

Dr. Wendy L. Widder, Daniel, Session 11, Daniel 8, God's Leash on Evil

© 2024 Wendy Widder and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Wendy Widder in her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 11, Daniel 8, God's Leash on Evil.

We're in Daniel chapter 8 for this lecture, and I have titled this lecture God's Leash on Evil.

It turns out, in my opinion, that the primary comfort of what is offered in this vision for Daniel is that God has evil on a leash. When we get to Daniel 8, we are returning to the Hebrew language. So, you probably remember by now that the book started in Hebrew. Chapter one was in Hebrew, and then when we got to chapters two through seven, we shifted to Aramaic.

It was in Aramaic that we had that chiastic structure providing key themes of the book and actually some encouragement and themes that will carry us into the rest of the book, which is the apocalyptic chapters in which Daniel sees four visions. So, when we get to Daniel 8, we shift back to Hebrew. Another shift that happens in this chapter, although it's not quite as noticeable unless you're looking for it, is that chapters two through seven are all taking place in Babylon or Medo-Persia.

They are set in the exile. In chapters eight through twelve, while Daniel himself is still living in that place in exile, he has visions that concern his people when they return to the land. So in a lot of ways you can think of these chapters as being set back in the restored land of Israel, even though Daniel himself, as he sees them, is still in Babylon.

So, that's a significant shift. A focus of all four visions that Daniel has, so he has four visions, chapter eight is one, chapter nine, chapters ten through twelve, and he had a vision over here in chapter seven. So, there are three visions in just this section.

Oops, yes, let's fix that. He has three visions, but he has four visions total, and all of them are concerned with life back in the land, although chapter seven is much more cosmic in nature. So, he's set in Babylon, Persia, and he's seen things happening in the land.

In these visions, Daniel's scope is really going to be progressively narrow. So, in chapter seven, we heard a little bit about this oppression of the holy ones, and we heard about how long it would last for a time, times and half a time, which we'll come back to when we get later on, and it reappears. And there was oppression by this little horn figure.

Chapters eight, nine, and ten through twelve will return to that same theme but with greater detail and more focus. So, you can almost think of these visions as honing in on this particular topic, which is really going to be the temple, restored, rededicated, or restored temple, the second temple. And most specifically, it's going to be concerned with a period in time in which Antiochus IV, we're going to get back over here in a minute, which he desecrated the temple, this abomination of desolation it's called.

So that is the key event that all of these visions are focused on. Now, that is their nearest historical referent, but I think in a lot of ways, you can see that they're projecting even further. So, you have multiple things that it can apply to.

But the closest, the most immediate referent for what Daniel sees is the second century BC Antiochian persecution and desecration of the temple. That's a broad overview. Before we get into the particulars of this vision, I want to do a quick review, maybe not so quick review, of the time period that the vision is looking ahead to and the context in which that's set.

So, a quick review. We started back there with Genesis, way back over there on the other side of the board. We moved up to the dividing of the kingdom in 922, Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria in 722.

Southern Kingdom hangs on until 587, when it falls to Babylon. And then we are in this period of the exile. That's the setting for the Book of Daniel.

Daniel is in exile in Babylon. In 539, Cyrus the Persians issued a decree that captive people groups, not just the Jews, but captive people groups could return to their homelands. They could even receive some funding to rebuild their places of worship.

So, a number of Jews do return. It's recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. They rebuild the temple and they dedicate it in 515 B.C. This begins the Second Temple period, when the Second Temple is up, constructed, and dedicated.

The Second Temple period is going to continue as long as that Second Temple stands and that is until 70 A.D. when it's destroyed by the Romans. So, this entire period of time, the Second Temple period. Some other things going on in the Second Temple period and other ways we can break it down a little smaller.

420 is my estimate for the Book of Malachi. It's hard to date. There are disagreements about it, but it is 420-ish in that neighborhood.

So, this is the close or the end of the Old Testament canon. The end of the time period it's recalling. Malachi 4:20.

When did New Testament events pick up? Well, with the birth of Jesus and the Gospels will record that being written late in the first century. So, we have this intertestamental period from the end of the Old Testament to the beginning of the new intertestamental period. Also, within this time we have the march of world empires.

So here was Babylon, and before that was Assyria. The Persian world empire begins in 539. It continues until the rise of Alexander the Great in 332 BC.

Then, we move into the Greek period, which is more commonly known as the Hellenistic period. That continued all the way until 63 B.C., when the Romans rose to the top. Then we have the Roman era, which goes on until the fall of Rome.

So, this is just in terms of world empires to give you a glimpse of where we're at. Now, within this Hellenistic period, Alexander the Great dies shortly after he rises to the top. He dies, and he has no viable heir.

