

“Little Horn, Big Prince” – Daniel 8:1-27

Messiah Bible Church – September 9, 2026 - Adam Casalino

1. Introduction: Daniel Receives another Vision

Two years ago, Daniel received an intense vision that left him perplexed. But God wasn't finished with Daniel. In our next chapter, he sends the prophet another important message. Yet again, God masks the message in vivid symbolism. Why? What does it all mean? We're going to find out tonight. My message is “*Little Horn, Big Prince.*” Turn in your Bibles to Daniel 8. Let's read verse 1:

Daniel 8:1 (ESV) — 1 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first.

The first message was in chapter 7, during Belshazzar's 1st year as king.^{1 2} You'll notice he calls this experience a *vision*. Chapter 7 was a dream. What's the difference? Dreams are visions you have while asleep. The Bible also describes “open visions” where the person is fully awake. Daniel begins to describe what he sees in verse 2:

Daniel 8:2 (ESV) — 2 And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the citadel, which is in the province of Elam. And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai canal.

Daniel isn't in Babylon. He's in Susa, which is 225 miles to the east.³ Here is a map for reference:



To the very west in blue is Jerusalem. In red is the city of Babylon. East of it, in yellow, is Susa. It was the capital (citadel) of the province Susa. This city wasn't important to Babylon

¹ Walvoord, John F., *Daniel, TJWPC*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), 222: “Daniel's second vision occurred in the third year of Belshazzar's reign, about two years after the vision of chapter 7. Since both visions occurred in Belshazzar's reign, chapters 7 and 8 chronologically occur before chapter 5, the night of Belshazzar's feast.”

² Baldwin, Joyce G., *Daniel, TOTC*, (London, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), Apple Books: “1. The third year of the reign of King Belshazzar would be 550/549 BC, a significant year in which Cyrus broke free from his allegiance to Astyages the Mede and established the joint state of the Medes and Persians.”

³ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 223: “Ancient Susa was about 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf, and 225 miles east of Babylon.”

and (despite the map) some claim it wasn't under its control.⁴ For Susa to be the setting of this vision tells us that it *will* be important in the future (re: Esther⁵). What Daniel describes suggests he was actually at this location.⁶ He can also identify north, south, east, west based on what he sees.⁷ That becomes helpful as this vision unfolds. Here is a picture of Susa today:



So, after telling us where he is, Daniel begins to relate what he saw:

Daniel 8:3–4 (ESV) — 3 I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal. It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. **4** I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

Daniel's in the middle of a city. It's probably bustling with people, especially by the canal. But he sees a ram. Here is picture of a ram common to that region:

⁴ Ibid, 223: "The question as to whether Babylon controlled ancient Susa at this time is debated. The probability is that Babylon did not control this city or area, which may account for Daniel's astonishment to find himself in this place rather than at Babylon."

⁵ Miller, Stephen R., *Daniel, TNAC*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1994), Apple Books: "Susa was used as a winter residence by the Persian kings and was made the administrative capital of the empire by Darius I in 521 B.C. Darius also built a beautiful palace there."

⁶ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 223: "Most expositors, whether liberal or conservative, understand Daniel 8 to teach that Daniel was actually in Babylon and in vision only was transported to Susa. Montgomery cites the overwhelming weight of scholarship on this point, which is supported by the Syriac version and the Vulgate, and held by John Calvin and many contemporary writers.⁷ In a similar fashion Ezekiel was transported in a vision from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezek. 8:1–3)."

⁷ Miller, *TNAC*: "The phrase 'in the citadel of Susa' may mean either that Daniel saw himself in Susa merely in vision or that he was present physically in that city when he received the vision."



Kind of majestic-looking, huh? Especially with those horns. I wouldn't want to be on the business end of those horns. Daniel watches in horror as this beast attacks anything and anyone in its wake. No one could stop it. I'm sure even Daniel was thinking, "I gotta get out of here!" Can you imagine a creature like that coming at you?

We already know from chapter 7 that animals in the Bible sometimes represent people or nations. At the time of this vision, Daniel serves the Babylonian Empire. But just 9 years from now, another nation will come on the scene. Two nations, actually, that are joined together and overthrow Babylon.

Write this down as Point 1: The ram represents the united kingdom of the **Medes and Persians**.⁸ Fitting, since the Persians used the ram as their symbol (their kings marched into battle wearing a ram's head, not a crown).⁹ The first horn represents the Median kings and the second, which grew later, were the Persian kings. Persia, under Cyrus the Great, gain the supremacy and he ruled both nations.¹⁰ In 539 BC, the Medo-Persians, after conquering the rest of the kingdom, take the city of Babylon.¹¹ This vision tells us that this empire is a force to be reckoned with. For a time, the Medo-Persians conquer land after land and can do as they please.¹² But it does not last forever, as we find out:

⁸ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 225: "The two-horned ram Daniel saw is revealed in verse 20 to be Medo-Persia, with the horns representing its major kings... The portrayal of the two horns representing the Medo-Persian Empire is very accurate, as the Persians coming up last and represented by the higher horn were also the more prominent and powerful. The directions that represent the ram's conquests include all except east. Although Persia did expand to the east, its principal movement was to the west, north, and south."

