

Daniel 8:1-27

The End Is Near

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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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."

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. 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. 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. 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. – Daniel 8:1-27 ESV

It seems that Daniel not only interpreted dreams, but he also had them, and the dream he has in chapter seven was a doozy. It was full of bizarre beasts, big horns and little ones, violent wars, and other disturbing imagery. His dream included signs of the not-so-distant future and a time that has yet to happen even in our day. Ultimately, his dream was about the end times; he was given a glimpse of the time of the Tribulation and the coming of the Antichrist. But more importantly, Daniel was given a view of the coming of the Son of Man; the return of Christ to reign over His Kingdom the earth.

The term, “Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite designation for Himself. He preferred it over the more common term “Messiah,” because to most Jews that simply indicated a human deliverer sent by God. By referring to Himself as the Son of Man, He claimed the role of the one predicted in Daniel’s dream. He was the coming God-man. He would one day be “given authority, honor and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him” (Daniel 7:14 NLT). His coming kingdom would be an earthly, not just spiritual, kingdom. And it would last forever.

Of all the beings revealed in Daniel’s dream, the most significant one is that of the Son of Man. He is not described in detail, and his appearance remains a mystery. The other beasts are described in frightening detail. But with the Son of Man, the emphasis is on what He will do rather than what He looks like. Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, will destroy the Antichrist and the nations he gathers to rebel against God Almighty. Christ will use His God-given authority to destroy the enemies of God and usher in a new age of perfect peace.

“Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war. His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him that no one understood except himself. He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. The armies of heaven, dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses. From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He

will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress. On his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords.” – Revelation 19:11-16 NLT

We may not fully understand who the other beasts represent, but we do know that the Son of Man is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He will return to Earth one day to finish His work and establish His Kingdom once and for all. His rule will be eternal – it will never end. And unlike the nations represented in Daniel’s dream, the Son of Man’s Kingdom will be everlasting.

As chapter seven closes and chapter eight begins, there is a change in the narrative and its emphasis. First, the text converts from Aramaic to Hebrew and the emphasis shifts from “the times of the Gentiles” to the future fate of the Israelites, the chosen people of God.

Daniel and his fellow exiles lived in a spiritually tumultuous time. The land of Israel had been raped and pillaged and its people taken captive to foreign lands. Daniel was one of tens of thousands of individuals who had been living in Babylon for decades. Their homeland was miles away and their Temple, the dwelling place of their God, lay in shambles. It was a period of spiritual darkness filled with questions about the future. What was God going to do with His people? Would He keep His covenant promise and restore them to the land?

In Chapter 7, God gave Daniel a glimpse into the distant future and a foreshadowing of the end of the age. He revealed what would happen long after Daniel was gone. But that left many of Daniel’s more immediate concerns unanswered. Then he was given a second vision recorded in Chapter 8.

In this vision, Daniel was given a closer look at future events. There are similarities and parallels to his first vision, but the focus seems to be on the period between when Daniel lived and the second coming of Christ. Daniel is living within the kingdom of Neo-Babylonia. The glory days of this once-powerful empire are quickly coming to an end. This dream occurs two years after his earlier vision recorded in chapter seven.

In this vision, Daniel is transported to Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire, located about 200 miles east of Babylon. In his vision he sees a goat and a ram. The ram was the guardian spirit of the Persian Empire. The goat represents Greece, and its single, prominent horn represents Alexander the Great, who would sweep onto the world stage and wipe out the Medo-Persian Empire. Alexander the Great would die in his thirties and his kingdom would divide into four parts led by four different generals. Out of one of those kingdoms would come Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), who would wage a relentless war on the people of Israel, overthrowing the High Priest, looting the Temple, and replacing the worship of God with a form of Greek worship. The daily sacrifices would cease after he desecrates the Temple and, in his vision, Daniel is told that this would go on for seven years.

Each of these prophetic promises came about just as Daniel saw them in his vision. This speaks of God’s omniscient, all-knowing nature. He doesn’t helplessly watch the future unfold like the

rest of us; He knows it before it happens. In fact, He orchestrates events so that they happen just as He said they would. This is why God was able to reveal to Daniel in amazing detail events that had yet to take place. And these events foreshadowed what Daniel had seen in his vision.

What is amazing is the detail with which these events occurred. In December of 168 B.C., Antiochus returned from a defeat at the hands of the Romans and, in frustration, sent 20,000 of his troops to seize Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Having overtaken the Temple, he erected an idol of Zeus and desecrated the altar of the Temple by sacrificing swine on it. This idol became known to the Jews as “the abomination of desolation.” All of this was a precursor to events that will take place in the end times. At that time, the Antichrist will erect an image of himself and command that everyone, including Jews, worship it. As bad as that time will be, it will also serve as a kind of alarm clock, telling mankind that the second coming of Christ is imminent.

Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him. Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don't believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us. Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction. He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God. – 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 NLT

But those events will be the preface for an even greater and more significant one: the second coming of Christ. He will return just as He promised, and just as the events of Daniel's vision took place with painstaking accuracy, so will the events associated with the end times. The Tribulation *will* come. The Antichrist *will* rise to power. And Jesus Christ *will* come again, do battle with the enemies of God, and establish His Kingdom on Earth.