So, his massive empire is split among at least four of his generals. The only two we care about are Seleucus and Ptolemy. Seleucus had control of Syria.

O you like my map, I know it. There's the Mediterranean Sea, Nile River. Overblown land of Palestine.

Syria is in the north. Egypt is in the south. This is the Seleucids.

This is the Ptolemies. And so, during this entire period from about 332 until 140 B.C. we will have this tug of war between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies tugging war over the land of Palestine. So, Israel is stuck in the middle of these empires.

So that's Seleucid Ptolemy's rule in Palestine. Now we can get even more specific. The time period we most care about with respect to Daniel's visions is a particular Seleucid ruler named Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He came into power during the 170s, I think.

But he's most famous for what happened in 167 B.C. when he authorized his troops to desecrate the Jerusalem Temple and wreak havoc on the Jews in Jerusalem. That's in 167. Three years later, we had a successful uprising by a group of a family plus their followers, the Maccabean Revolt, the Hasmonean family.

In 164, they reclaimed the temple, and rededicate it, celebrating or initiating what is now the Feast of Hanukkah celebration. And about two decades later we actually have an independent state in Israel again under the Hasmonean dynasty for just this

short little period of time. They are an independent state being ruled by the Hasmoneans.

63 brings an end to that. Rome takes over, and then we move into the New Testament. So, this is your broad view.

I will try to remember to leave this up on the board so I don't have to recreate it. We'll be referring to it several times as we go through these last chapters of the book of Daniel. So, I want to look at this vision in a similar way to what I did with the vision in chapter 7. So, I organize it in some ways a little bit differently than some other commentators and scholars do.

I've based it on an organization that was derived from the book of Revelation and some of the key language that's used to set off visions and to group them into individual visions and blocks of visions. So, in chapter 8, I see three vision blocks. So those are the major groupings.

Within those major groupings are a number of minor or individual visions. The first one is verses 1 through 4. The second one is verses 8 through 9. The third one is verses 15 through 27.

So, those are the three vision blocks that we'll be looking at as we go through this vision. Alright, so let's get to the first vision block. This is verses 1 through 4. And I call this vision block the vision of the two-horned ram.

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. 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 that I was at the Ulai Canal.

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.

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.

That's the first block. And we're going to talk about four individual visions that Daniel sees here. The first one is, actually, the first two are related to the timing and the place, which is what we call a space-time referent of a vision.

It's not actually part of the vision, but it sets the context for it. So, the space-time referent will see himself in Susa, and he will see himself along the Ulai. Along the canal.

The third thing that he reports is the appearance of the ram, the two-horned ram. And the next thing he reports is the activity of that ram. This is verse 3, and this is verse 4. Oh, there's one more, sorry.

No, there's not. Alright, so in terms of the space-time referent for this vision, we're told that this is happening in the third year of Belshazzar. Daniel 7 was set in the first year of Belshazzar.

So, we're following consecutively after that vision, but we're still in this larger disrupted chronology. So, we're back into the narrative chapter chronology, which took us from the third year of Jehoiakim, early in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, until the first year of Cyrus. So, we're back in there during the first and third years of Belshazzar the king.

If this is a literal reference to the third year of Belshazzar and not just something that means not long after he took control or not long after the beginning of his reign, then it would be 550 BC, and that's about the time that Cyrus established the Medo-Persian, the joint Medo-Persian empire after he achieved independence from Media. There's a whole history in there that we're going to bypass just for the sake of time and keeping it simple here. But that series of events ultimately led to the end of Babylon, which was the beginning of the end of exile for Israel.

So, it's significant in terms of what Daniel sees. As I said in chapter 7, I think one of the effects of this date formula, this setting in the reign of Belshazzar, is that it brings back to our minds that king who was so opposed and so arrogant and defiant against God. And so, we're set during that reign, and we know what happened to Belshazzar, and it was ominous and foreboding, and Belshazzar serves, I think, as a prototype for this blasphemous, arrogant king who's going to defiantly raise his fist against Israel's God.

He was the first of it, and now we're going to see even worse kings to follow. There's also this interesting note in Daniel's first statement here that it's after the vision that I saw first, or after the one that I already saw. So, he's connecting this vision to the one in chapter 7, which most scholars take as a hint that we're supposed to read these things together.

They're related. Daniel himself relates them. So where was he when he had this vision? First, he sees himself in Susa, the citadel or the fortress, which is in the province of Elam.

And then he tells us he's by the canal, and then he sees this ram, and you almost have this idea that it's this video camera just sort of panning Susa, Elam, okay? Now we're at the bank of the river, and it pans in and narrows in on where Daniel is. Susa, at this time, was not a very significant location at the time that Daniel had the vision. So, it's relatively insignificant.