⁹ Ibid, 226: "Keil observes, 'in the Bundehesch the guardian spirit of the Persian kingdom appears under the form of a ram with clean feet and sharp-pointed horns, and ... the Persian king, when he stood at the head of his army, bore, instead of the diadem, the head of a ram.'"

¹⁰ Miller, *TNAC*: "Before Cyrus came to power, Media already was a major force, while Persia was a small country holding less than fifty thousand square miles of territory.¹⁵ But Cyrus succeeded in gaining control of powerful Media to the north (ca. 550 B.C.) and then made Persia the more important of the two states. With these nations united, he established the vast Medo-Persian Empire."

¹¹ Baldwin, *TOTC*: "According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, the date was the sixteenth of the month Tishri, which most scholars agree would have been October 12, 539 B.C."

¹² Miller, *TNAC*: "To the west it subdued Babylonia, Syria, Asia Minor, and made raids upon Greece; to the north—Armenia, Scythia, and the Caspian Sea region; to the south—Egypt and Ethiopia... More territory was controlled by this empire than by any other until that time."

Daniel 8:5 (ESV) — 5 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.

Even as Daniel is looking at this impressive ram, something else gets his attention. Coming from the west is a goat! Here is a picture of a goat, if you've never seen one:



Similar to a ram, for sure. But a bit less majestic, if you ask me. Rams have long been a symbol of power in the Middle East. But a goat? We're not talking G.O.A.T, we're talking about the animal that sometimes faints at loud noises. Why would anyone be intimidated by a creature like this? But Daniel tells us this is no ordinary goat. He is charging so furiously, his feet aren't even touching the ground. He's sweeping across the earth like a rocket jet.

You'll notice from the picture that goats normally have two horns. But the goat in Daniel's vision only has one--sticking right out from between his eyes. Here's what he does with this horn:

Daniel 8:6–7 (ESV) — 6 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. **7** 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.

Wow! This goat was charging a b-line straight for the ram. And in great wrath he takes it down! But he doesn't just kill the ram, he breaks his two horns and then tramples him to the ground. That's brutal. And ironically, the very ram whom nobody could resist, nobody could save.

Let's look at some of the details Daniel gives about this goat. It comes from the west. It has one singular, powerful horn that defeats the ram. The anger it has for the ram is important, too.

Write this down as Point 2: The goat represents the **Greek Empire and Alexander the Great.**¹³ A few centuries after Daniel, Alexander the great embarks on his history-making conquest of the ancient world.¹⁴ Without losing a single battle, he accrues for himself one of the largest empires known to man, in just 3 years.¹⁵ The mention of “wrath” in verse 6 is deliberate, because he had a bone to settle with Persia. His brutal conquest of the Persian Empire was revenge. About 100 years prior, Persia famously warred with Greece, causing much death and damage.¹⁶ Alexander didn’t forget what they did to his nation and he was out for blood.

Here is a map of Alexander’s empire:



It’s hard to overestimate the impact of Alexander’s conquests of the ancient world (you’ll notice it covers most of the world of the Bible). He dramatically changes the course of history of these regions. I won’t spend much time discussing the man, except to mention one of his most important policies: Hellenization.¹⁷

¹³ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 226: “Interpreters of Daniel 8 are generally agreed that the male goat represents the king of Greece. More particularly, the single important horn between its eyes, ‘the first king’ (cf. Dan. 8:21), is Alexander the Great. All the facts about this goat and his activities obviously anticipate Alexander’s dynamic role. Like Alexander, the goat’s conquests begin ‘from the west’ in Greece and move east to cover the entire territory. The tremendous speed of the goat’s conquests is symbolized by its moving ‘without touching the ground.’ Such speed characterized Alexander. The unusual horn—one large horn instead of the normal two—symbolically represents the single leadership he provided.”

¹⁴ Ibid, 227: “All of this was fulfilled dramatically in history. The forces of Alexander first defeated the Persians at the Granicus River in Asia Minor in May 334 B.C., which was the beginning of the conquest of the entire Persian Empire. A year and a half later, the battle of Issus occurred (November 333 B.C.) near the northeastern tip of the Mediterranean Sea. Persia’s power was finally broken at Gaugamela near Nineveh in October 331 B.C.”

