

A Picture Is Worth 1000 Words

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[0 : 0 0] The first half of Daniel 1-6 contains stories, narratives. Some of us have heard the story of the fiery furnace and the writing on the wall and Daniel in the lion's den since we were children.

But Daniel chapter 7-12 is not included in most Sunday school curriculum. And if you read through those last several chapters, then you have begun to understand why.

Daniel 7-12 is not narrative. It does not contain stories for us to read and learn from. It is called apocalyptic.

And that word is almost as difficult to type as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. I just started writing the letter A in my notes. It's just too much work to write apocalyptic. I got it wrong every time. Apocalyptic literature uses vivid images and larger-than-life symbols.

And often the purpose of apocalyptic literature is to reveal future or final events. And despite the bleakness and sometimes the destruction that is associated with apocalyptic literature, it also often contains an underlying message of hope.

[1 : 2 5] This is true in biblical apocalyptic writings like Daniel 7-12, portions of Ezekiel, and the Revelation, among others.

These portions of Scripture give hope to God's people. That's the purpose. People who are often marginalized, people who are oppressed, people who are persecuted.

Apocalyptic writing teaches us to anticipate the ultimate triumph of good over evil, light over darkness, and life over death.

And in this way, apocalyptic writings give, hear this word, perspective. Perspective. Now, the stories in Daniel 2-6 are written in Aramaic.

We didn't talk about this an awful lot, but I think it's worth mentioning here. So, the stories in 2-6 are written in Aramaic. And when the author switches to apocalyptic writing, we would expect that he might also switch languages then, in which case we would have expected him to switch back to Hebrew in chapter 7, that Mike faithfully preached last week.

[2 : 5 0] But, he does not switch back to Hebrew in chapter 7. Instead, this image, this vision of the four beasts, each scarier than the one before, and the son of man, the one who rides on the clouds up to the throne of heaven, this is written also in Aramaic.

And I think there's an important lesson here. While subtle, I think we're intended to realize that these two halves of the book of Daniel need to stick together.

We need both the stories of 1-6, and we need the hope from the apocalyptic writings of 7-12. And chapter 7, being an apocalyptic portion, but written in the language of the stories, helps us keep these two halves of the book linked together.

Do you need perspective? Do you need hope? Do you feel oppressed? Do you feel ashamed? Do you feel exhausted? If that's true, then the second half of Daniel is Jesus' gift to you.

Daniel 8 occurs before the writing on the wall. And we know this, because as we look in verse number 1, we see that Belshazzar is king of Babylon when Daniel receives this vision.

[4 : 18] Remember I mentioned a few weeks ago, Daniel's not primarily concerned with chronology. And so chapter 8 actually happens before the writing on the wall.

Here's what happens two years after Daniel chapter 7. Chapter 8, verse 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.

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.

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.

[5 : 28] He did as he pleased, and became great. 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 the 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, 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.

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.

Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land.

[6 : 47] So Daniel's vision has three scenes. First, there is a ram with two horns. Second, there is a speedy goat with a single horn.

And then, there is a third horn, a little horn. Now, we do not need to be puzzled about what much of this vision means, because God directs the angel Gabriel to interpret it for Daniel.

And this is so very helpful. So look at verse 15. Here's God directing Gabriel to explain the vision to Daniel.

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, and I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.

Who could boss an angel around? God or Jesus, right? Who is God? God. So likely, this is God or Jesus directing the angel Gabriel to give Daniel the interpretation of the dream.

[8 : 06] Verse 17, of the vision. My apologies. So he came near where I stood, and when he came, I was frightened, and I fell on my face.

But he said to me, Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end. 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, and 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 two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. So we know this.

The ram with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia, and other kingdoms are unable to resist their expansion, and no one can be saved from their power.

[9 : 06] They do exactly as they please. Look again in verse 4. I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him.

No one can get in the way of this goat, or sorry, of this ram, and no one can rescue from the ram's power. He did as he pleased and became great.