It had been conquered by Ashurbanipal in the mid-7th century BC and stayed relatively insignificant until this time of Daniel. Ultimately, it's going to be built up to become a very important city in the Persian Empire. The first historically recorded Darius, Darius I, in 521, is going to rebuild Susa as his fortress city, and it's also going to function as his administrative capital.

So, it becomes very important, ultimately. At the time Daniel had this vision, it was not very significant. That's a meaningful location for the vision because Daniel sees a ram in Susa that represents, the angel will tell us later, the Medo-Persian Empire.

There's really no concern with Babylon in this vision. Babylon's just not even part of it. Even though while Daniel's having the vision, he's in Babylon, right? He is during the reign of Belshazzar, but his vision has no symbolic representation of Babylon, which is appropriate because, by the time these events actually occur, Babylon is no more.

It will be challenged and defeated. Is Daniel awake during this vision? That's always a question we have when we read about these visionary experiences. Were the prophets and seers physically at this location? Were they in some kind of trance? What's going on? It actually seems like Daniel is on location, even though he's normally in Babylon, right? It's the third year of Belshazzar.

That's where he would have been. But for whatever reason, is he on business? I don't know. Did the spirit lift him by the hair like he did with Ezekiel and haul him off to Susa? We don't know, but we get the idea that he's actually there, maybe.

I don't know. He could have been there. He could have been in a trance.

He could have been in some kind of state of consciousness that I don't want to try to explain. But for the purposes of the vision, we're supposed to think Susa. That's where he is.

So, he lifts his eyes, which is a very common way to begin, something that you are seeing in a vision. I looked, and henei. Henei is a word that you'll find in the good old King James, almost always translated as behold or lo.

It's a great Hebrew word that can be really difficult to render in a way that makes sense to people. I think that what it means through most of this vision is it's

expressing a kind of surprise. Like, whoa, what? What's that? There's one place later in the vision where it's going to mean something different.

But Daniel's sort of expressing this, oh, that's not what I expected to see. So, what is it he doesn't expect to see? A ram. This lone, single ram along the Citadel's waterway.

And this ram has two horns, and he says one's longer than the other. Now remember, horns are symbols of power, and they can also, and rams are often used in the Old Testament as symbols of leaders or rulers. So here we have this ruler figure with two long horns.

One's longer than the other. It seems like one of them comes up later than the other. No wonder he's a little surprised.

This is strange stuff. So that's what he sees. The ram appears, and then he describes in the next individual vision what this ram does.

So, he sees this ram charge. This is probably not just, you know, he's running. He's probably actually attacking and goring other animals.

He goes toward the west, the north, the south, doesn't mention the east, and he runs at these challengers, gores them. We don't get any details about who those challengers were. There are no other beasts described.

It's not of concern in the vision. But it is interesting. He's apparently attacked a lot.

It says that there's no one to rescue. So, I wonder, did Daniel see animals try to rescue and that they failed? He leaves a lot of gaps in what he describes. He summarizes this activity of the ram by saying he did as he pleased and became great.

Other translations will say it did whatever it wanted and magnified itself. We will hear that language repeatedly in the rest of Daniel's visions. So that is a keyword, a phrase that will keep coming up.

We'll also hear the repetition of the statement that no animal or no beast could stand before it. It had no challengers. And we'll hear repeated that there was none who could deliver from his hands.

So, listen for those things as we go. They are establishing patterns, patterns of power, and patterns of conflict that become greater and greater as the vision goes on. So that's the first vision block, the shortest one.

The second vision block is the goat. This is called, I mean it is a goat, it's a male goat, different translations. Some of them call it a billy goat, some of them call it a shaggy goat, some of them call it a he goat.

Take your pick. I'll call it the shaggy goat for fun. This is his vision, the vision block concerns the shaggy goat or the goat of the goats is actually literally what it says.

And in it, he has several different individual visions. The right notes are here. He has three individual visions.

In the first, which is verses 5 and 6, he sees the appearance of the goat. In verses 7 through 12, he witnesses the rampage of the goat. And then in verses 13 through 14, he overhears a dialogue between holy ones.

So the vision block begins in verse 5 and goes through 14. Let me read it for us. 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. He came to the ram with two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal. And he ran at him in his powerful wrath.

I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him. He struck the ram and broke his two horns. The ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him to the ground and trampled on him.

And there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power. Then, the goat became exceedingly strong. And 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. And out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, toward the glorious land. It grew great, even to the host of heaven.

Some of the hosts and some of the stars were thrown down to the ground and trampled on. It became great, even as great as the prince of the host. The regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown.

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. 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? And he said to me, for 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then, the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state. Alright.