¹⁵ Miller, *TNAC*: “Alexander was one of the great military strategists of history. He was born in 356 B.C., the son of a great conqueror in his own right, Philip of Macedon. Philip had united Greece with Macedonia and was planning to attack Persia when he was murdered... A year and a half later (334 B.C.), he launched his attack against the Persians... With his subsequent victories at Issus (333 B.C.) and Arbela (331 B.C.) the conquest of Medo-Persia was complete. Incredibly within only three years Alexander had conquered the entire Near East.”

¹⁶ Ibid: “The goat charging the ram in a fit of ‘great rage’ (v. 6) aptly describes Alexander’s assault on the Persian Empire. Hatred for the Persians had grown steadily since the time of Cyrus due to constant quarreling and fighting between Persia and Greece, and the Greeks were especially bitter over the invasions of Darius I (490 B.C.) and his son, Xerxes I (480 B.C.). Alexander determined to avenge these assaults on his homeland, and v. 7 graphically portrays the utter defeat of the Persian armies at the hands of the Greek forces.”

Alexander the Great believed Greek culture, language, and religion were superior to every other nations'. So, he imposed Greek thought onto all the countries he conquered; this process of making a culture assimilate to Greek ways is called Hellenization. He was so effective, that hundreds of years later, Greek was the common language of many countries in the Roman Empire and is the reason your NT is written in Greek.¹⁸

Secular historians are enamored with Alexander the Great. But little is said about him in the Bible. God reveals to Daniel this conqueror's fate, and the fate of his kingdom, in the next verse:

Daniel 8:8 (ESV) — 8 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.

Alexander the Great died suddenly in 323 BC¹⁹ at the age of 33.²⁰ His mighty empire was chopped up into four parts, just as this verse tells us. Four men take pieces of it: Cassander takes Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus takes Thrace, Bithynia, and Asia Minor; Seleucus takes Syria and Babylonia; and Ptolemy takes Egypt.²¹ Stuck in the middle, was a strip of land called Israel.

So, where are the Jewish people in all this? When Cyrus comes to power, he begins sending Jews back to the promise land. Many Jews are living in their homeland at this point. After Persia falls, the land falls into the hands of Greece. The promise land ends up being a chess piece that is fought over by the kings of Egypt and Syria. God's people are in the middle of these conflicts, often facing collateral damage because of it. On top of that, they had to deal with the Greeks' policy of Hellenization, which continued after Alexander died. Which brings us back to Daniel's vision. He just learned that Alexander's kingdom was split into "four horns." Then he learns:

¹⁷ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 227-228: "Tarn says of Alexander: 'He was one of the supreme fertilizing forces in history. He lifted the civilized world out of one groove and set it in another; he started a new epoch; nothing could again be as it had been.... Particularism was replaced by the idea of the "inhabited world," the common possession of civilized men.... Greek culture, heretofore practically confined to Greeks, spread throughout the world; and for the use of its inhabitants, in place of the many dialects of Greece, there grew up the form of Greek known as the koine, the "common speech."'"

¹⁸ Miller, *TNAC*: "Alexander spread the Greek language and culture all over the world, an act that prepared the world for the gospel by giving it a common speech, Koine Greek, the language of the New Testament."

¹⁹ Ibid: "Alexander 'carved out an empire of 1.5 million square miles,'¹⁸ but at the pinnacle of his career, having conquered much of the known world, the great conqueror died. On returning to Babylon from the east, he was taken with a severe fever (possibly malaria) and on June 13, 323 B.C. died at the age of thirty-two."

²⁰ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 228: "Although Alexander conquered more of the world than any previous ruler, he was not able to conquer himself. Partly due to a strenuous exertion, his dissipated life, and a raging fever, Alexander died in a drunken debauch at Babylon, not yet thirty-three years of age. His death left a great conquest without an effective single leader, and it took twenty years for the empire to be successfully divided"

²¹ Ibid, 228: "Practically all commentators recognize the four horns as symbolic of the four kingdoms of the Diadochi which emerged as follows: (1) Cassander assumed rule over Macedonia and Greece; (2) Lysimachus took control of Thrace, Bithynia, and most of Asia Minor; (3) Seleucus took Syria and the lands to the east including Babylonia; (4) Ptolemy established rule over Egypt and possibly Palestine and Arabia Petraea."

Daniel 8:9–10 (ESV) — 9 Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. **10** 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.

