

Our God Reveals, Rescues, and Reigns

Daniel 2-8

How would you respond if you received this message from a military officer who knocked on your door? "The government has ordered that you and your friends must be put to death!" And if you were to ask, "Why?" the answer would be: "Because the highest official in the land wants answers, and no one is giving him those answers!"

Almost everyone seems fascinated by a "cliff hanger."ⁱ That usually refers to a fictional story where a character is in serious trouble; everyone who hears about the story wants to know how that he or she escapes that deadly "cliff hanger" of a problem. In the early days of the serial stories in monthly magazines and newspapers, the authors specialized in "cliff hangers." Their readers wanted to buy the next periodical to see how the story came out. In the early days of the cowboy westerns, the writers used those "cliff hangers" to good effect. It always seemed as if the hero might die, but something happened at the last minute to free the cowboy to ride again. But the real-life cliff hangers get everyone's attention. In 2010, the Chilean mining accident kept the world on the edge of its seat for sixty-nine days. As we meet this morning, the FBI and the police in Nashville, Tennessee are searching for information about the Christmas Day bomber. Early on December 25, the explosion damaged or destroyed forty-one businesses in the city. The news tells us that the authorities are searching for a "person of interest."

In Daniel 2:13, we learn that that king wanted information. And if he didn't get that information, he threatened to kill them all. Arioch, the captain of the king's guard was sent to execute Daniel and his three friends. Apparently, at the time, those young men were in training to become the king's counselors. But the king was so furious with his others counselors that he decided to kill them, trainees and all!

And this was not the only "cliff hanger" in the Book of Daniel. In Daniel chapter 3, the king threatened to kill Daniel's three friends by throwing them into a raging fire. In Daniel chapter 6, Daniel himself was thrown into a den of lions. Who could survive that? But as you read these true accounts, you can see how God delivered His servants.

When you read Daniel chapters 2 through 8, you begin to see an interesting theme emerging.

1. The Most High God reveals hidden things, including the future of the world.
2. The Most High God rescues His servants from their desperate circumstances.
3. The Most High God reigns over the kingdoms of men

The Structure of the Book

The structure of the book of Daniel is evident from its use of language, perspective and sequence. The story about the king's threats was written in the international language of the day. Daniel 2:4 through Daniel 7:28 was written in Aramaic; Daniel chapter 1 through 2:3, and Daniel chapters 8 through 12 were written in Hebrew. This use of two different languages gives us a better understanding of the structure of the book. God's glory was on full display. Though Israel had rebelled and its people had been taken as captives by the Babylonians, the Most High God took center stage in the land of their captivity. And in that distant land, God performed great wonders for all the leaders of all the captive

peoples to see. And His prophet, Daniel, recorded these wonders in a language that the nations understood.

Chapters 1-6 of Daniel described Daniel (and his friends) in the third person (what he/they did in response to their various trials). But for the most part in Daniel 7-12, Daniel spoke in the first person. (In Daniel 7:2, Daniel spoke and said, "I saw in my vision")

And the sequence of the book emphasizes the break in these same chapters. Chapters 1-6 are chronological (in the order of the events that happened), but in chapter 7, Daniel referred back to an earlier time when the visions came to him. (Daniel 7:1 refers back to the reign of Belshazzar in Babylon.) The remaining chapters are written around a theme, rather than around a series of historic events. All of these structural aspects of the book help us to see the theme of these chapters more clearly. Our God reveals, rescues and rules.

The Most High God reveals hidden things, including the future of the world.

In Daniel 2, the king wanted to kill all the wise men because they couldn't give him answers. So in Daniel 2:13-49, the three young men, who were probably still teenagers, prayed for answers – and God gave answers! In the words of Daniel 2:18, they desired the mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret in order that they would not perish. Would our young people know how to seek the Lord this way when they are in desperate straits? We can teach them by our example, using the story of Daniel and his friends.

In this case, the Lord rescued His people by revealing the information, showing that He reigned over all. Daniel wrote, **"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His: And He changes the times and the seasons: He removes kings, and sets up kings: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He reveals the deep and secret things: He knows what *is* in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him"** (Daniel 2:20-22).

God revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream and king was so impressed that he promoted those four young men. As the king testified in Daniel 2:47, **"Of a truth *it is*, that your God *is* a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing you could reveal this secret."**

God revealed the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 4. In Daniel 5, He gave Daniel the wisdom to interpret the handwriting on the wall, which no one else could interpret.

In Daniel 7 and 8 (as well as 10-12), God revealed the destinies of present and future world kingdoms. (See Earthly Kingdoms and the Everlasting Kingdom.)ⁱⁱ Throughout the Book of Daniel, God gives revelation. Several words help us to see God's revealing work: "dream" (18x), "interpretation" (13x), "show" (11x), "tell" (4x), "know/make known" (18x), "reveal" (7x), "secrets" (8x), "wisdom" (revelation) (5x), and "wise men" (9x).