I wonder if this vision may have fueled Daniel's boldness with Belshazzar, king of Babylon. Remember, he receives this vision while Belshazzar is king before the writing on the wall.

Daniel already knows that the kingdom of Babylon is not going to last forever. How? Because he has seen this ram charging west and north and south.

So when Daniel sees the writing on the wall, Daniel rightly interprets it as impending judgment on Babylon.

[10 : 11] Belshazzar, Daniel says, you are weighed, you are wanting, and you are about to die, you wicked king. But, the kingdom of Media and Persia doesn't last forever.

And this second scene of Daniel's vision is this goat that is expanding to the west, and it moves so quickly that it looks like it's not touching the ground. This reminds me of like cartoons.

Kids, you know what I'm talking about when like a character spins up their legs really fast and then they seem to just fly above the ground. I think that maybe is what is happening here.

This goat is advancing so quickly that it looks as though he's not even touching the ground. And the goat rushes towards the ram and crashes into it and breaks off both of the ram's horns.

And Gabriel tells Daniel that the goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the single horn represents its first king.

[11 : 18] Look at verse number five. 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 the 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 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.

Now, with the benefit of history, we believe this king of Greece, and the goat is the king or the kingdom of Greece, and the great horn between his eyes is the first king.

This is the verse I was looking for. Now, with the benefit of history, we believe that this first king of Greece is who? History nerds.

Unite! Now is your chance. It is Alexander the Great, okay? And although he was undefeated in battle, and though he was incredibly successful, Alexander died in the prime of his life at the age of 33, and he left behind no heirs, and his vast empire was divided into four parts, but it never recaptured its former strength or glory.

[13 : 08] verse 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.

Verse 22 is Gabriel's interpretation, 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.

So these are the first two scenes of Daniel's second vision. The ram representing the kingdom of Media, Persia, charges and conquers Babylon, and the goat representing Greece, charges and conquers the Medo-Persian empire.

But what about this third scene? What about this little horn? This is interesting, because the little horn gets the most attention in chapter eight.

In fact, we learn more about the little horn than we do about the ram or the goat combined. And I think there's a reason for this. I believe the little horn gets big attention because it oppresses God's people.

[14 : 34] Notice that in verse number nine. Out of one of them, out of one of these four conspicuous horns that used to be the Greek kingdom, the Greek empire, one of them came, out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land, towards the land of God's people, the promised land.

This little horn is expanding into the region that God had given to his people. And I believe that's why this little horn gets so much attention.

Keep reading. It grew, verse 10, 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.

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, 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.

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?

[16 : 18] And he said to me, For twenty three hundred evenings and mornings, then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.

Now remember, apocalyptic literature uses vivid, larger-than-life symbols. Daniel does not see the future perfectly clearly.

it's not as though Gabriel hands him a pre-publication of a history book. Daniel eight contains no names and no dates and only minimal chronology, but with the benefit of history, we are able to discern that this little horn that arose from the kingdom of Greece likely represents Antiochus Epiphanes.

Antiochus Epiphanes rose up from one of the horns of the Greek Empire. He began ruling in 175 BC and he was what you might say a big fan of Grecian culture.

And so he implemented a series of harsh measures against God's people, the Jews, essentially making Judaism a capital offense.

[17 : 43] He canceled the Sabbath. He outlawed circumcision. He banned the study of the Torah. He forbid the offering of sacrifices. He force-fed Jews pork.

I know that's hard for us to understand because we love pork and we love bacon. But for a Jew, these are unclean animals that are not to be consumed.

He force-fed them pork. He stole temple furnishings. He corrupted the priesthood with an illegitimate priest. And he erected an altar to Zeus in God's temple, sacrificed pigs on it, and then sprinkled the pig blood all over the temple.

Those who refused to renounce their religious beliefs and practices were tortured and killed one account from history tells the story of a single three-day period where Antiochus executed 40,000 Jews.

Listen to how Gabriel describes the little horn in verse 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.

[19 : 13] 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.

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.