Now this is where the vision gets weird. I’m sure some of you are thinking, “*This is where it gets weird? Adam, it’s been weird the whole time!*” I know, but it gets weirder. From one of these 4 Greek kingdoms comes a “little horn.” This little horn becomes “exceedingly great;” this ruler gains power in lands to the south, east, and even the “glorious land.” What land might Daniel be referring to? In Daniel’s mind, only one land is glorious, his homeland Israel. So, this is one of the Greek kings who gains dominance in regions to the east (Babylonia), south (Egypt) and Israel.²²

Then the vision becomes even more metaphysical. This little horn grows “even to the host of heaven.” From this “host” he cast down stars and trampled them to the ground. Stars can refer to angels, but let’s not forget Genesis 15:5, where God compared Abraham’s descendants to the stars of heaven.²³ Daniel is saying this “little horn” will gain power over the Jewish people (especially faithful, God-honor Jews) and he will persecute them.

All of this matches up with the actions of the 8th king of the Syrian kingdom: Write this down as Point 3: The “little horn” is **Antiochus IV Epiphanes**.²⁴ At one point during his reign, he made it his ambition to wipe out Jewish culture, language, and religion.²⁵ He forbade the practice of circumcision;²⁶ and any Jew who refused to obey him, he brutally tortured and killed.²⁷ But there’s more as we read in the next passage:

²² Ibid, 229: “The implication is that the point of reference is Syria, that ‘the south’ is equal to Egypt, ‘the east’ is in the direction of ancient Medo-Persia or Armenia, and ‘the glorious land’ refers to Israel or Canaan, which lay between Syria and Egypt. The original for ‘glorious land’ actually means ‘beauty,’ with the word for ‘land’ supplied from Daniel 11 (cf. Dan. 11:16, 41, 45; Jer. 3:19; Ezek. 20:6, 15; Mal. 3:12). The word here could refer to Jerusalem in particular rather than to the land in general.”

²³ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 230: “Leupold says, ‘That stars should signify God’s holy people is not strange when one considers as a background the words that were spoken to Abraham concerning the numerical increase of the people of God, Gen. 15:5; 22:17.’”

²⁴ Miller, *TNAC*: “Scholars agree that this little horn represents the eighth ruler of the Seleucid Greek Empire, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.).”

²⁵ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 229: “Israel indeed became the battleground between Syria and Egypt, and the setting of some of Antiochus Epiphanes’ most significant blasphemous acts against God. According to the Revised Standard Version of 1 Maccabees 1:20: “after subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred and forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force.”

²⁶ Bauer, Susan Wise, *The History of the Ancient World: From the Earliest Accounts to the Fall of Rome*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2007), 643-644, Kindle: “Antiochus, infuriated by their stubbornness, declared Judaism an illegal religion. Anyone who refused to eat pork when required (this was against the Jewish regulations) or was found with a copy of the Jewish scriptures was put to death. ‘Two women were brought in for having circumcised their children,’ the book of 2 Maccabees records. ‘These women they publicly paraded about the city, with their babies hung at their breasts, then hurled them down headlong from the wall.’”

²⁷ Miller, *TNAC*: “Threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them” signifies that Antiochus would persecute the Jewish saints in Palestine. “Trampled upon them” suggests severe persecution. Antiochus’s persecution of the Jews may be considered to have begun in 170 B.C. with the assassination of the high

Daniel 8:11–12 (ESV) — 11 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. **12** 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.

Not only is this little horn persecuting Jews, but he even opposes the “Prince of the host.” If we maintain that this host refers to faithful Jews, than this Prince must mean their God.²⁸ The verse goes on to say that the little horn takes away “his” burnt offerings²⁹ and overthrows “his” sanctuary.³⁰ So, this must mean God, since the Jews would not offer sacrifices to anyone else. But the use of the term “Prince” is interesting...

The God of Israel is called their king throughout the OT, not prince. A prince, however, is the son of a king. Could this passage be referring to a “son” of the king of Israel? Someone who is both the son of God and also claims ownership to his sanctuary? My view is that Daniel is speaking of Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, in a veiled way. In Daniel 7:13–14 he does a similar thing: he refers to a “Son of man” who nonetheless rules an eternal kingdom.

Daniel is attributing deity to what appears to be a mortal man (son of man/prince). This would have been hard for his original audience to accept. But the full truth was revealed in the NT, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Looking back, these passages confirm what the NT teaches: that Jesus is both God and man.

But, wait a minute! We almost missed something. At the time Daniel sees this vision, Jerusalem lies in ruins, along with its temple. But now, we learn that soon there will be burnt offerings again--and a sanctuary (because Antiochus is interfering with them!). Quite a way to drop that bombshell, I know. But nonetheless, we discover that the temple will be rebuilt and the Jewish people will resume burnt offerings. A huge revelation tucked into this vision.

