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face.* We think of Sarah or Abraham or Gideon or Mary or Peter

and they all had encounters with angels that ranged from the awe-inspiring to the absolutely terrifying. Manoah and his wife -- that's Samson's parents -- they marveled that they had actually seen the angel of the Lord and they were not struck dead. In *Judges 13* it says: *The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God."* Whether or not this is the angel of the Lord or an angel of the Lord is still a subject of dispute but we know and Manoah knew well that angels could be deadly. And sometimes angels acted as executioners exacting God's punishment and demonstrating that the kingdom of God does sit above this earthly kingdom is capable of inflicting vast destruction and terror whenever God sees fit to exact it.

If you remember David, David was put in a position of actually begging for mercy for Jerusalem after he had been -- after he had ordered up a census and was subsequently being punished for it. In *1 Chronicles 21* it says: *And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw, and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction -- he's in the process he destroying it, he says -- "It is enough; now stay your hand." And David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and*

heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And then we have Sennacherib, he's the pagan general, he thought he could mock the living God. Sennacherib and his Army was visited at night by an angel. 2 Kings 19 says: *And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.*

Now the very same angel who comforted Daniel was the one who struck Zechariah speechless because he questioned God's ability to make him a father. In Luke 1:19 it says: *And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel." Same Gabriel. "I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."* And of course who can forget Mary's encounter with the very same angel. Again, this is Gabriel. Luke 1:26: *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"*

So we see Gabriel and we see his name mentioned over and over again in his interaction with humans and we note one thing as well, that these interactions, they span multiple centuries. And so clearly angels, unlike us humans, they operate outside of time and they also operate out of the normal restrictions of space. They appear wherever they are needed. And what they do is they remind us that there's another kingdom that's operating right alongside the kingdom that we're all familiar with. And no doubt, the what of the two kingdoms is very clear and very obvious if you're an angel. It's not so clear if you are a flesh and blood human being. And the wonder of scripture is that it enables us through these different confrontations with angels to recognize that there are not only two distinct kingdoms, but when God sees fit, these kingdoms intersect with one another.

And secondly, we need to thoroughly understand the why of these two kingdoms. Why are the angels breaking through the kingdom of God to connect with Daniel? I mean, what's the reason? What is the ultimate goal here? Well, it was really two-fold. I mean, one we know it was to state prophetically where the future was going much in the same way as they were able to state prophetically where Israel was going before they were even captured and taken to Babylon. But there's also another aspect about the distant future, and to understand where the world is going, we need to fast-forward

to the end that the kingdom of God is pointing to. And Revelation 21 tells us what that's going to be like. It says: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."* And he who was seated on the throne said, *"Behold, I am making all things new. Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."* And he said to me, *"It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment."*

You see, all of this life that we live here on earth, it's all pointing to something, it's all pointing to one glorious ending that Daniel was giving us a sneak preview of, and it's where man's purpose finally meets its appointed end. And it's all about the Alpha and the Omega. It's all about Jesus. He's the beginning and he is the end. And all of us humans find our purpose in glorifying

God and enjoying him forever. And it doesn't matter what station you are in, butcher, baker, candlestick maker, all that God asks of us is that we live out our particular station in life with faithfulness. And the beauty of our faith is that everything done for the sake of Christ can become sacred, from changing a diaper to running a race, to making a sail or even preaching a sermon, and that's why Paul encourages us by saying in *1 Corinthians 10:31*: *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.* But you know, for some reason we find that an incredibly difficult task. I cannot imagine what we look like to the angels. You know, they're the ones who have the truest perception of what the ultimate reality of life is all about, it's about the glory of God in Jesus Christ. And so the angels see the ultimate reality in Christ and they see us, the crown of God's creation, the creatures who will one day outrank them in heaven, they see us caught up in the most trivial earthbound nonsense of absolutely no eternal consequence. You know how horror movies used to do this thing where they involve the audience so everybody knows what's going on except the victim, and it's supposed to keep you on the edge of your seat because you're watching this person make bad choice after bad choice and they're getting deeper and deeper into all kinds of awful situations. I wonder if that's how angels look at us. I mean, do they see us constantly making bad decisions, constantly getting caught up in things of absolutely no value

whatsoever, making choices that cause the rest of the angels to groan? I mean I honestly don't know how angels relate to us. We are the ones that have been given the ultimate honor of being made in the very image of God himself and yet we're the ones that are fallen and staggering around almost completely unaware of the privilege that God has given to us, and we're unaware because we're so caught up in the pursuit of the trivial, the short-lived, and the inconsequential.