So, he sees this one-horned goat charging from the west and is introduced with, hey, surprise, here comes this one-horned goat. And it races across the land. The Hebrew is something like, and nothing was touching the ground.

So, it's almost, you could almost say it flew. It flew across the ground, across the land. It has one huge horn between its eyes.

It comes up to the two-horned ram, and it runs at it with furious strength. We aren't told why this goat is so angry, but it races toward this ram. Then, Daniel starts the next individual vision, which is the rampage of the goat.

He says this goat was enraged. It struck the ram. It broke the ram's two horns.

It threw it to the ground. It trampled it. This is a mad goat.

And the reason the ram could succeed at all of this is because, or sorry, the goat could succeed because the ram had no power. Just as no beast had any power against the ram, now the ram has no power against the goat. And just as there was no one to deliver the other beasts from the ram, now there's no one to deliver the ram from the goat.

And the goat continues. And this language just keeps getting bigger and bigger. It magnifies itself and it's reaching to the hosts of heaven.

And at the peak of its strength, the single horn of the goat is broken. And out of that single horn come four horns arising to the four winds of heaven going every direction. And then, out of one of those, we have a smaller horn.

Some translations will say a little horn. That's what the ESV says. A smaller horn, a little horn coming out from one of the four.

And that's what the rest of this vision block is concerned with, the little horn. The four big horns just sort of disappear from the vision. They're not important.

What the vision cares about is this little horn. This little horn rises and becomes great. It grows exceedingly.

It says it grew exceedingly in three directions, which would be impossible to do all at once. So, it's probably describing the simultaneous reaching. It goes first to the south, then to the east, and then toward the glorious land, the ESV says.

Other translations say toward the beautiful. Beautiful or beautiful land is a reference to Israel and to Jerusalem specifically. We find other places in the Old Testament.

And the reason Jerusalem is beautiful is not because of its scenery. Sometimes the earth's actually not very beautiful at all. But it's beautiful because that's the place where Yahweh chose to put his name.

That's where Yahweh dwelled among his people. That's why it's beautiful. This little horn grows as far as the host of heaven, which is probably a reference to that divine assembly that serves under Yahweh, serves before his throne, and also fights on Israel's behalf.

We have the host of heaven that fights for Israel in the book of Joshua and 1 Kings. And again, in language you don't quite understand, this little horn causes some of the stars and some of the hosts to fall. So, you have what we're going to learn: a human king causing stars and hosts to fall.

And it tramples them. And honestly, verses 11 and 12, if you were to line up four different translations and read them, they would all deal with it a little bit differently. It's really difficult Hebrew.

The syntax is hard. The vocabulary is hard. The grammar is hard.

It's difficult. We have a general idea of what happens. Nobody doubts that.

But all the details are hard to be too sure about. It says this little horn even magnifies itself to the prince of the host. Or some translations will say the commander of the host.

And everyone agrees that that's a reference to God. The commander of the host is a reference to God. We'll come back to that when we get to the actual interpretation.

From this commander of the host is taken away, it says, the ESV says the regular burnt offering. That's reflecting another somewhat difficult word. It's tamid, and in some literal translations, it's called the continual.

But what it's a reference to is the daily sacrifices that happened in the Jerusalem temple. So, they happen twice a day. They happen in the morning.

They happen in the evening. And the command itself about making those sacrifices is that they were to be offered continually. So that word tamid is the continually part.

So in the book of Daniel it just represents those sacrifices. So, back to what happens here. The little horn takes away from the commander the regular sacrifice, and it says the place of the sanctuary, the place of the commander's sanctuary, was thrown down.

And then the host was given over along with the daily sacrifice. And it gives the reason for all of these things happening. It says it happens because of transgression.

Well, whose transgression? That's actually a huge question. Is it the transgression of the host? Is it the transgression of the people the host represents, so God's people? Is it the transgression of Antiochus ultimately? The transgression of the little horn? Whose transgression is it? We don't know. There's disagreement.

Commentators will go both ways, and this will come up again. The word transgression appears three times in this chapter, and trying to identify whose transgression is a little tricky. Even though this little horn is described with these words of these grandiose words, this little horn seems to have unlimited power.

But there are some subtle hints in the text that this power and this success is actually being allowed to the little horn. The little horn is not the one who's just conquering the world, but some hand behind the little horn allows it to conquer the world. For example, with the recounting of this little horn's greatest achievements, so taking away the burnt offering, throwing down its sanctuary.

In the Hebrew that's actually told with passive verbs. So, it's taken away, which they're subtle. This chapter is very subtle in its encouragement.

Sometimes, I call it stingy comfort. It's there, but it's not there. But you have to work to get it.

There's still a lot of suffering that goes on. So this little horn has great power, but there's just a little hint that the power is allowed. It's allowed to have the power.

