

Daniel Chapter 8

Vision of the Ram (Medo Persian empire) and the Goat (Grecian empire)

Firstly, when did Daniel receive this vision? In the year 551 BC, two years after the vision in chapter 7, and 12 years before Belshazzar's feast and the writing on the wall in chapter 5. Chapter 7 happened in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, and this vision in chapter 8 occurred in the 3rd year of Belshazzar king of Babylon. It fits between chapters 4 and 5 during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar.

In the ancient manuscripts, the Book of Daniel here resumes using the Hebrew language, the official language of the nation of Israel. The section from Daniel 2:4 to 7:28 was written in Aramaic, the common language of the day because God wanted it understood and read by the people of those days. By this I mean the the entire kingdom of Babylon and then the entire kingdom of the Medes and Persians which was at that time most of the world's population. I find it amazing how God revealed Himself basically to the entire known world during those dark days while Israel was in captivity. Israel has caused God's name to be blasphemed, His temple destroyed. So God chooses to use 4 ordinary men to glory Himself and reveal Himself to millions of people. Think about it, several letters were written by the most powerful rulers of the times magnifying God; e.g. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue made up of gold, silver, bronze and iron and Daniel's explanation of it in chapter 2; Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refusing to bow down and being thrown into the fiery furnace in chapter 3; Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree and his 7 years of eating grass like a cow and his putting his faith in God in chapter 4; the writing on the wall in chapter 5, Contrasting Belshazzar's pride and defiance with Nebuchadnezzar's humility and repentance; and finally in chapter 6 Daniel is thrown into the lions den for being faithful in prayer. These became documents that were widely circulated around the respective kingdoms in the common language and therefore brought much glory to God.

Application for us: Don't give up. The darker the days, the more opportunity there is for God to use a dedicated and faithful person to bring glory to Himself, though obviously it won't be smooth sailing — indeed their lives were marked by persecution and hard work — but they were faithful to God despite the difficult circumstances.

But why change back to the Hebrew language in chapter 7? Because, although they involve some nations, the prophecies in the following chapters have specific application to Israel and the events described have latter fulfilment.

In chapter 8 it starts by repeating information given in chapters 2 and 7 concerning how Greece would overthrow or defeat the Mede and Persian empire and become the dominate world empire, but then it narrows down and focuses in on a time in the future that affects the temple. We will see that it has two fulfillments, one near (fulfilled in 165BC) and one far (the tribulation period). It's interesting because the near fulfilment, Antiochus Epiphanies, becomes a type of the Antichrist, and we learn much about what to expect of the real Antichrist who is yet to come.

Vision of a Ram and a Goat

8 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time. ² I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai. ³ Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. ⁴ I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.

⁵ And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. ⁶ Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. ⁷ And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.

⁸ Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven. ⁹ And 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 And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. ¹¹ He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. ¹² Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.

¹³ Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?”

¹⁴ And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

Gabriel Interprets the Vision

¹⁵ Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly 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, who called, and said, “Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.” ¹⁷ So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end.”

¹⁸ Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. ¹⁹ And he said, “Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be. ²⁰ The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹ And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. ²² As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.

²³ “And in the latter time of their kingdom,
When the transgressors have reached their fullness,
A king shall arise,

Having fierce features,
Who understands sinister schemes.

²⁴ His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power;
He shall destroy fearfully,
And shall prosper and thrive;
He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people.

²⁵ Through his cunning
He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule;
And he shall exalt himself in his heart.
He shall destroy many in their prosperity.
He shall even rise against the Prince of princes;
But he shall be broken without human means.

²⁶ “And the vision of the evenings and mornings
Which was told is true;
Therefore seal up the vision,
For it refers to many days in the future.”

²⁷ And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king’s business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

Daniel 8—Antiochus and Antichrist

A. The vision recounted [8:1–14]

1. Introduction to the vision (1–2)

¹ In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time. ² I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai.

a. **The third year of the reign of King Belshazzar:** This vision happened while Babylon was securely in power. Though the vision will deal with the emergence and destiny of the Greek Empire, the Greek Empire was not much of anything at the time the prophecy came to Daniel.

b. **I was in Shushan, the citadel:** Daniel was in **Shushan** on business for the king (Daniel 8:27), or he was transported there in a vision.