Antiochus epiphanes maliciously and mercilessly persecutes God's people. He shakes his fist at the prince of princes, at God himself, and yet when Antiochus has served God's purpose, God deals with him effortlessly.

Daniel 8 provides hope for God's people relentlessly persecuted and killed by Antiochus.

[20 : 37] And Daniel 8 provides hope for God's people throughout history who suffer, people who suffer under cruel leaders, under corrupt systems, and under inconceivable injustices.

Can you imagine reading this text as a Jew suffering under Antiochus epiphanes and realizing this is really bad? This is what Daniel wrote down?

And yet finding in this apocalyptic writing hope knowing that God is going to deal with him effortlessly. here is God's perspective on world history.

Sin doesn't win. God sees all. God knows all. He even knows the sin that is in your heart, the sin that you think no one else could possibly know about.

Please don't shake your fist towards heaven like Belshazzar. don't shake your fist towards heaven like Antiochus epiphanes and think that you are somehow going to get away with your sin.

[21 : 54] You will not. You cannot repent and trust in Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5 21 Paul writes this, for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Sin doesn't win. God puts sin on Jesus so that all who trust in Jesus can receive by God's grace the righteousness of Christ.

Is Jesus your savior? Have you been born again? Children, have you been born again? are you saved? Look what this vision does to Daniel in verse 27.

And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Daniel is emotionally traumatized.

He is overwhelmed at the future horror that God's people must endure. and for several days he's unable to even get up. He's completely tapped out by what he has seen.

[23 : 14] And then it seems just as quickly Daniel returns to his responsibilities. The second half of verse 27, then I rose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.

I wonder if you noticed that Daniel's response is a sharp contrast to some who study Bible prophecy. Daniel does not panic.

He does not withdraw from public life. He doesn't stir others up with fear mongering or conspiracy theories about the future.

He's not making bold predictions. He knows what he has received. He knows what Gabriel has given him. And he doesn't understand it. And that's okay with Daniel. He's appalled by what he has seen.

He acknowledges that he doesn't understand it all. And yet, he doesn't create a commune and go off to prep for the end of the world.

[24 : 27] Daniel sees this horrific suffering that is coming for God's people. Suffering that will last for centuries. suffering that persists even now steadfast. And yet, Daniel remains faithful in a foreign land.

Do you see how this apocalyptic literature works? If a picture is worth a thousand words, then apocalyptic literature, with its vivid, larger-than-life symbols, describing future events, the ultimate triumph of good over evil, apocalyptic literature gives comfort to those who are oppressed.

It gives freedom to those who feel pressure to conform. It gives security to those who feel shame. It gives assurance to those who don't get out of life what they expected to get.

It gives hope to those who in their grief cry out, how long, oh Lord, will you forget me forever? Apocalyptic literature helps us persevere in faithfulness even while enduring tremendous suffering.

How does it do this? Well, it helps us grasp God's perspective. this is what we need.

[26 : 03] We need God's perspective on the world around us. We need God's perspective on suffering. We need God's perspective on adversity. We need God's perspective on injustice.

If we have our own perspective on all of those things, we're going to fly off in all sorts of directions, many of them probably sinful. but if we will hold to God's perspective and allow God's perspective to become our perspective, then like Daniel, we will be faithful in a foreign land.

Let me offer three perspective adjusting lessons from Daniel chapter eight. I don't often organize the sermon this way, but here we are.

Three perspective adjusting lessons from Daniel chapter eight. First, evil tends to get in over its waders.

Do you know what waders are? I thought maybe some of you would not, so I'm going to tell you. This is what waders are. If you go to the lake and you need to put a dock in the lake in the spring, it's often, cold.

[27 : 24] Does that make sense? Because it's been winter and it's been frozen, right? But you want to get the dock in the lake as quickly as possible so you can use it. I wish the brought ones were here.

They would help us affirm that this is true. You want the dock in the lake as quickly as possible, but that water is so cold. But when you're young and foolish and you want to be in the lake, you're eager to get the dock in.