It doesn't take the power. And that's something that fits within this theology of Daniel where you have great human kings. You have Nebuchadnezzar, who's this great king, but he is allowed to be king.

His power is derived from God. God grants it to him. So that's a theme of the book and it fits right in with the theme here.

It says that the little horn cast truth to the ground. We'll come back to what that means when the angel gets around to it. It says the little horn, it did and it succeeded.

Or whatever it wanted to do, it did. It prospered just like the ram had done. This little horn appears to have no limits.

There is one statement that's not repeated in this description of the little horn. So, I said that the description of the ram, the description of the goat, there were several repeated statements such as no one could stand against it. That's also said of the little horn.

And then a statement that there was none to deliver from that creature, from that beast. That statement is not said of the little horn. No one could deliver from his hand.

It's said of the ram. It's said of the goat. It's not said of the little horn.

But you'd think that it would be true, right? Here we have: if no one can stand against the goat, no one can stand against the ram; the little horn is even greater. Of course, there was no one to deliver from that, from the power. But the vision doesn't say that.

It doesn't bother to say it. And you always want to be careful when you make an argument from silence just because the vision doesn't say it. I don't want to read too much into it.

But I kind of wonder if that's another one of those subtle hints that there was someone who could have delivered from the little horn, but he stayed his hand. Now, that was true also of the others, right? If God had delivered from the little horn, he certainly could have delivered from the ram and the goat, too. But this vision doesn't really care about those.

It cares about the little horn because the little horn affects God's people. And so that might just be a subtle hint that there was someone who could deliver, but he allowed it to happen. He stepped back and allowed it to happen.

So, I might be over-reading. I'm okay with that. It's just another one of those subtle possibilities that would fit with the theology of the Book of Daniel.

The final individual vision within this vision block is that of this dialogue between the Holy Ones. So, Daniel hears Holy Ones or hears talking, and he's not really reported who these beings were, where they came from, just they're standing there. And they

have the appearance, one of them has the appearance of a man, or like a son of man is probably what it says in the Hebrew.

So, this looks like a human, has a human figure. And this Holy One says, how long? How long is this going to be allowed to happen? And that kind of language echoes a lot of what we hear in laments in the Psalms. How long, oh Lord? How long will you allow the wicked to prosper? How long will the righteous suffer? And it calls to mind this lament.

The specific question here is how long is that daily sacrifice going to be removed? How long is that desolating transgression from verse 12 going to be around? How long is the holy place going to be given over? How long is the host going to be given over? How long are all of these things going to last? The answer is, kind of specific, 2,300 evenings and mornings, it says. After that, a sacred place would be put right. Or ESV says the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.

That's all we get. There's no explanation of what 2,300 evenings and mornings mean. So, you can be sure that there are options available for what you might think that means.

There are at least three, three suggestions for what that number might signify. The first is that the number represents the number of evening and morning sacrifices in the temple. So there were two per day, right? There's a morning sacrifice, an evening sacrifice.

So, if you take 2,300 divided by two, you're going to get 1,150 days. So, over the course of 1,150 days, 2,300 sacrifices would be made. That's a little more than three years.

So, if you've read chapter seven, it talked about a time, times, and half a time. And I did not spend any time talking about that. But one way that is commonly interpreted, for better or worse, is that time is one, times, as in one year, times is actually a dual word.

We don't have dual in English. It's not just a straight plural. It means two.

So, one year, two years, and half a time is 0.5. So, you add all those together and you get three and a half years. Time, times, and half a time. There is a word for year that could have been used.

It's not used. So, I don't know if this is really how specific the vision is meant to be taken. But at any rate, this number that you could derive from time, times, and half a time is within the ballpark of this interpretation of 2,300 evenings and mornings.

It would be a little more than three years. That's one option. A second option for what that time frame means is that each of those 2,300 represents one day.

Each one represents one day. So, in the Old Testament, a day is often referred to as evening and morning. Evening and morning.

If you look at the Genesis 1 account, we have the evening and morning. That's one day, day one. So, 2,300 evenings and mornings would be 2,300 days, which is six years and about four months, which is just shy of seven years, and seven is the number of completion. So, the idea would be until the completion, the complete time of all these things, which is who knows when that is.

The third idea is that the number is symbolic, which is usually my favorite because you don't have to try to make all the numbers work and fit, which is really difficult in a text that's primarily literary. This isn't a mathematic text.

So, the number is symbolic, and if the number is symbolic, it doesn't have to fit some kind of calendrical interpretation. It doesn't have to fit on any kind of calendar. Whatever the exact point is, or whatever the exact time is, the point is that the sanctuary is going to be restored.

There's going to be an end to this suffering. And that, in some ways, it's encouragement, but it's not really great encouragement. Your suffering will end.