In a word, Daniel finds himself projected in vision to a town little known at that time and unsuspected for future grandeur, but yet destined to be the important capital of Persia, the home of Esther, and the city from which Nehemiah came to Jerusalem. It is significant that **Shushan, the citadel** was not yet the capital of the Medo-Persian empire, but it would be one day. It was probably at that time only a fortress rather than a palace.

2. A mighty ram pushing in different directions (3–4)

³ Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns *were* high; but one *was* higher than the other, and the higher *one* came up last. ⁴ I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor *was there any* that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.

a. **A ram which had two horns:** Daniel saw a vision of a ram with two horns, one higher than the other. Verse 20 tells us this ram represents the Medes and the Persians who which succeeded the Babylonian Empire. It was nine years after Daniel had this vision, that the Medes and the Persians, having formed an alliance, attacked Babylon and were victorious. The second horn grew stronger than the first because, although the Medes were initially more powerful, the Persians eventually became the stronger of the two.

It wasn't a stretch to use a **ram** to represent the Medo-Persian Empire. "Ammianus Marcellinus, a fourth century historian, states that the Persian ruler bore the head of a ram as he stood at the head of his army." (Wood) "The ram was the national emblem of Persia, a ram being stamped on Persian coins as well as on the headdress of Persian emperors." (Strauss)

b. **The two horns were high; but one was higher than the other:** The ram was noted for the proportion of its two horns—**one was higher than the other**. This was an accurate prediction of the partnership between the Medes and the Persians, because the Persians were larger and stronger in the partnership. They also emerged *after* the Medes (**the higher one came up last**).

c. **Pushing westward, northward, and southward:** The Medo-Persian Empire exerted its power to the north, south, and west. It took territory but made no major conquests towards the east.

"The principle theatre of their wars, says *Calmet*, was against the Scythians, *northward*; against the Greeks, *westward*; and against the Egyptians, *southward*." (Clarke)

3. A male goat challenges and conquers the ram (5–8)

⁵ And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes. ⁶ Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. ⁷ And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.

⁸ Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.

a. **A male goat came from the west:** In this same chapter (Daniel 8:21–22) this **male goat** was clearly identified with Greece and its horns are identified with the rulers of the Greek Empire.

From ancient history we know this wasn't a strange symbol. The goat was a common representation of the Greek Empire. "*Newton very properly observes that, two hundred years before the time of Daniel, they were called, the goats' people.*" (Clarke)

b. **Across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground:** This prophetic description of the male goat was proved to be accurate regarding the Greek Empire.

- The Greek Empire rose **from the west** of previous empires.
- The Greek Empire rose with great speed (**suddenly ... without touching the ground**).
- The Greek Empire had a notable ruler, Alexander the Great (**a notable horn**).
- The Greek Empire had a famous war with the Medo-Persian Empire (**I saw him confronting the ram**).
- The Greek Empire and the Medo-Persian Empire greatly hated each other (**with furious power ... moved with rage**). Some of the greatest, fiercest battles of ancient history were fought between the Greeks and the Persians.
- The Greek Empire conquered the million strong Medo-Persian Empire's army in 334 BC with 35,000 troops (**no one that could deliver the ram from his hand**).
- The reign of the notable leader of the Greek Empire was suddenly cut short (**the large horn was broken**).
- After the end of Alexander the Great's reign, the Greek Empire was divided among four rulers (**in place of it four notable ones came up**).
- The four rulers of the Greek Empire after Alexander ruled their own dominions, not the entire empire together (**came up toward the four winds of heaven**).

Alexander did not divide the empire among his four generals himself. His four leading generals divided it among themselves by force after his death. The four generals were:

- Cassander, ruling over Greece and its region.
- Lysimachus, ruling over Asia Minor.
- Seleucus, ruling over Syria and Israel's land.
- Ptolemy, ruling over Egypt.

c. **The male goat grew very great:** The greatness of Alexander's Empire was not only in its vast dominion but also in its cultural power. Alexander the Great was determined to spread Greek civilisation, culture, and language across every land he conquered.