We know that a second temple was built by decree of Cyrus the Great. Many years later Antiochus, as part of his campaign to wipe out Judaism, sacks the temple and infamously defiles

priest Onias III and terminated in 163 B.C. at his death (or even a few months earlier when the temple was rededicated in December 164 B.C.). During this period he executed thousands of Jews who resisted his unfair regulations.”

²⁸ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 231: “According to verse 11, the little horn, fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes historically, magnified himself even to the Prince of the host. By this is meant that he exalted himself up to the point of claiming divine honor, as brought out in his name “Epiphanes,” which refers to glorious manifestation such as belonged to God.”

²⁹ Ibid, 231: “As a specific illustration and supreme act manifesting this attitude, Antiochus stopped the morning and evening sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem, taking away from God what were daily tokens of Israel’s worship.”

³⁰ Miller, *TNAC*: “Although the “Prince” has been identified by some as the high priest Onias III, who was assassinated in 170 B.C., v. 25 calls this person the “Prince of princes,” a title that refers to God. Montgomery rightly contends, with the majority of scholars, that the “Prince” in v. 11 “can be none other than God.”²⁷ Moreover, the language of this verse indicates that the Prince is no mere man.”

it.³¹ He slaughters a pig (an unclean animal)³² to the pagan god Zeus.³³ The temple is left defiled for a time, as Antiochus oppresses God's people.

We'll learn much more about Antiochus in the coming weeks. But I'm sure you're thinking what Daniel might have been thinking, "How long does this go on? How long does this evil, little horn, wage his campaign against Israel?"

Daniel 8:13–14 (ESV) — 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" **14** And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."

At the end of this part of the vision, Daniel hears two "holy ones" speaking. These are two bystanders who have been watching this vision, just like Daniel. These are angels. One of them asks about the latter part of what Daniel saw.

1. Regular burnt offering - The suspension of temple worship due to Antiochus
2. The transgression that makes desolate - The sin of Antiochus of defiling the temple
3. Giving over of the sanctuary - The temple in the hands of an evil king, not the Jews
4. Host being trampled underfoot - The persecution of the Jews by Antiochus

One of them explains that this little horn, Antiochus IV, will continue his evil campaign for 2,300 "evenings and mornings." This is likely referring to the evening and morning sacrifices that were offered each day: 1,150 days = 3.2 years.³⁴ Antiochus' defilement lasted between 167 BC to 164 BC (The Maccabees took temple back).³⁵ Then the sanctuary was restored to its rightful state.

Part 3: Gabriel visits Daniel

³¹ Ibid: "During the three horrible years specifically in view (167–164 B.C.), the Jewish people ("the host of the saints") were "given over" to Antiochus (the little horn) in the sense that the Syrian-Greek tyrant controlled Palestine and was able to persecute its citizens. The "daily sacrifice" would be terminated by Antiochus (cf. v. 11)."

³² Carson, D. A., "Daniel," *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 758: "He abolished the daily morning and evening sacrificial offerings (11; cf. Ex. 29:38–43) and committed the blasphemy of sacrificing a pig on the altar of burnt offering, later placing a statue of Zeus in the temple and making human sacrifices on the altar. He forbade circumcision and profaned the Sabbath (cf. vs 11–12)."

³³ Miller, *TNAC*: "No services would be held in the temple because it would be defiled by Antiochus, and idols would be set up in the temple precincts. "The rebellion that causes desolation" likely alludes to the Zeus statue (or altar) set up by Antiochus in the temple and designated in 11:31 "the abomination that causes desolation."

³⁴ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 233: "Because the days are related to the cessation of the evening and morning sacrifices, another theory is that the phrase actually referred to 1,150 days, that is, 2,300 evenings and mornings."

³⁵ Ibid: "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)."

Like you, Daniel's head is swimming. He saw all this with his own eyes, yet he doesn't understand it. So, as in chapter 7, someone comes to Daniel and helps him out.

Daniel 8:15–18 (ESV) — **15** 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. **16** And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." **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." **18** 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.

Daniel sees a man standing nearby. And a voice (likely the voice of God) speaks to this man, telling him to explain to Daniel what it all means. The man, we learn, is the famous angel Gabriel. Gabriel is well-known to Christians as the angel who appears to Mary and announces she will give birth to the Messiah. Gabriel is only mentioned 4 times in the Bible--this is the first. As far as I know, this is the first time a good angel is named in the Bible (not including "the Satan" in Job or "Lucifer").³⁶ Something about this man must have been overwhelming, because when Gabriel comes close to Daniel, he falls on his face. That's pretty typical of angelic visitations in the Bible.³⁷

Gabriel begins explaining the vision by saying it is "for the time of the end." Now, that's an interesting term, isn't it? I've been explaining that these events have already happened; God is revealing to Daniel what is going to happen a few hundred or so years in the future. So, why does Gabriel explain that this is the for the "time of the end"?