But if your grandfather is wise, and mine was, he would wear waders. Now, waders are like big rubber pants that kind of go up to your chest.

And as long as you don't go in too deep and you don't get in over your waders, then you will stay dry even while your grandchildren are scurrying about and freezing trying to get this dock in the lake.

Did you have a question? I was thinking grandpa was feeling like papa was putting the dock in and he said that it's in the water running and it was actually pretty warm. Oh, it was actually, well, if you only get a little water, your body will heat it up.

[28 : 36] But listen, my grandfather was wise. He did not get in over his waders. The grandchildren went in well past where we should have been. We were comfortable up to our knees, right?

But no, you need to go in deep. The dock has to go in. This is what happens with evil. Evil, wickedness tends to get in over its waders, beyond where it is able to support itself.

Here's what I mean. Those who manipulated King Darius and trapped Daniel into praying, trapped Daniel while he was praying, those who did that, that malicious act to Daniel, what happened to them?

They and their families got eaten by the very lions that were supposed to eat Daniel. Evil got in over its waders with Daniel. Belshazzar desecrates God's golden goblets, and then what happens?

He dies that very night. Evil tends to get in over its waders. The furnace that Nebuchadnezzar heats up seven times hotter than it had ever been.

[29 : 53] What happens to the executioners who are trying to throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace? They get burned up, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego don't even get a sauna.

Evil tends to get in over its waders. Do you remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians?

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel. What happened to Paul? He's thrown in prison. He's unable to serve as a missionary and get out and plant new churches.

But Paul says, I'm in prison, but what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel. evil got in over its waders with Paul.

Jesus, cruelly tortured and crucified, the devil must have reveled in finally thinking he was the king of the mountain.

[30 : 57] But listen to what the author of Hebrew writes. He, Jesus himself, likewise partook of the same things, that is, Jesus took on flesh and blood, he became a man, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

Jesus took on flesh and blood so that he could suffer and die. The devil thought he had won, but evil got in over its waiters.

On the first day of the week, Jesus is alive. the first perspective adjusting lesson, evil tends to get in over its waiters, so we can wait patiently on God's justice without pursuing vengeance.

Second perspective adjusting lesson, the greatest humans are still dependent on God. What do we learn from Daniel 8 about these kingdoms of the world?

God rules them. He rules over them, so we don't need to be surprised when leaders rise and fall. We don't need to be surprised when nation attacks nation and goes to war with one another.

[32 : 28] We shouldn't be surprised by that. We don't have to be shocked when sin leads to temporary advancement. We don't need to be impatient about injustice that seems to go unpunished, and we don't need to be afraid of wickedness that seems to grow stronger every day.

God will bring all of Earth's history to its intended conclusion, and that includes the story that God has written for you.

So let this hope produce faith in your heart, the hope that God is writing a story, that he is still in control. Here's the second perspective adjusting lesson.

The greatest humans are still dependent on God, so we can ask the spirit for grace to persevere. final lesson.

Evil's winning streak does not undo or diminish Jesus' ultimate victory. Does it seem like evil is on a winning streak?

[33 : 51] It does, doesn't it? the conflict between darkness and light stretches back to the beginning. It is not difficult to notice that darkness and sin and death seem to be on a roll.

But just you wait. Just you wait. Sin doesn't win. The world is not spiraling out of control. The grave is empty, as Mike said, so that the throne wouldn't be.

And one day, the cloud rider will return and he will make all things new. Don't be afraid.

Cast all your anxiety on Jesus because Jesus cares for you. 1 Peter 5. After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself strengthen, sorry, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you to him be the dominion forever.

Amen. The final perspective adjusting lesson, evil's winning streak, does not undo or diminish Jesus' ultimate victory so we can remain faithful in a foreign land.

[35 : 24] Let's pray. Good Father, thank you for your word. Amen. Help us to understand the things that are important for us to understand.

Help us to believe the truths that we have seen in your word. Help us by the power of the Holy Spirit to obey those things that we believe are true.

We ask this for your glory and for our good in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.