Here is an interesting story concerning Alexander the Great.

After defeating the Medo Persian king Xerxes in 334BC, Alexander went on and kept going south to Israel. When he neared Jerusalem, he was poised to annihilate it when the high priest met him outside of the city and showed him this passage, written two hundred years earlier. So convinced was Alexander that it spoke of him that he spared Jerusalem. The city was saved because the Word was shared.

He then went into Egypt and founded Alexandria, swept north into present-day Afghanistan, and then made a run into India. After conquering India, the he-goat went back to Babylon and established that city as his capital. At that point, realising he had conquered the entire known world, he wept that there were no worlds left to conquer.

An example of how God works behind the scenes in history:

As God guided history, He used Alexander's passion to spread Greek culture to prepare the world for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of Alexander's influence, *koine* (common) Greek became the common language of the civilised world—and the language of the New Testament. Can you imagine how difficult and slow it would have been for Paul and the other first century missionaries if they had to learn different languages and translate the scriptures into different languages every time they went to a different country or province. Later, God used the Romans to build roads as part of a transport system that linked most of the known world. Perfect conditions for sharing the gospel to the whole world in a short period of time.

V8 The large horn was broken - a reflection on Alexander's life and a comparison to Jesus.

At the party he threw for all of his soldiers upon their return to Babylon, Alexander became drunk. He walked back to his residence in the rain and fell asleep in his damp clothes. Within three days, he died of pneumonia at the age of thirty-three.

Alexander was the epitome of what the world looks for in a leader. His father was Philip of Macedon, a brilliant general. As little Alexander watched his father, he grew bitterly jealous of his conquests. He complained to those around him that his father was going to conquer everything and leave nothing for Alexander to do. When he was thirteen years old, Philip realised his son was uniquely gifted so he brought in the finest scholar of the ancient world, a philosopher named Aristotle, to teach his son. He was then given a black horse so powerful that no other man could tame or ride him. Alexander was able to do both. Seeing his son upon his mighty horse, Bucephalus, Philip said, "My son, Macedonia is not worthy of you. Conquer a kingdom that is great."

By the time he was twenty, Alexander had gained control of Greece. As he was conquering some of the rebellious areas north of Macedonia, hearing that the city of Thebes had the audacity to revolt against him, he went to Thebes, destroyed every building in the city, and killed every man, woman, and child except 30,000 whom he sold into slavery. At that point, everyone in Greece realised they dare not rebel against him no matter how long he was gone.

Alexander was a powerful man, a military genius. Yet he died broken and empty. I contrast him with another Man who also died at the age of thirty-three...

- Alexander was a man who made himself to be God.
Jesus, who was God, humbled Himself and became a man (Philippians 2:5–7).
- Unlike Alexander, Jesus was not in competition with His Father. Rather, Jesus was in submission to His Father. "I have come to do the will of Him that sent Me," He said (see John 6:38). "I always do the things that please My Father," He declared (see John 8:29).
- At the age of thirteen, Alexander was taught by Aristotle.
At the age of twelve, Jesus tutored the priests.
- Alexander shed the blood of millions for his own glorification.
Jesus shed His own blood for our salvation.
- Alexander rode a magnificent black stallion.
Jesus rode a lowly donkey.
- Alexander wiped out the city of Thebes and enslaved the rebels.
Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem and freed the sinners (John 8:11).
- "Friend, you must die," Alexander said before killing a friend who he thought had made advances toward his wife.

“Friend, who do you seek?” Jesus said to the one who would indeed betray Him.

- When Alexander died, his body was placed in a golden casket and moved from Babylon to Memphis, Egypt and finally to Alexandria, where a great monument was built to his memory.

When Jesus died, He was also moved from the place where He was buried—not to another burial place but up to heaven where He lives to make intercession for you and me (Hebrews 7:25).

- Alexander is simply a memory.

Jesus is the Messiah who is coming again.