This is where studying Bible prophecy gets tricky, especially apocalyptic literature. That's prophecy that deals with future events, often written during times of struggle.³⁸ Apocalyptic literature focuses on God's ultimate triumph of evil. A hallmark of this kind of prophecy (mostly Daniel and Revelation, but also in other books of the Bible), is the use of current issues a lenses through which we see and interpret the final conflict between good and evil. This is important, because if we don't know this, we can stumble on a lot of details.

Example: some scholars claim that Revelation only discuss ancient Rome and the persecution of Christians at the time John wrote the book. That is relevant, of course, but the book addresses current events to explore the future and final conflict between good and evil, at the return of Christ. But it is a challenge interpreting all the details, which is why many good scholars disagree.

³⁶ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 236: "This is the first mention in the Bible of a holy angel by name."

³⁷ Ibid, 236: "The situation was not much different from the reaction of John the apostle in Revelation 1 at the tremendous vision of the glorified Christ."

³⁸ Neal, D. A., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016): "A genre of biblical writing that reveals God's actions and coming judgment in symbolic language. The transition from prophecy and apocalyptic is characterized by an increased use of symbolism and an increased use of heavenly mediators explaining the vision. The latter half of the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are representative of the apocalyptic genre... Apocalyptic literature reflected its origins in a time of great unrest and oppression. While Jews were in the midst of resisting forceful Hellenization, Christians were being persecuted by the Roman Empire (Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation," 121–42).

The same is happening here: Daniel 8 reveals a future conflict against the Jewish people; but also in mind are things in the much further future.³⁹ Which is why Gabriel uses the ambiguous term “time of the end.” “End times” or “latter days” in the OT are euphemisms for some future time (Genesis 49).⁴⁰ It doesn’t always mean the *literal* end times when Christ returns. Sometimes, they can refer to both!⁴¹ Confused, yet?

Why does God do things this way? Why not make it simple? The message of salvation is simple: John 3:16. Even a child can accept it. But prophecy can be hard, because it is a demonstration of God’s wisdom foiling the wisdom of this world. He hides things so that the foolish can’t see them; but those willing and patient can learn and grow in faith.

After waking him up, Gabriel begins informing Daniel:

Daniel 8:19–22 (ESV) — 19 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. **20** As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. **21** And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. **22** 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.

“Latter end of the indignation”: God’s judgment against Israel in the form of exile. That’s a hopeful note. Daniel’s been waiting for that day for a long time. And now he hears that the real focus of this vision is not Gentile kingdoms, but what will befall the Jews when they return from exile.

Verses 20-22 summarizes the first section of the vision. As we said, Persia would rise up after Babylon, then they will be defeated by Greece. He even explains that the great horn of the goat was Greece’s first king, Alexander the Great. He then explains that Alexander’s kingdom will be split into 4 smaller kingdoms, not as powerful as his own. The precision of this message is so historically accurate, that some scholars assume it was written after these events. But we believe God knew long beforehand what would happen and is revealing it to Daniel.

Daniel 8:23–25 (ESV) — 23 And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise. **24** His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. **25** By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken—but by no human hand.

³⁹ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 237: “Because of the terms used in verse 19, many scholars find in this chapter reference to the ultimate consummation of Gentile times at the second advent of Christ.”

⁴⁰ Miller, *TNAC*: “Keil explains: ‘Time of the end’ is the general prophetic expression for the time which, as the period of fulfillment, lies at the end of the existing prophetic horizon—in the present case the time of Antiochus.”

⁴¹ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 239: “Some expositors have posited a dual fulfillment, in which prophecy fulfilled in part in the past also foreshadows a future event that will completely fulfill the passage.”

Gabriel explains the identity of the “little horn.” This is Antiochus IV, who ruled from Syria. He says this man has a “bold face,” he is brash and arrogant. He “understands riddles,” a term used to describe the king’s cunning. This king is smart and dangerous. Then Gabriel describes much of what we already discussed: Antiochus will use his cunning to bring great destruction, particularly against the “saints,” meaning the Jewish people who are loyal to the Lord. Gabriel repeats that this little horn will rise up against the Prince, but he calls him not the prince of hosts, but the “Prince of princes.” Similar to God’s title as the “King of kings,” yes? But why prince? I maintain that this is in reference to the son of the king, our Messiah Jesus.

Gabriel reveals that this little horn will be broken (killed) but by no human hand. Antiochus dies of an illness in 164 BC.

