

You do not have to raise your hand, but how many control freaks do we have here? Some people would say that I am a control freak, but to be honest, it is not that I have to have complete control all the time. Sometimes I feel like I just need to help you out, by explaining how to do it my way. It is not that I have to be in control as much as it is that I just want to help.

Usually being a control freak stems from a lack of trust in God or maybe a lack of self-control. So, because we cannot control ourselves, we feel like we have to control everything around us. We see this a lot in people who are already in charge. Vice presidents, presidents, leaders, directors, CEO, the big gun, or head honcho, people who already have authority.

These folks want things to go a certain way and when other people can't or choose not to do it that way, we see the control freak side come out. They are going to prove that they are in control and things are going to go the way they want it to, or else. Normally these people are also being controlled, some by fear, or temptation, maybe pride, or anger. No matter what it is they feel like they have no other option but to try to control everything in the world around them sense they cannot control some aspects of their personal life.

We see it through out the bible as well. Sarah was very impatient and tried to rush Gods promise to Abraham about being a great father, by having Abraham lay with her maidservant. We can always tell others that God has a perfect plan, and it will come to fruition at Gods perfect time. But we rarely are able to wait when we are staring at the hourglass. Martha was also a control freak; she was more worried about making sure everything was perfect for Jesus and totally missed that JESUS was in her house at that very moment! We waste so much time and energy worrying over the small things that we lose sight of the bigger picture. If we focused on God as much as we do the all the little things in life that will have absolutely zero effect on anyone eternity, we would be so much better off. Does any of that mean that Jesus loved Martha any less? Certainly not! Does it mean that God can't use someone who may not seem like a likely candidate for the position?

Today we are going to be reading about some leaders who thought they had everything figured out and knew that they were in total control. But we will see that they were just a vessel to complete Gods plan.

Daniel 8 - Pray

They were a vessel He was a vessel I am a vessel.

They were a vessel

V1-2 This vision comes to Daniel just two years after the last vision, we talked about last time with the four beasts. Babylon is still very much in control of its own empire at this time and even though these two visions are similar we will see that Daniel a man who God has so very much blessed with the understanding of dreams is having a difficult time with this one.

Daniel sees himself in a place called Susa, otherwise known as Shushan. Shushan was a town that laid about 350 miles east of Babylon and was the birthplace of the Medo-Persian army. This town is the summer va-cay spot for the Persian king and will later become the location for the king's palace.

V3-4 Later on we will see the ram is identified as the Medo-Persian empire. The shorter first horn is the Media empire whose rule was shorter and mildly weaker than the next group. The second taller horn is Persia, who came up slower but stronger and more fierce than the Medes. A man named Cyrus whose father was king of Persia and grandfather was the king of Media was born into the royal bloodline on both sides. He married a woman named Roxane and succeeded to both crowns thus uniting Media and Persia.

The ram in the vision was a depiction of Persia, who was known for using the ram as their national animal, it was stamped into their coins, into the emperor's headdress, history says that the ruler would even carry a ram's head when he stood before his army.

The directions listed here are the exact direction the Medo-Persian army set out for. They travelled westward towards the Greeks, north towards the Scythians and south against the Egyptians. They were a vessel that God choose to use to help set the stage for the future. So, they had power, the power to conquer nations that normally they may not have. It says that no animal could stand against them. No one could save others from their wrath. What happens to people when they feel like they are unstoppable? They become prideful, they become control freaks, they cannot stop. They always have to have more and more.

They were a vessel, He was a vessel

V5-8 The ram had served its purpose, had its 15 mins of fame but now it was the new kid on the blocks turn. The goat, I thought that meant the greatest of all time, but evidently it stands for the Greeks. Using the goat as the symbol for this was quite fitting. Ancient history recalls that hundreds of years before Daniel was even born the Greeks were called the goat people. The Greeks also attacked from the west. Who was the ruler of the Greek army of this time? Alexander the great, the GOAT. If you remember from our last look into Daniels visions Alex was identified as a leopard with wings. Showing the quickness that he conquered the known world.

-So, we have the goat travelled across the whole earth- conquered the known world

-Without touching the ground – conquered with quickness

-Rose from the west – explains itself

-Had a notable horn – Alexander the great was a notable ruler. His last name was not “the great”, he got that from being great at what he did. I couldn't even find a last name. Just Alexander III of Macedon

-I saw him confronting the ram - The Greek empire had a famous war with the Medo-Persian empire

-With furious power and moved with rage – These two empires greatly hated each other. Some of the worst and greatest battles were between the Greeks and the Persians.

-No one could deliver the ram from his hand – The Greeks whooped the Medo-Persian empire

The Greeks came from the west, swiftly, and with a vengeance, they stopped a kingdom who had an instrumental part in returning the Jews to their land and rebuilding the temple with one final deathblow.

The Greeks are now the top goat, like the ram he magnified himself quickly and once again we see pride and oppression rising to the top. Not only was his domain vast in size, but it also had cultural power. He was determined to spread Greek civilization, culture and language across the world. Alexander would not have seemed to be someone God would have used, but Alexander's passion to spread Greek culture around the world was God using him as a vessel to prepare the world for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of this Greek became common language of the civilized world and the language of the New Testament.

After conquering basically, the world Alexander was so upset and mad that he sat down and cried because there was not another world to win over. We know though his reign was short lived, dying from some sort of illness like malaria or typhoid fever. This was the large horn being broken off. In place of the large horn four notable horns came up. These are the four generals that Alexander had in place to rule over the four dominions. Alexander did not divide it up for them, they forcefully divided it amongst themselves after he died. The four generals were,  
Cassander who was over Greece and its regions.  
Lysimachus covering Asia Minor,  
Seleucus watching Syria and Israel's land, and finally  
Ptolemy ruling Egypt.