4. The strong horn that arises from the four horns of the male goat (9–12)

⁹ And 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 And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some* of the host and *some* of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. ¹¹ He even exalted *himself* as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily *sacrifices* were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. ¹² Because of transgression, an army was given over to *the horn* to oppose the daily *sacrifices*; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did *all this* and prospered.

a. **A little horn which grew exceeding great:** This was fulfilled in one of the four successors to Alexander the Great. Since the dominion of this horn was extended **toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land**, we can identify the historical fulfillment of this **little horn** in Antiochus IV Epiphanes who ruled over Syria and Israel’s land under the Seleucid dynasty.

i. Israel’s land was contested between the dynasties of Seleucid (controlling Syria to the north) and P(tolemy), controlling Egypt to the south, but the Seleucids (controlling Syria to the north) gained power over the region in the days of Antiochus III (198 b.c.).

ii. Antiochus IV gained the throne of his father (Antiochus III) by murdering his brother, the former king Seleucus Philopator. The son of Philopator was the rightful heir to the throne, but Antiochus IV had him held hostage in Rome. Antiochus IV legitimized his rule mainly through flattery and bribery.

Verses 9-12 happened exactly as predicted. Here is a summary:

One of the four horns, the Seleucid family, controlled Babylon and Syria. Out of that family came a very infamous individual who the Bible calls “the little horn.” He is not the same little horn as the one in chapter 7. That little horn, which came out of the ten-nation confederation, is Antichrist. This little horn comes out of the Seleucid family and is a picture, a foreshadowing, an illustration of Antichrist. This little horn has already come.

From 175 to 164 b.c., this little horn, known as Antiochus came on the scene as the leader of Syria and Babylon. He called himself “Theos Epiphanes,” or “God Manifested.” Others called him “Antiochus Epiphanes” or “Antiochus the Shining One,” because he was ruling in the area of Antioch. The Jews, aware of this madman, called him “Antiochus Epinanes,” which means “Antiochus the Insane One.” They recognized he was deranged and history confirms this was true.

He began to expand his empire by conquering everything he set his eyes upon—including Israel. Such hatred did he have for the Jews that he demanded that all of the holy writings of the Jews be burned. Claiming to be God, he built a statue and put it in the temple. When the Jews revolted, 40,000 were killed in a single day and perhaps a million more in the ensuing months. He then butchered a pig on the altar in the temple, smeared the blood on the walls, and forced the priests to drink the remainder. He was a cruel madman, a picture of Antichrist himself.

b. **The Glorious Land:** In the Hebrew, the same term was used for the land of Israel in Ezekiel 20:6 (*the glory of all lands*), Ezekiel 25:9 (*the glory of the country*), and in Daniel 11:16 and 11:41. Similar wording is used in Psalm 48:2.

We can rightly see the **Glorious Land** as the centre of the world:

- It is the *nerve centre* of civilisation since the days of Abraham.
- It is the *truth centre* from which flowed God's revelation to man.
- It is the *storm centre* of warring nations since the days of Joshua.
- It will be the *peace centre* of the earth during the millennial reign of Jesus.
- It will be the *home centre* for the Jewish people forever more.

c. **He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host:** Antiochus Epiphanes was an accurate and dramatic fulfillment of this prophecy in history—so much so that critics insist that the Book of Daniel *must* have been written *after* his time.

i. Antiochus Epiphanes exerted his dominion **toward the south, toward the east, and toward the** land of Israel.

ii. Antiochus Epiphanes murdered other rulers and persecuted the people of Israel (**cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them**).

iii. Antiochus Epiphanes blasphemed God and commanded idolatrous worship directed towards himself (**exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host**).

iv. Antiochus Epiphanes put a stop to temple sacrifices in Jerusalem (**by him the daily sacrifices were taken away**).

v. Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple (**the place of His sanctuary was cast down**).

vi. Antiochus Epiphanes opposed God and seemed to prosper (**he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered**).

d. **It cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground:** The **host** and **stars** are symbols used in the Old Testament for angels, kings and leaders, or the people of God at large. This prediction was fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes and his attacks against rulers and against God's people in general.

i. The terms *stars of heaven* (Genesis 12:3 and 15:5) and the *hosts of the Lord* (Exodus 12:41) are at times used of God's people in general.

ii. "Undoubtedly it is the design here to describe the pride and ambition of [the 'little horn'], and to show that he did not think anything too exalted for his aspiration." (Barnes)

e. **And trampled them:** Antiochus was an infamous persecutor of the Jewish people. He wanted them to submit to Greek culture and customs and was more than willing to use murder and violence to compel them.

f. **Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices:** This was fulfilled in the terrors of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Jews, especially their leaders, invited God's judgment upon them through Antiochus because of their sin.