Listen to what God says in *Hebrews 2:5*, he says: *For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor."* What God is saying is there's no other creature in the universe including the angels themselves who have been crowned with that glory and that honor, but we have. We've been given the privilege of bearing the *imago dei*, the very image of God, and we've been put on this planet with this high and lofty goal of bringing honor and glory to the creator who made us. And then joined us on this planet, living out his life perfectly and then offering up his perfect life on the cross so that by faith in him we could claim his righteousness as our own, instead of our sin. And so by faith we could join him forever in his kingdom. We

are the loftiest of creatures determined to occupy the lowest rungs of creation we can find.

I remember many years ago describing a scene I had once seen on a Chinese television show. I'd mentioned this one time before. There was an animal trainer who had taken these massive brown bears and he had trained them to ride bicycles. And they apparently thought this was extremely cute. I don't think it was cute at all, I think it was profoundly ugly. And so to me this was a hideous TV scene. They had these magnificent apex predators and they're wearing little pink dresses and they're holding delicate little parasols and they're riding bicycles around in circles. And I saw these massive animals so far removed from their glory pathetically riding these bicycles around in circles just to entertain us and I said that's what we must look like to the angels. I mean, we are these magnificent creatures and we've been given such honor and glory by our creator and we're reduced to running around in circles hardly realizing how far from our original glory we've fallen. And so we're the ones that are holding the parasols, we're the ones that are dressed in tutus, we're the ones that are riding around on bicycles, and the enemy of our soul and of our creator laughs as he puts us through our paces. We were intended for so much more. Paul speaks of that very same frustration when he addresses some of the petty grievances that Christians were having with one another



in the Corinthian church. This is what he says in 1 Corinthians 6, he says: *When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!* Listen to what God is saying. He's saying one day we will judge angels. Would that we would realize the privileges we've been given.

You see, the what of this life is that there are two very distinct kingdoms, one high and lifted up, one that is above and eternal and rules and reigns over all things and that all things are eventually headed at some time in the future to the only thing that matters and that is the glory of God in Christ. And meanwhile, right here now today, we live in this earthly kingdom that occupies us day in and day out as we walk through this life as flesh and blood people who just need to earn a living, need to run a household, need to raise our kids. And so we desperately need to know how to reconnect the what of this world, those two kingdoms, and the why of this world. And the why of this world is something that Daniel gives us a glimpse of with his interaction with the angel Gabriel. You know, we're looking at Daniel from street level and all we see is that it looks like he's caught up in the backwash of politics

and earthly kingdoms but we begin to see with his interaction with angels is that there's this separate reality riding above the earth and actually controlling it. In that ultimate reality, what matters is Jesus Christ and him glorified. That's where every single event in this world is going. It's where all of reality is pointing to. This is the why of everything that we do.

Thirdly, we need to understand the how. How will the kingdom of God that sits high and above all the kingdoms of the earth, how is it going to finally rule and reign on the earth? Well, Daniel's vision tells us the Son of Man is going to come in the clouds. And he's not going to be received like he was the last time he spoke of his coming. Remember I spoke about that last week, it was before -- as he was appearing before the Sanhedrin. And they had already arrested Jesus, and they had mocked him, they had beaten him, now they're asking him, are you the coming Messiah? And he responded by telling them that he was indeed the Messiah, then he told them how he coming and in telling them how he was coming, he repeated what Daniel had seen in his vision. This is *Matthew 26:64*, it says: *Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy." It*

wasn't blasphemy. This was the absolute truth. But we all know what happened next. We know he was tried in a kangaroo court, he was found guilty, and he was crucified. You know, the people thought it was all their own doing but it was Jesus himself acting as his own high priest who orchestrated all of the events that ended with him sacrificing himself to perfectly satisfy his own justice on our behalf. And when three days later he arose, he began the process of building his church. It's the process that we are right in the middle of right now. But thanks to Daniel we know how it's all going to end. *Daniel 7:13* says: *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of Man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."*

What Daniel is giving us a picture of is this: When Jesus comes on the clouds of heaven, he's no longer going to be coming to earth as the suffering servant. He's no longer coming to earth as the lamb. He's coming as the lion. And trust me, he's coming to harvest. And this harvest is not going to be without violence. God describes two separate harvests that are going to take place. He says Jesus is going to come on a cloud first to harvest his own,

those who are blood-bought members of the kingdom of God on earth. That's the church. It says in *Revelation 14*: *So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.* But then it says there's going to be another harvest and it's a harvest unlike anything this earth has ever seen. You see, God's righteous fury which has been held in check by his mercy since the great flood of Noah's day is going to finally break forth. Verse 17 says: *Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside it city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.*

We don't even like to think about this, much less speak of it, but there's a cosmic rule that governs the entire moral universe just as there's physical rules that govern the entire physical universe, and that law says that all sin has a price, and every sin committed in the entire universe will be paid for. The fact is every single thing you and I have ever done, every single sin we have ever

committed is either bought and paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross or it sits, and it doesn't sit idle, it sits storing up wrath for us on the day when God's harvest becomes a reality. Listen to what God says in *Romans 2:5*, it says: *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works.* That's a fact. That is where all of creation, redeemed and unredeemed, is headed. That is the how of the heavenly kingdom finally ruling over earth.