Certainly one of the most interesting aspects of God's revelation is about the coming Antichrist. What is even more intriguing is that God gave us a pattern that was fulfilled in a historic figure. The Lord Jesus made this connection in Matthew 24:15. Speaking of a future event, He said, **"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)"** This historical figure whom we now know is "Antiochus Epiphanes."ⁱⁱⁱ Both Antiochus and the future Antichrist arise from an existing kingdom (arising among

the horns) (7:7-8, 25 / 8:8-9). Daniel foretold that both would persecute Israel (7:25 / 8:13-14). In an interesting mirror image of sorts, the Antichrist is introduced in Daniel 7, but with remarkable parallels to Antiochus in Daniel 8. (In fact, the similarities are so strong that some of the phrases in chapter 8 probably refer to the Antichrist.) In Daniel 11, we will see that the pattern of Antiochus is a preface for the pattern of the Antichrist in Daniel 11 and 12. Both will insist on godlike privileges (8:11-12, 24 / 11:36); "Antiochus Epiphanes" referred to himself as "god manifest." Daniel prophesied that both rulers would use cruelty and violence, plucking up the fellow horns (7:8, 24 / 8:24) with remarkable power (7:20 / 8:10). Antiochus appeared in the waning years of the Greek kingdom while the Antichrist will appear in the waning years of the revived Roman Empire. But at last, no one will be able to help either of them (11:45, 7:26, 8:25). In Daniel 8:13-14, a word of encouragement appears for those who would be so deeply troubled by Antiochus Epiphanes. **"Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain *saint* which spoke, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days^{iv}; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed"** (Daniel 8:13-14). We now that that Judas [Judah] Maccabeus (who was called "The Hammer") revolted against Antiochus Epiphanes. The nation was in a rage because of what Antiochus had done in the Jewish temple (referred to as "the abomination of desolation" by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:15).

We don't know exactly when the daily sacrifice was interrupted. But we do know that "In December 167 Antiochus set up an altar (and possibly a statue) to Zeus in the temple (1 Macc 1:54), and Judas Maccabeus rededicated the temple on December 14, 164 B.C. (1 Macc 4:52)."^v According to historical accounts, Maccabeus tore out the defiled contents of the temple and restored it. As you may know, the misrepresentation of this text led to Miller's founding of Seventh Day Adventism.^{vi}

The Most High God rescues His servants from their desperate circumstances.

In Daniel 2, the Lord delivered Daniel and his three friends, in answer to their prayers.

In Daniel 3 and Daniel 6, the Lord also delivered His faithful servants. In both cases the central question was whether God was able to deliver them from "certain" death^{vii} (3:15-18; 6:16, 20-22). Both Daniel and his friends had determined that they would obey God, regardless of the consequences (3:16-18; 6:10). But in both cases their fellow dignitaries targeted them, probably because they had high positions of authority (3:8; 6:4-5). In both chapters, the central conflict was brought about by an edict demanding false worship (3:4-6; 6:6-8). Both Daniel and his friends faced immense pressure to conform. But in both of those situations, the kings learned to glorify God, and the court officials were astounded (3:24-27, 28-30; 6:24-28). But a messenger from God accompanied those faithful men (3:25,28; 6:22). Both of these stories are instructive to us today as we face our own trials and persecution. In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar took offense personally. In Daniel 6, Darius did everything he could to deliver Daniel. But the Lord demonstrated that He could deliver His own people in both situations. God displayed His remarkable ability to rescue His servants from the Babylonians (ch. 3) and from the Media-Persians (ch. 6).

God reveals and God rescues. But in all these things, He will demonstrate the ultimate truth:

The Most High God reigns over the kingdoms of men

In Daniel 2:20-21, Daniel had praised God: **“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His: And He changes the times and the seasons: He removes kings, and sets up kings:”** And the following chapters made that point repeatedly. Most notably in Daniel 4:17, all these things occurred, **“to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and sets up over it the basest of men.”** (See also 4:25, 32, 5:21). In Daniel 3, the king was intent on destroying God’s people, but God changed the king’s word (3:28). When Nebuchadnezzar was lifted up in pride, God changed his heart to that of a beast (4:16). While Belshazzar was partying, God changed his proud mirth to terror (5:9-10). Most notably, God is ruling over the kingdoms of men, and He will bring in the everlasting kingdom of the Most High God. The Son of Man, the Lord Jesus who was crucified for our sins and rose again, is coming again to this earth. His dominion is **“an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed”** (7:14). Are you ready to meet Him?

Applications

In the next few messages from the Book of Daniel, we will take careful note of Daniel’s prayers. That God answers prayer is a testimony to the nations. Daniel’s story (in Aramaic) showed that God answered prayer, and He is still doing to today.

- Will you place your faith in the Most High God who reveals, rescues and reigns?
- Will you pray for those around you that the Most High God would show His glories to this generation, just as He did to Daniel’s generation?

Would you join us in praying for our nation and the nations of the world right now?

Psalm 145:18 assures us that *“the LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.”*

Psalm 34:15 *“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.”*

Pastor Gordon Dickson, Calvary Baptist Church, Findlay, Ohio www.cbcbfindlay.org

ⁱ Cliff hanger, Merriam-Webster accessed at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cliff-hanger#:~:text=1%20%3A%20an%20adventure%20serial%20or,end%20broadly%20%3A%20a%20suspenseful%20situation>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cbcbfindlay.org/earthly-kingdoms-and-the-everlasting-kingdom/>

ⁱⁱⁱ For further reading, see Antiochus Epiphanes, Encyclopedia Britannica accessed at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Antiochus-IV-Epiphanes>

^{iv} The phrase in the original is “2300 evening and mornings.”

^v Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 228–229.

^{vi} “Miller and his followers had claimed that Daniel 8:14, which refers to the ‘cleansing of the sanctuary,’ meant that Christ was coming to earth in 1843 and then in 1844, to cleanse it with fire. When He did not, they looked in the Bible and found “heavenly sanctuary” mentioned in Hebrews 8:2, and “the temple of God” referred to in Revelation 11:19, and so they invented a new theory, -since Jesus did not come to earth, He came to heaven.” This false interpretation led to *The Great Disappointment* because thousands of people had believed in Miller’s teaching, and Christ did not return on that date . Louis Talbot, *Seventh Day Adventism and the Bible*, Findlay, Ohio: Dunham Publishing, p. 20 accessed at <https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1082&context=talbot-pub>

^{vii} The same challenge posed by the Assyrians in 2 Chronicles 32:14.