The first attack of Antiochus against the Jews of this time was to settle a rivalry for the office of high priest. A pious high priest, Onias III, was removed from office and was replaced with his brother Jason because Jason bribed Antiochus. Then in 172 b.c. another brother (Menelaus) gave Antiochus an even bigger bribe and replaced Jason. A year later Menelaus started selling many of the temple's gold utensils to raise money to pay off the bribe. Onias III rebuked him, and Menelaus had him murdered. Meanwhile, Jason gathered armies and fought against Menelaus to regain the office of High Priest. Antiochus Epiphanes came in to Jerusalem in 171 b.c. to defend the man who paid him a bigger bribe to be the High Priest.

Many would say that Antiochus Epiphanes was used by God as a judgement on a corrupt priesthood and nation, just like Babylon was used to destroy the southern kingdom of Israel.

5. The duration of the sanctuary's desecration: 2,300 days (13–14)

13 Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?" 14 And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

a. **Then I heard a holy one speaking:** Probably an angel.

b. **How long will the vision be?** Daniel didn't ask this question; he heard the holy ones speaking together and one of them asked the question. They wanted to know how long the **sacrifices** would be suspended and how long the **sanctuary** would be desecrated.

c. **For two thousand three hundred days:** Literally, Daniel heard a holy one say "**two thousand three hundred mornings and evenings.**" The date when the temple was cleansed is well established as December 25, 165 b.c. If we count back 2,300 days from then, we come to the year when Antiochus Epiphanes began his persecution in earnest (171 b.c.).

I'll give the case for 2,300 days:

What are these 2,300 days? When Antiochus Epiphanes began his reign on September 6, 171 B.C, a man named Matthias in the village of Modine refused to give in to his pressure. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, he refused to submit. For this, he was killed—but he had five sons. These five sons, led by Judah, the oldest, were so incensed that, with guerilla tactics, they began attacking the soldiers of Antiochus. Others joined and the Maccabean Revolt was underway.

On December 25, 165 B.C., they drove Antiochus and his boys out of the land. Judah and his men then went into the temple, cleaned it from the defilements of Antiochus, and relit the candles. But there was only enough holy oil for one day. A new supply would take

eight days to make. When they prayed that the oil would miraculously last, the Lord answered their prayer and the candles burned for the eight days until the new oil was ready. The commemoration of this event is called the Feast of Lights, or Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah. September 6, 171 B.C.—when Antiochus came to power—to December 25, 165 B.C. is exactly 2,300 days.

There are other interpretations.

i. This passage has been a favourite springboard for elaborate and fanciful prophetic interpretations. A popular and tragic interpretation of this passage took one year for every day, and William Miller used 2,300 “year-days” to calculate that Jesus would return in 1844 (2,300 years after Cyrus issued the decree to rebuild the temple). His movement ended up giving birth to the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and several other movements.

ii. We can know that Miller and other “year-day” theories are wrong because this passage was fulfilled before the time of Jesus. Jesus recognised that the temple was properly **cleansed** and rededicated when He attended the Feast of Dedication or lights (Hanukkah), commemorating the cleansing and rededication of the temple after the desecration brought by Antiochus Epiphanes (John 10:22).

d. **Then the sanctuary shall be cleansed:** This amazingly specific prophecy was written some 350 years before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Great prophetic fulfillment like this demonstrates that God not only *knows* the future, He also *guides* the future.

B. The vision is interpreted [8:15–27]

1. Gabriel appears to Daniel (15–19)

15 Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly 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, who called, and said, “Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.” 17 So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end.”