But there is another way of looking at verses 23-25. It says “latter end” of the kingdom. The Seleucid Kingdom ruled for almost 250 years and falls around 64 BC, about 100 years after Antiochus’ death. That certainly can be called the “latter end” of the kingdom. But like I said, apocalyptic literature often has dual purposes in mind. This reference to the “time of the end” and “latter end of their kingdom” can also be referring to the End Times, the period just before the return of Christ. “Their kingdom” in this sense, are the kingdoms of this world (Revelation 11:15).

At a time when “transgressors have reached their limit” (NASB: when sinners have “run their course” or reached their “full measure”), then a man will arise who is bold, cunning, and ruthless. Notice verse 24: he will be great, but not by his own power. What does that mean? Both Antiochus and this future ruler will be great because of power given to them.

Verses 10-11 and 24-25 seem to go beyond the earthly man Antiochus. The references to stars the “Prince” strongly suggest supernatural aspects of this ruler. We know that Antiochus was proud: he tried to wipe out Judaism and impose Greek culture. We can assume that means he sneered at the Jewish God in favor of his own. But this language that he was *actually* trying to oppose the Prince of princes suggests he wanted to directly oppose the true God.

Which leads us to our 4th According to Jesus in Matthew 24:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4, a future ruler will, once again, defile the Jewish temple. Scripture suggests a third temple will be built sometime around the Tribulation period. This ruler—who opposes Christ and is often called the Antichrist—will enter that Temple and defile it.⁴² The Antichrist will wage a campaign against the Jewish people and those who believe in Jesus during the Tribulation (“mighty men and the saints”).⁴³

⁴² Walvoord, John F. ed., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1:1359: “So it may be concluded that there is a dual reference in this striking prophecy. It reveals Israel’s history under the Seleucids and particularly under Antiochus during the time of Greek domination, but it also looks forward to Israel’s experiences under Antichrist, whom Antiochus foreshadows.”

⁴³ Walvoord, *TJWPC*, 244-245: “This difficult passage apparently goes beyond that which is historically fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes to foreshadow a future personage often identified as the world ruler of the end time—the Antichrist. In many respects this ruler carries on a persecution of Israel and desecration of the temple similar to what was accomplished historically by Antiochus. This interpretation of the vision may be regarded as an illustration of double fulfillment of prophecy or, using Antiochus as a type, the interpretation may go on to reveal additional facts that go beyond the type in describing the ultimate king who will oppose Israel in the last days. He indeed will be “broken—but by no human hand” when Jesus Christ returns.”

Much of what we know about the Antichrist comes from this section of Daniel and helps us understand what the book of Revelation says about him. One detail about the Antichrist will be that he considers himself a god. He will be empowered by Satan⁴⁴ and convince much of the world to worship him (Revelation 13:14). At the very last he will gather his forces and surround Jerusalem, intending to wipe out the Jewish people once and for all (Revelation 16:12-16). At that moment, they will call out to their true Messiah (Zechariah 12:10–13:1), who will appear in the clouds and kill the Antichrist with just a breath (2 Thessalonians 2:8).⁴⁵

Daniel 8:26–27 (ESV) — 26 The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.” **27** 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.

He tells Daniel to “seal up the vision.” That seems to mean that Daniel and his original audience won’t fully understand what it all means. Understandably, Daniel was overwhelmed by all this information. He actually become sick--perhaps from exhaustion?

Part 4: Application

A passage like this can be pretty overwhelming. And it’s easy to get “lost in the sauce” of all the details of kings, rams, antichrists, and so on. Many Christians love studying these chapters of Daniel and other apocalyptic prophecies in the Bible, because it tickles their desire for information. “Ooo! What’s going to happen in the future? Tell me more!” But that’s not why God put this in the Bible. He’s not interested in just filling your head with facts so you can indulge in intrigue or mystery. There is a reason God revealed all this to Daniel. Several, I believe, that we are going to consider. And they have great significance to our lives today.

The **first reason** God sent this vision to Daniel and Israel was because he loved them. The Jewish people were in exile, forced to live under the thumbs of Gentile kings. They longed for the day that they could return to the promise land and worship God once again at the temple. At this time, God seemed far away. They were surrounded by Gentiles and their pagan idols. They were no doubt wondering, “Where is God? When is he going to act? What is going to happen to us?”

The revelation of future events, even ones that seemed bleak, was a powerful sign of God’s continued faithfulness to Israel. They had failed, they had fallen short. But God reaches out to them with this vision. It was a demonstration of his love: his commitment to the Jewish

⁴⁴ Miller, *TNAC*: It is specifically expressed that the Antichrist will be empowered by the devil (cf. Rev 13:2; 2 Thess 2:9). Miller

⁴⁵ Baldwin, *TOTC*: “He shall even rise up against the Prince of princes (cf. 10:20; 12:1), more directly this time than through his people, but the extremity of his daring is the occasion of his downfall. The statement he shall be broken is as decisive as it is brief and his downfall will not be the result of human scheming.”

people. In essence, he's saying, *"I have not forgotten you. I have a plan for you. I love you so much that I am going to show you, ahead of time, what is going to happen."*

In much the same way, we believers are living in a pagan world. We are far from our true promise land: the kingdom of heaven. We are surrounded by sinfulness and godlessness. With each passing day, we feel more and more like outsiders in a hostile world. Where is God? When is he going to act? What is going to happen to us, his Church?