V9-12 Daniel sees a little horn rise up from one of the previous four horns, who is a severe persecutor of God's people and the church. This is to be the main point of this part of the vision, for Daniel to see God's people will be persecuted. You may think scripture is talking about the antichrist and this guy was not far off, but this little horn is referring to Antiochus Epiphanes. A name he gave himself meaning the illustrious, nothing like giving yourself a prideful name huh. Most people used another name Antiochus Epimanes meaning furious or madman.

This guy was another real piece of work, he did not one once of princely qualities, he was the little horn because he did not deserve the kingdom. There were others in line before him to be heir to the throne. But that did not stop him from doing all he could to get what he wanted. Antiochus the IV gained the throne by killing his brother and having the next guy in line held hostage in Rome. What a way to win the election. Doesn't sound too much different from our elections today. Just as it was back then, electing the right leader isn't going to save our country. Our country following Jesus is what will save the people.

He stretched his empire to the south into Egypt, and to the east invading Persia and Armenia, but the most devastating blow was to the Beautiful land. The land held by the Jews; it is not directly called out as them, but it is easy to understand who scripture is talking about.

Why would God allow this to happen to His chosen people? It tells us, because of their rebellion, this ruler does not reign over everything because he is stronger than God, or because his army is larger and more fierce. It was because God's people had made the CHOICE not to follow God. We see this every day here around the world, in this country, in Tennessee, in our town and sometimes even in our own homes. America wonders why filth, self-centeredness, and disillusion runs rampant here. Its because so many have made the CHOICE to turn from God. Just like these ancient rulers, God used them as a vessel, He uses those in power today as vessels to complete His plans.

Antiochus had no problem murdering the Israelites, he was not worried about God or His people. He even blasphemed against God. Removing the Israelites sacrifices and defiling the sanctuary.

Everything that was true was torn down and destroyed. The world today hates the truth too, I will never understand how those against God and Christians can hate us so bad. By their rules they are allowed to tell us how narrow minded we are, how judgmental we are, and how they do not have to believe in God because there is no God, or they deserve to go to heaven no matter how they live.

V13-14 Here goes Daniel eves dropping on the holy ones, this is most likely angels in reference to how they are addressed, but some have thought this was an Old Testament sighting of Jesus. I do not think that way, but you are welcome to study this out on your own to make the decision that makes sense for you. But Daniel hears them talking about the duration of no daily sacrifices, and when it will come to and end. He was told it would be 2300 evenings and mornings.

Again, there is some speculation about how long this actually means. You could take it as an actual 2300 days. We know the day that the temple was cleansed, it was December 25, 165 BC. If you count back 2300 days, which is about 7 years, it brings you to the time when Antiochus began his persecution of the Israelites in 171 BC.

However, you can count the sacrifices, one in the morning and one in the evening. At that rate it would be 1150 days or just under 3 years. Using this timeline, it would count back to the time of the Maccabeus tribulation where the sacrifices were re-instated. This would have been 168 BC. So, either way you take it, it will get you to a date of significance.

V15-19 Gabriel was told to explain this vision to Daniel, the one who God had used to interpret many dreams and visions in the past. He is telling Daniel that this vision is all about the time of the end. But this is talking about things that for us have already happened. I mean at this time for Daniel the Medo-Persian empire has not even happened yet, let alone the Greeks, or Bidan. So, we see a version of an Old Testament Antichrist.

He rose to power by deceiving people, and being forceful when needed, just as the Antichrist. He persecuted the Jews as will the Antichrist. He stopped the sacrifice, desecrated the temple and seems to be very successful in all he does...just like the Antichrist. So, Antiochus fulfills the prophecy, but in the end times the Antichrist will bring a tribulation like the world has never seen, much greater than Antiochus could have ever done.

The end time here is most likely not talking about the end time that is still in our future, but the end of a time. Ezekiel 7:2-3 says "An end. The end has come to the four corners of the earth. The end is now upon you". This was the end of the Northern Kingdom in the time of Amos, the end was brought at the hands of the Assyrians. For Judah the end was being attacked by Babylon. In both of these times this was the end of a time of rebellion against God. This is the type of END that is being described here in Daniel.

Greece, the ruler of the world with all its culture, and refinement produced an Old Testament antichrist, meanwhile today Christian Nations are working on producing the coming Antichrist.

V20-26 Daniel sees nation after nation swapping power until this little horn arises. From our perspective he rises due to the power that he has gained weather through being deceptive or cunning or from taking it forcefully. From Gods perspective he was risen and given power because the sin of Gods people had run its course. Antiochus conquered other nations but not with the prejudice of

that shown to the Jews and against Jerusalem. Antiochus was a vessel that God used to give His people exactly what they deserved.

They were a vessel, He was a vessel, I am a vessel.

V27 Daniel was having a hard time understanding all this, why would God give someone like Antiochus such power to bring so much destruction to His chosen people? What was the point of permitting even a brief time great oppression?

Have you ever thought about why the Old Testament prophets were always being rejected, persecuted and killed? Why was it so difficult for them to find people willing to listen? Because true prophets tell men what they need to hear, false prophets tell men what they want to hear.

Finally, Daniel says after being sick for several days he got up and went about the Kings business. Daniel was not going to let being physically or spiritually weak stop him from doing what God has called him to do. This is how we are called to be, weather you understand what God is doing in your life or not, weather you see a clear path that God has laid out or if light you have been given only lights your next step. We do not need to know the when, but the WHO, be about doing the Kings business.

Pray

Even when evil seems victorious remember that no matter how it looks, God is always in control. The best thing we can be is a vessel for Him to use, in the end Gods righteousness will prevail.

I am just a vessel, God is the source!