18 Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. 19 And he said, “Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be.

a. **Between the banks of the Ulai:** Daniel was still in the midst of his vision when he saw himself on the shores of this Persian river. He heard someone instruct **Gabriel** to explain the vision to Daniel.

b. **The vision refers to the time of the end:** Gabriel assured Daniel that this vision had to do with end times, with the **latter time of the indignation**.

i. This is a problem for some, because we see that the prophecy of Daniel 8:1–14 was fulfilled in the days of the Medo-Persian and Greek Empires, especially in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. The terms **time of the end** and **latter time of the indignation** commonly refer to what we think of as the *end times*, not events fulfilled more than a 100 years before the birth of Jesus.

ii. The answer is that though this prophecy was fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes, it also has a later fulfillment in the Antichrist, referring to the **time of the end**. Antiochus Epiphanes is sometimes called the “Antichrist of the Old Testament.” He prefigures the Antichrist of the end times.

iii. Just as Antiochus Epiphanes rose to power with force and intrigue, so will the Antichrist. As he persecuted the Jews, so will the Antichrist. As he stopped sacrifice and desecrated the temple, so will the Antichrist. As he seemed to be a complete success, so will the Antichrist. “From what Antiochus did to Jews in his day, therefore, one may know the general pattern of what the Antichrist will do to them in the future.” (Wood)

iv. Daniel 9:27, which refers to the last 7 years of human government before Jesus comes back, often called the tribulation period, gives extra insight into the dual fulfillment of this passage.

Daniel 9:27 - The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him.”

While there are obvious similarities between the two little horns of chapter 7 and chapter 8, the differences are important. If the fourth kingdom represented by Daniel 7 is Rome, then obviously the third kingdom represented by the goat in chapter 8 is not Rome, it's from the Grecian empire. Their characteristics are much different as they arise from different beasts, their horns differ in number, and the end result is different. The Messianic kingdom according to Daniel 7 was going to be erected after the final world empire. This is not true of the period following the goat (grecian empire) in chapter 8.

For me, one of the most conclusive evidences is what Jesus said in:

Matthew 24:15 - “Therefore when you see the ‘*abomination of desolation*,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),...

This refers to what we are reading in Daniel chapter 8. Here Jesus is referring to a future event, which therefore cannot include or mean Antiochus Epiphanes.

Overall, the vision itself of the little horn can be fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes, the interpretation given by the angel starting in verse 23 seems to go beyond Antiochus to the final world ruler.

2. The specific identification of the ram and the male goat of Daniel’s vision (20–22)

²⁰ The ram which you saw, having the two horns—*they are* the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹ And the male goat *is* the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that *is* between its eyes *is* the first king. ²² As for the broken *horn* and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.

a. **The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king:** This was fulfilled in history by Alexander the Great (see comments on Daniel 8:5–8).

b. **Four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power:** This was fulfilled in history by the four generals who divided Alexander's Empire between them (see comments on Daniel 8:5–8).

3. The rise and fall of the strong little horn (23–26)

- 23 **“And in the latter time of their kingdom,
When the transgressors have reached their fullness,
A king shall arise,
Having fierce features,
Who understands sinister schemes.**
- 24 **His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power;
He shall destroy fearfully,
And shall prosper and thrive;
He shall destroy the mighty, and *also* the holy people.**
- 25 **“Through his cunning
He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule;
And he shall exalt *himself* in his heart.
He shall destroy many in *their* prosperity.
He shall even rise against the Prince of princes;
But he shall be broken without *human* means.**
- 26 **“And the vision of the evenings and mornings
Which was told is true;
Therefore seal up the vision,
For *it refers* to many days *in the future.*”**

Let's look at how this was fulfilled:

- a. **In the latter time of their kingdom:** The prophecy in this passage reads equally true of both Antiochus and Antichrist. This is an example of a prophetic passage that has both a *near* and *far* fulfillment.
- b. **Having fierce features:** Antiochus Epiphanes was known for his cruel brutality. This will also be true of the coming Antichrist.
- c. **Who understands sinister schemes ... through his cunning:** Antiochus was known for his flattery and smooth tongue. The coming Antichrist will strike a covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27).
- d. **His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power:** Antiochus Epiphanes was empowered by Satan and allowed by God. The same will be true of the coming Antichrist.
- e. **Shall prosper and thrive:** Antiochus Epiphanes looked like a total success. The coming Antichrist will look like a complete winner until God topples his reign.
- f. **He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people:** Antiochus Epiphanes not only destroyed his enemies, but also harshly persecuted the people of God. The coming Antichrist will also destroy and persecute.

g. **He shall cause deceit to prosper:** Both the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes in the past and of the Antichrist in the future are marked by **deceit**.