But God has not forgotten us, not even for a second. He has given us his inspired word to show us what will happen in the future, as a demonstration of his love for us. He has a plan. He is very much involved in everything that happens. But he's done more than give us these prophecies. God has revealed his love to us in other gifts: the gift of his Holy Spirit, who is in our hearts. The gift of the Church, our family of believers. And the gift of his Son, who was the final "burnt offering" that cleanses us completely of *our* transgressions which defiled us. When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, he makes us pure, clean temples in which he dwells.

When we read passages like this, we are reminded of God's love. So, I say to you: **embrace God's love for you**. Put it at the forefront of your thoughts. Each day, be mindful of his continued presence in your life.

The **second reason** God sent this vision to Daniel and Israel was to give them hope. Most of what we read in this chapter appears frightening, especially the "little horn." But there is a throughline in this passage that would have given the original readers a glimmer of hope. Gabriel says this was about the "end of the indignation." God will end the judgment against Israel and bring them back into the land. The temple will be rebuilt. Even persecution from Antiochus will only last 3.2 years and the sanctuary will be restored!

The Jewish people who would live through these events could look at this passage and know there was an end. They would endure persecution and wars, but they didn't have to despair. They knew there would be an end to all this, and their temple would be restored. That is a powerful hope to hold onto.

We can't live without hope. We live in a world full of uncertainty and seeming chaos. Every day we learn about a new health crisis, war, or leader exposed for corruption. Our news feeds are loaded with discouraging, hopeless messages designed to make us live in despair. But as my dad likes to say, *"I read the end of the book!"* It doesn't matter how awful things get in this world, our destiny is secure. God will defeat the forces of darkness, both now and in the future. If a vile ruler like Antiochus is thrown down, then we don't have to fear anyone.

So, I say to you: **build up your hope for the future**. We win! The antichrists of the world will be destroyed. Take a break from your news feeds, social media, or television and soak up the words of hope in God's word. Fill your mind with his truth. If you are struggling with despair today--over a personal struggle or something larger--know that God is on your side. There is never a reason to give up our hope. Weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Finally, the **third reason** God gave Daniel and Israel this vision was to build their faith. Consider all the kings and kingdoms mentioned in this text--Media, Persia, Greece, Antiochus, the Antichrist. There is one constant. Did you notice it? No matter how powerful they were, they all came to nothing.

As chaotic as this vision appears, it's very encouraging. All these mighty kingdoms will be crushed in time. But this Prince of princes remains. Who is this Prince of princes? It is Yahweh, the God of Israel, manifested in the Second Person of the Trinity, his Son. Jesus, the promised Messiah. The Prince of peace, the Savior of the world, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the one constant, both in this chapter and throughout human history.

Notice how the moment the little horn tries to defy the Prince, he is broken (verse 26). The Antichrist to come will wreak havoc on the earth for a number of years. But when he tries to wipe out Jerusalem, the Messiah comes. And guess what? All of us here today who believe in Jesus will be in the sky with him! We are the army in white, riding on horses behind Jesus according to Revelation 19:14.

Any time God speaks, it is to reveal himself to us. So that we will put our faith in him. God spoke this to Daniel so that the Jewish people would continue to trust in their God. Today, we know him through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Passages like this, ultimately, are not to make us fearful. They are meant to inspire faith. This world has an expiration date. The kings of this world will fall. But if you put your trust in Jesus Christ, you will have no reason to fear. Everyone who calls on his name is saved. Saved from sin, death, and hell. Only Jesus can save you. If you are here and you never put your trust in Christ, today's the day. We don't know when the events of the end times will happen. The Antichrist could arise very soon. Your only hope is to give your life to Jesus, now.

To the believer, I say: **keep looking to the sky**. This present life is only a mist and shadow. It will be over soon. Jesus is coming back. That truth is the undergirding of our faith. We are called to live each day with the expectancy that he is coming back. This evil world will be set right. The forces of darkness will be destroyed. Let that inspire you, encourage you, and excite you as you continue to abide in Christ each day.

1. Embrace daily God's unending love for you.
2. Fill yourself with hope by meditating on his word.
3. Look to the skies with faith in Christ's return.