

Daniel 8:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.

Analysis

Gabriel continues explaining: "And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up." This describes Antiochus IV Epiphanes emerging from the Seleucid kingdom. "Latter time" places him chronologically after the four kingdoms' establishment. The phrase "when the transgressors are come to the full" (Hebrew: keta hitam happosh'im, כְּתָם הַחֹמָם הַפְּשׁוּטִים) indicates divine judgment timing—God allows sin to accumulate until appointed measure is reached, then acts in judgment.

"Fierce countenance" (Hebrew: az-panim, אֶז-פָּנִים) means "strong of face" or "insolent"—describing Antiochus's arrogance and cruelty. "Understanding dark sentences" (Hebrew: mevin chidot, מֵבִין חִידוֹת) refers to cunning, craftiness, ability to manipulate through deception and intrigue. Antiochus gained power through treachery, deposed rightful heirs, and used political manipulation. His intelligence served wickedness, showing that intellectual capacity without moral restraint produces tyranny.

Theologically, this teaches divine patience in judgment. God doesn't immediately punish sin but allows it to accumulate, giving opportunity for repentance. Yet when transgression reaches its "full" measure, judgment falls certainly. This applies individually (Genesis 15:16 - Amorites), nationally (Israel's exile), and

eschatologically (final judgment). The principle warns that sin's apparent prosperity is temporary—God's patience shouldn't be mistaken for indifference. His justice, though delayed, is certain.

Historical Context

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC) exemplified fierce cruelty and cunning manipulation. He gained throne through deception, deposing the rightful heir. His persecution of Jews included torture, forced apostasy, temple desecration, and martyrdom of faithful believers. 1-2 Maccabees detail his atrocities. Yet his cruelty emerged because Jewish apostasy had reached its "full"—many Jews had already embraced Hellenization, requiring divine judgment through persecution. God used Antiochus to purify His people, distinguishing faithful remnant from compromisers.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does God's patience in allowing transgressors to come to the full teach us about His character—both merciful and just?
2. How should understanding divine judgment timing affect our response to apparent prosperity of wickedness today?
3. In what ways does Antiochus's fierce intelligence serving evil warn about intellectual capacity divorced from moral character?

Interlinear Text

וּבְאַחֲרֵית	מַלְכוּתָם	בָּהֶם	הַפֹּשְׁעִים		
And in the latter time	of their kingdom	are come to the full	when the transgressors		
H319	H4438	H8552	H6586		
יַעֲמֹד	מֶלֶךְ	עַז	פָּנֵי יָם	וַיִּבֶן יֵן	חִידוֹת:
shall stand up	a king	of fierce	countenance	and understanding	dark sentences
H5975	H4428	H5794	H6440	H995	H2420

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 19:20 (Parallel theme): And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

1 Timothy 4:1 (Parallel theme): Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Daniel 7:11 (Parallel theme): I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

Daniel 7:20 (Parallel theme): And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.

Daniel 7:8 (Kingdom): I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Daniel 7:25 (Parallel theme): And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times

and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

Ezekiel 38:8 (Parallel theme): After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.

Ezekiel 38:16 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.

Daniel 8:25 (Parallel theme): And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.