2 Thessalonians 2:9–10 - *The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

h. **He shall exalt himself in his heart:** The coins of Antiochus Epiphanes were inscribed with this title: theos epiphanies meaning, “God manifest.” The coming Antichrist will also exalt himself:

2 Thessalonians 2:4 - *So that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

Satan has always been doing this. What we read concerning Antiochus and the Antichrist to come is just a manifestation of Satan’s egotistical desires:

Isaiah 14:12-15

- ¹² “How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
- ¹³ For you have said in your heart:
‘I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
- ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.’
- ¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,
To the lowest depths of the Pit.

He shall destroy many in *their* prosperity:

Initially, Antichrist will come as a man of peace, solving the problems of the Middle East, solving the economic tensions in the world. But in the middle of the Tribulation, he’ll show his true colours. Three and a half years after he comes into power, blood will flow and heads will roll. According to 2 Thessalonians 2, when the Antichrist sets up his image and demands to be worshiped, anyone who doesn’t will be jeopardising their own life.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

i. **He shall even rise against the Prince of princes:** Though Antiochus Epiphanes hated the people of God and fought against them, it was because he really hated God. The same will be true of the coming Antichrist, who will hate the Jews because he hates God.

ii. **Broken without human means:** History tells us that Antiochus Epiphanes died of disease, not by the hand of man. In a similar way no *man* will defeat the coming Antichrist, but the hand of Jesus will strike him down at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:20).

iii. **Therefore seal up the vision:** Daniel must do this because in his day the vision referred to a period far distant in its ultimate fulfillment. For us, the time is near (Revelation 1:3) and the book is unsealed (Revelation 22:10).

Revelation 1:3 - Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; **for the time is near.**

Revelation 22:10 - And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

4. Daniel reacts to the vision with physical shock and astonishment (27)

27 And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

a. **Fainted and was sick ... I was astonished:** Daniel probably couldn't understand why God would allow such a mighty persecutor of His people to come to power and seeming success.

"He may well have been puzzled about why Yahweh would permit even this brief time of brutal oppression under the little horn." (Archer)

b. **I went about the king's business:** Daniel didn't let either spiritual mysteries or physical weakness keep him from doing his duty. This shows us that our interest in prophecy should make us *more* concerned with our daily responsibilities, not *less* concerned about them.

c. **No one understood it:** It wasn't because God never wanted this prophecy to be understood. There is no reason for God to reveal something to man that can never be understood. The reason why **no one understood it** was because the vision was sealed up in light of its ultimate fulfillment in Daniel's distant future.

The intent of the vision was to record the prophecy for the benefit of future generations rather than for Daniel himself. Unlike the previous instances where Daniel was the interpreter of divine revelation, here Daniel becomes the recorder of it without understanding all that he wrote or experienced.

It is worth repeating: the time is *not* distant for us in light of Revelation 1:3, and the book of prophecy is not sealed in light of Revelation 22:10.

Revelation 1:3

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; **for the time is near.**

Revelation 22:10

And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

Quote from John Courson:

Although the vision was so real to Daniel that it had a physical effect upon him, he didn't understand its meaning. Maybe you can relate to this. Maybe you're saying, "I don't get it. Little horns and ten toes and brass bellies—I'm completely confused!" That's okay. It will affect you just as it did Daniel. Whether or not you can identify the ten toes is not the point. God is saying in this book, "Wake up. We're not playing a game here. We're talking about eternal destiny, about friends and family going through the Tribulation unnecessarily, about suffering, persecution, and eternal damnation."

As believers, we are in an important place as ambassadors of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). Therefore, like Daniel, we, too, must go about the King's business. We can't just cruise through Christianity going through a Bible study occasionally, praying sporadically, hoping things will work out eventually. We must be about the King's business continually. Daniel rose up and did the King's business. May that be said of us.