That's the encouragement. Okay, great. How long is it going to last? Well, it'll last, but it's going to end.

That's what the Holy One offers here. That's the end of the second vision block. And then Daniel is a little confused.

He doesn't understand it, so he looks for interpretation. He looks for understanding in the third vision block in verses 15 through 27. So let me read that.

When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And, behold, there stood beside me one with the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Uali, and it called, Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.

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. And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep, but he touched me and made me stand up.

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. As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. And the goat is the king of Greece.

And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. 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. And at the latter end of their reign, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise.

His power shall be great, but not by his own power. I just lost my spot. And he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in whatever he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints.

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. 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.

And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I arose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it." Okay, let me organize for us the individual visions that are part of this vision block before we go any further. So there are three; well actually, there are two.

First of all, I call this the interpretation of the vision of the evenings and the mornings. Now that's a long title. The reason I want to focus on the vision of the evenings and the mornings is because that's what the interpreter calls it.

We typically call this the vision of the ram and the goat, which does have a ram and a goat in it, but the angel refers to it as the vision of the evenings and the mornings. So, I'm going to stick with the angel. It's pretty reliable.

So, this is the interpretation of the vision of evenings and mornings there. So, the first thing that Daniel reports is one like the appearance of a man. And I think I misspoke over here.

I was looking at the wrong text. One like the appearance of a man, like a human. Then, in the second one, which is verses 16 through 26, he reports the interpretation.

And then there's a long list of that that I won't put on here. And verse 27 is not part of the vision proper, but it is Daniel's conclusion to the whole report. All right, so let's look at these more closely.

So, he first says in verse 15 that he sees before him, behold, surprise, he sees before him one having the appearance of a man. So, let me just correct myself regarding vision block two. He heard holy ones speaking, but he did not describe them as having the appearance of a man.

This is where the appearance of a man comes in. So, there stands before me someone who looks like a human. So, this is somebody new in the vision.

He's described other beings that he's seen, but this surprise is a new person. Then he reports what he heard. He doesn't see anything, but this part of the vision is what he hears.

He hears a human voice. So, there's the angelic figure, the one-like appearance of a man standing before him, but he hears a voice, a human voice, from the direction of the canal. He doesn't report seeing anything to go with that voice.

He just hears a voice, a human voice. And the voice says, Gabriel, explain the vision to this man. So, we can deduce here that Gabriel is this figure that appeared to him, this human-like figure, and he's being instructed by the voice to interpret the vision.

Gabriel is one of two angels who are named in the Bible. The other one is Michael. Gabriel appears by name here and later on in the book and then in the Gospel of Luke.

He's the one who comes to announce to, let's see, he announces the birth of John the Baptist and he announces the birth of Jesus. Michael is also named in the Bible. When we get to more literature written in the Second Temple that's not included in the biblical canon, we have named angels all over the place.

Angelology really develops a lot during the Second Temple period. So, Gabriel is the one who delivers messages from God. So, if Gabriel is being instructed to give this message, he's probably being instructed by somebody who has authority over him, right? It could be the voice of God himself, we don't know.

God's voice in the wilderness, sometimes it sounds like thunder and it's terrifying or many waters and sometimes it sounds like human voice. In one place it even sounds like a whisper. So, it's very possible that the voice, the human voice that Daniel reports hearing is the voice of God instructing Gabriel to interpret the vision.

So, Gabriel steps up and comes near to where Daniel stands. Daniel is frightened, and he falls on his face. And so, Gabriel says to him, understand, O son of man, the vision is for the end time or a time of the end. And in English translations, Gabriel's words

here kind of sound like he's talking about the end of human history, the very end of all things, which isn't necessarily what's going on here.

Gabriel is talking about an end time, the end of something, not the capital E and T time. It's the end of something. Daniel has witnessed in his vision events that refer to a particular time that I erased, a particular time, but Gabriel's going to specify which time he's talking about later.

So, then Daniel falls into a deep sleep, which could be kind of like a trance. This word is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe like this deep sleep that's brought on by God himself. So, Daniel falls into this deep sleep and Gabriel touches him, raises him up and he speaks again.

So, we have this long lead in to the actual interpretation, right? Gabriel's told to tell Daniel what the dream means, what the vision means. And we have Daniel almost passing out and we have him falling into a deep sleep. We have Gabriel touching him and raising him up, enabling him to receive the meaning of the vision.

This long lead in to the vision probably hints at the importance not only of what Daniel sees, but at the difficulty he's going to have taking it in. So, this is a very hard thing to see, it's a hard thing to understand, and it's a hard thing to absorb. There's great suffering being portrayed in this vision and Daniel's going to have to try to absorb that.