But there's another aspect of this question of how. We need to ask ourselves, okay, how is the kingdom of God going to advance in the right here, in the right now in the concrete world that we are living in today? How does the intersection of the heavenly kingdom with the earthly kingdom take place for believers today? Well, Tony Reinke at *Desiring God* draws a connection from Daniel's dream straight through to Christ's great commission. See, in this dream Jesus receives his commission and Daniel through his vision is privileged to see it unfold in the heavenly kingdom. We are told of Jesus in *Daniel 7*: *To him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.* Now if those words sound familiar, we need to compare them with Jesus's final

words on earth taken from what we call the Great Commission. This is what Jesus -- these are the words Jesus left us with as he was leaving. He said in *Matthew 28*: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*"

See, Jesus left us with the how. He left us with the how, how we are to advance the kingdom of God on earth. If you look at *Matthew 11:12*, it says: "*From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.*" True. But there will come a time when the kingdom will advance and it will advance violently. And God will tread the grapes of his wrath and he will tread them without mercy. But that time's not now. The way Jesus expects the kingdom of God to grow until he returns is through that one simple command that he left us. "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.*" That's how the kingdom advances today. That's the concrete answer to how. And what is discipling, the kingdom advances when one starving beggar tells another starving beggar where he's found bread. That's discipleship. And that applies to every single person in the church. Every single person who names Jesus Christ as Lord and

Savior is a disciple but he's also a discipler. And discipleship, it applies to everyone. If you've been a Christian for a week you can disciple somebody who's been a Christian for a day.

Speaking of the great commission, Reinke at *Desiring God* puts it this way, he says: "These closing words of Matthew deliver the ultimate Jesus-Juke of self-consumed political establishments." He's talking about what kind of political carnage we're looking at today and he's saying look at how the world does politics, look at how Jesus does it. He says: "For now. Quite apart from the rise and fall of global superpowers, the Son of Man's international conquering will transpire (at least in part) in time and space, through the nonviolent means we call disciple-making. Jesus is the sovereign king of the universe. Period. He has all authority now. Period. But his conquering kingdom is being quietly unveiled. His leaven is working its way through the dough. His Cosmic Commission has ushered in our Great Commission."

In other words, Jesus still intends to conquer the world but he intends to do it through the nonviolent means of making disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them all that Jesus has taught us. Now, living in this concrete kingdom where we all still need to earn a living and maintain a household and raise our kids, we have to realize that there's a kingdom that is operating right

alongside us and above us. And sometimes the non human creatures in that kingdom actually interact with us like they did with Daniel. That's the what, that there's two separate kingdoms operating here. The why is that everything, everything is for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the how is that we are here to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and to lead others into a deep realization that Christ and him crucified is the only thing that gives meaning to life. And that means that you and I are here to be what? Disciple makers. Every single one of us. We've been blessed with great examples of disciple makers right here in our church, whether it's Deborah or Donna or Dave or Fred or Steve or a host of others, we are blessed with folks here at Grace who understand that discipleship is a vital part of what it means to be a Christian. We need every one of you to see that and to sense that. If you feel God is speaking to you about growing in your need for discipleship or in your desire to disciple others, I would love to have you speak with me or some of the elders afterwards because we would love to encourage you in that because that's what we're here for. And we all know that we are entering into a very -- quote -- "interesting time" for the church, but we know that God is at work in both kingdoms.

After Daniel had received his visions, he was appalled and upset because he knew God's plans meant that there were going to be a lot



more tough times still ahead for Israel. In *Daniel 8:27* it says:  
"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." Unlike Daniel, we have no clear  
set patterns as to what's going to take place in the immediate  
future, and as yet, we've not yet been visited by angels, at least  
I haven't, I don't know if you have, but I haven't. But I know  
what to do next. I think you know as well. It's what Daniel said.  
What do we do next? We rise and we go about the King's business.  
Let's pray.

*Father, we just thank you for the vision that Daniel had of  
Christ's Great Commission. And Lord, that Great Commission stands  
even now. There's going to come a time when the kingdom will  
advance with a violence that is unprecedented, that people have no  
sense of at all. Lord, before that time there is still ample time  
for us to practice discipleship, for us to do exactly what you have  
called us to do. I pray that you would give us the ability, the  
heart, the desire, the skill and the determination to do what you  
would have us do as you grow your church your way. I pray this in  
Jesus' name. Amen.*