All of this difficulty that Daniel's having, getting ready for the vision, is just amplified several times when we get to the very last vision in the book. It takes almost a whole chapter to get Daniel ready to actually hear the message that God has sent. Alright, so the actual interpretation begins in verse 19.

And Gabriel says, Hine, or behold. And this probably is not a, hey, surprise! This is probably what I'm about to say, which is really important, so listen up. But then listen to what he says.

So, listen up, I'm going to make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation. Well, that's kind of a strange thing to say is important. Tell us the meaning of who all these beings are.

That seems more important than your telling me something that's going to happen later. I think that the importance of what Gabriel has just said here is actually something that's the primary comfort of this vision. So far in the vision report, the point has been made repeatedly that the suffering that Daniel is seeing, this vision that Daniel is seeing, has an appointed end.

So, in verse 13, the Holy One said, how long is this going to last? And in verse 14, we got a specific answer. 2,300 evenings and mornings. Verse 17, Gabriel says the vision is for an end time.

Verse 19, he says this is going to be at the end of the indignation. This point is repeatedly made that yes, this is horrible, but there is an end. This is about the end of it.

Someone has appointed the end of it. And it will come to pass. And we'll talk more about that as we go because as I said, I think the text really focuses on that being the encouragement, the comfort of this appalling vision.

Then the interpretation follows, and it's got really wonderful specificity for us. And something that's really wonderful about that is that commentators can't disagree. So if the angel says the ram is Medo-Persia, the commentators say the ram is Medo-Persia.

Nobody has to disagree about it. This is not true of chapter 7 and chapter 9, but we love an angel who is this specific. So, the ram is the kings of Media and Persia.

That's all Gabriel says. Now we saw a whole lot of stuff about this ram. We had his appearance described, the two horns, one longer, one comes up later.

We heard about what the ram did. Gabriel does not explain any of that. He just says that's who the ram is.

And then he interprets the goat and its large single horn. And the goat, everyone agrees, is the king of Greece. And everyone agrees also that that king of Greece, the single horn, is Alexander the Great.

The goat is the king of Greece and the great horn between his eyes is the first king. So, the first king, although technically he's not the first king, but it's beside the point. The first king is this Alexander the Great.

He's going to conquer Persia. The great horn between his eyes is the first king. So far, we have a wonderful agreement among the commentators.

And then, of the four horns that come up out of the single horn, the goat, tell us who those are. Well, all we hear from Gabriel is that those four horns represent four kingdoms that come from one empire. But they're not as strong as the single empire.

He doesn't identify those. But thankfully, everyone agrees that we're talking about the successors of Alexander the Great. There are four.

Some historians will put extra people in there depending on how you want to count the generals and how much power they had. Four could just be this number of totality. However, many generals actually got land and count as having had it, all of them.

We only care about two. We only care about two of these horns. Then Gabriel moves on to talk about this smaller horn.

In place of the four, four kingdoms shall arise, not with the same power. And then at the latter end of their kingdom, so those four, when the transgressors have reached their limit, then we get one king, this little horn. The little horn is a new king who arrives when the transgressors or when the transgressions, depending on the translation, have reached their full measure.

And again, we wonder whose transgression has reached its full measure so that this new king arrives. Well, there are two main options. Some commentators will say, well we're talking obviously about the oppressions of Antiochus IV, that little horn when his wickedness had reached its fullness.

That's possible. The other possibility is that it's a reference to apostate Jews in the second temple period. So, when their transgression had reached its fullness, then God keeps history moving and this is unleashed.

Again, you can find commentators on both sides of the issue, so I'm not going to settle it here. But this is the third, or actually final, occurrence of the word transgressors, transgression, that shows up in this chapter. In verse 12, the transgression was the reason for giving over the host and the continual or the burnt offering.

In verse 13, the transgression was the cause of the desolation. And then in verse 23 we have this completed transgression. This king, this little horn king, is described as being fierce of face and one who understands riddles.

That actually is a language that reminds people of Proverbs. People who have studied wisdom literature might hear some Proverbs in there. And understanding riddles is actually considered, usually, a positive trait.

This is a description that would be something you'd want your king or leader to be able to do. You want somebody who is fierce and someone who can understand difficult things. It's typically a compliment.

I think John Collins describes mastery of riddles as something normally considered a good thing. Such wisdom was a traditional attribute of monarchy, or at least of royal propaganda, all over the ancient Near East. But the other thing about this

description, this fierce face, while it might sound like just a strong, powerful king, it's a similar expression that's used of the seductive adulteress in Proverbs 7. She has a brazen face.

She's fierce of face. And it's her fierceness that allows her to lure this naive simpleton, this untaught young man. She lures him into her house, which turns out to be a highway to the grave.

And this lad is described as following her like a deer stepping into a noose. So, there might be a little hint of Gabriel suggesting that this king might appear to be wise, but he's going to be pretty manipulative also. And his wisdom is going to be perverse.

It's a perverse wisdom. His power will be mighty, but not with his power. There's another subtle hint that this little horned king rises to the top, but not with his own power.

There is someone else empowering him, enabling him, and allowing him to have great success. The little horn's actions that were described in 9 through 12 of the second vision block are interpreted by Gabriel, or summarized actually by Gabriel, just by saying that he would destroy extraordinarily or greatly, he would be successful, he would have great success, and he would do. And all it says is he would do.

Which probably means he would do whatever he wanted to do. There was nobody to stop him. With unsurpassed power that isn't even his own power, he would destroy strong, mighty men and holy people, or the people who are the saints, the ESV says.

He is a person of intrigue. He's cunning. And he makes deceit prosper.

So, he is wily. He achieves great success because he's clever. And for the end of this little horn, all the vision says is he shall be broken, but by no human hand.

That's all it says. That's all it says of his destruction. So, he's just shattered.

That's it, and he's gone from the scene. This great king is just gone. Just disappears quickly.

Then Gabriel calls this vision the vision of the evenings and the mornings. Says it's true. Why does Gabriel call it the vision of the evenings and the mornings and not the vision of the ram and the goat? That would seem to describe the content better, but he calls it the vision of the evenings and the mornings.

I think because it reminds, wait, we've heard evenings and mornings somewhere else in this text. Where did we hear that before? He's calling to mind earlier in the vision,

and that was when the Holy One had assured Daniel that the things that he's seen, these horrible things he's seen, are only going to last 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then, the sanctuary will be restored or made right.

By calling this the vision of the evenings and the mornings, I think Gabriel is giving us one final reminder in a chapter that's full of such reminders that even though things are going to be horrible, it's only for a time. God has evil on a leash, and he gives it a lot of leeway it seems, right? But he has it on a leash. What Daniel had witnessed was terrible, but it wasn't going to last forever.

Evenings and mornings, there is a set time for it. When those are completed, restoration will occur. Then, Daniel is instructed to seal up the vision.

That's a common statement in apocalyptic literature. In visions. And remember, Daniel's setback here is in the third year of Belshazzar.

The Jerusalem temple in its historical time frame is destroyed. It hasn't been rebuilt yet. And he's just seen a vision a couple of centuries down the road of a new temple that's also destroyed.

So, kind of put yourself in Daniel's shoes. He's still probably getting over the destruction of the first temple, and he's anticipating restoration as the prophets promised, and yet he has a vision of the destruction of another temple. No wonder he's overwhelmed.

He can't take it in. Daniel's reaction to this vision is worse, or more intense at least than it was in chapter 7. At the end of chapter 7's vision, he said his thoughts greatly alarmed him, and his color changed, but he kept the matter in his heart. Here he is sick for days.

He doesn't understand it. There's no one to explain it. I think part of the explanation for this more intense, more severe reaction that Daniel has is that he's watching great suffering.

I also think that with Daniel 7's vision, remember the glorious promise it offered. There was this vision of the one like a Son of Man receiving the kingdom, and the saints are going to rule with him and receive the kingdom, and it's a glorious promise. That's a great comfort at the end of Daniel's vision. In Daniel 8, the comfort is, it's not going to last forever.

Your suffering's not going to last. That is comfort. Don't get me wrong, that is comfort.

But it's not the same; it's not the same kind of comfort as looking at this glorious future. It's just seeing the end of the suffering. So, it's a comfort to be sure.

But I can see why Daniel is having trouble getting over this. It's a hard comfort to just absorb and rest in. So that's the primary comfort, is that the suffering will not last forever.

I think another comfort in this vision is that the host suffers, and they represent the people who suffer; they are not alone in their suffering. The commander of the host also suffers loss. The burnt offering is said to be taken away from him.

His sanctuary is thrown down. So, you have great suffering from the host, but you also have the commander suffering. And we could probably see that as perhaps a foreshadowing of the New Testament account of this incarnation, where God himself comes in the flesh, and what does he do? He lives alongside his people, and he suffers with his people.

He becomes this great high priest who can intercede for his people because he knows their experience better than anyone else. So, I think that's a secondary comfort. But the primary comfort of chapter 8, in my interpretation, is that hang on.

The suffering will not end. It will not last forever. There is an end to it.

God will bring it to an end. When we come back in the next lecture, we are going to look at chapter 7 and chapter 8 together and how people sort out the interpretation of the different empires. Thank you.

This is Dr. Wendy Widder in her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 11, Daniel 8, God's Leash on Evil.