

One of the distinguishing features of the book of Daniel is its focus on the Gentile world kingdoms in the first section of the book, namely, chapters 1–7. In the interpretation of Daniel’s vision in chapter 7, it was revealed to Daniel that the final stage of the fourth Gentile kingdom will be a time of great persecution of the nation of Israel by the little horn. Recall that when Daniel had his visions in chapter 7 and 8, the Babylonian kingdom was still the Gentile world power in control. Put yourself in Daniel’s position: You are living in the midst of the Babylonian captivity and God has revealed to you that there will be three more Gentile powers before the coming kingdom. Daniel surely asked himself “what is going to happen to Israel during these three additional kingdoms?” As we proceed through Daniel 8–12, we shall see that the remaining visions will highlight both the “near prophetic” and “far prophetic” issues that will (from Daniel’s time perspective) unfold for the nation of Israel.

As we work through the rest of Daniel, we see that God provides Daniel with an overview of the Medo-Persian/Greek empires (Chapter 8), a history of the nation of Israel from the time of Ezra/Nehemiah to the Second Coming (Chapter 9), which is immediately preceded by a time of great trouble for Israel. Chapters 10–11 reveal more events related to the Persian and Greek empires with an emphasis on the Gentile oppression of the nation. The final section in 11:36 through 12:13 deals with the end of the age, which we have seen pertains to the future final stage of the fourth Gentile empire, Rome.

When we come to Daniel 8, we have the same basic structure as in Daniel 7. There is an introductory section (8:1–2), the vision section (8:3–14), an interpretation section (8:15–26), and finally Daniel’s reaction to the vision (8:27). Since the last chapters primarily concerns the nation of Israel, Daniel wrote them in the language of Israel; Hebrew.

### Daniel 8:1–2

<sup>1</sup> In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. <sup>2</sup> I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal.

To the best of scholarly knowledge, the third year of Belshazzar’s rule would have been 551 BC. Daniel was about 69 or 70 years old. It would be 12 years before the Babylonian empire would fall to Cyrus. Daniel had a vision, presumably while he was awake, whereby he was in the city of Susa. Whether he was physically in Susa at the time or he had the vision in Babylon (likely because of 8:27) is a matter of debate. Susa was on the outskirts of the Babylonian empire, about 225 miles to the east.

At the time of Daniel’s vision, it was the capital of Elam; but during the Medo-Persian empire it became one of the royal cities. Susa was used as a winter residence by Persian kings and was made the administrative capital of the empire by Darius I in 521 BC. Darius also built a beautiful palace there. In 1901 archaeologists discovered the famous Code of Hammurabi in Susa. This outstanding find had been taken from Babylon to Susa by the Elamites probably in the thirteenth century BC. According to scripture, both Esther and Nehemiah lived in Susa, and Daniel probably had visited the city on official business. Some have located Daniel’s tomb in Susa, but there is no evidence to support this claim.<sup>1</sup>

Conservative scholars see the mention of Susa as an important city in the Persian empire as prophetic. Susa was the capital of the Elamites in antiquity, but its prominence was nonexistent until the Persian empire. Daniel further specifies that he was “beside the Ulai Canal.” Daniel was most likely referring to a canal that was next to the city. The canal provided water into the city, and acted like a moat to protect the city on its eastern side. Today the Ulai Canal is a low dry area between the Royal city and the lower city. Again, if we recall the discussions on authorship and dating, Daniel’s mentioning of the province of Elam for the location for Susa is something a 2<sup>nd</sup> century author would not have known.

### Daniel 8:3–14

Now if we read this section of Daniel (I won’t print it) there are really only a few things that we need to “interpret.” Fortunately, the angel Gabriel will help us in the interpretation section which follows.

<sup>1</sup> Miller, Stephen, R., *Daniel*, The New American Commentary, pp. 221.

The first issue in the interpretation of Daniel 8 is the identity of the ram and the goat. Here we do not have anything to interpret for Gabriel tells us their meaning. Verse 20 ... “The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia.”

The fact that the ram represents both the Median and Persian empires in their combined states rather than as separate empires is another important proof that the critics are wrong.<sup>2</sup>

The image of a ram with two horns representing the Medo-Persian empire is an apt symbol. The ram was an accurate representation of Medo-Persia because in the *Bundehesch* (a Persian religious book) the guardian spirit of that kingdom was portrayed in the form of a ram with sharp pointed horns, and the Persian king wore a ram’s head on his head when he stood before his army. The fact that one of the horns was larger than the other would indicate that one of the co-regent kingdoms would be more powerful than the other; in this case, the Persians were the dominate people in this two-pronged Gentile rule. Notice that the directions that the ram was butting did not include the east. Although the Persians did expand to the east, its principal movements were to the other directions as they themselves came from the east.

In verse 21, we have ... “The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king.” There can be no doubt the identity of this large horn on the shaggy goat, it is none other than Alexander the Great. The first detail is the direction of conquest, he was coming from the west. Certainly, the Greek empire would have to invade from the west if it were to overtake the Medo-Persian empire. The text tells us that the goat was coming from the west over the surface of the earth “without touching the ground.” This depicts and represents the speed at which the Greek empire overtook the ancient world under Alexander. The next comment that is made concerns the voracity of the goat against the ram. The text specifically says “rushed at him in his mighty wrath,” “enraged at him,” “struck the ram and shattered his two horns,” “trampled on him,” etc. For this, we need a little bit of history. Miller provides an apt summary.

The goat charging the ram in a fit of “great rage” (vs. 6) aptly describes Alexander’s assault on the Persian Empire. Hatred for the Persians had grown steadily since the time of Cyrus due to constant quarreling and fighting between Persia and Greece, and the Greeks were especially bitter over the invasions of Darius I (490 BC) and his son, Xerxes (480 BC). Alexander determined to avenge these assaults on his homeland, and vs. 7 graphically portrays the utter defeat of the Persian armies at the hands of the Greek forces.<sup>3</sup>

The events depicted here were fulfilled dramatically in ancient history. The forces of Alexander the Great first defeated the Medo-Persian armies in May 334 BC. The final decimation of the Persians occurred a few short years later in 331 BC and Greece had captured the known world. One of the important aspects of the Greek empire was the language and literature. Prior to the Greek empire under Alexander, the language had many dialects and was primarily confined to the Greeks. As the Greek language and culture spread throughout the empire, the use of the Greek language by the empire’s inhabitants gave rise to a common dialect of the language called the *koine*, the common language. This would become the common language of writing, commerce, literature, and OT Biblical translation and was instrumental in the propagation of the gospel several hundred years later.

The next incident is the breaking of the large horn and the coming up of four “conspicuous” horns in its place. It is a fact of history that Alexander died in Babylon at the young age of 32 and the Greek empire was never the same. In some twenty years the remnant of the empire would be divided among four of Alexanders generals into four major sections. (1) Cassander assumed control of Macedonia and Greece; (2) Lysimachus took control of Thrace, Bithynia, and most of Asia Minor; (3) Seleucus ruled over Syria and the lands to the east to Babylon; and (4) Ptolemy was made ruler over Egypt and Palestine.

We now come to the meaning of the little horn. The terminology in Aramaic/Hebrew is a little different than that used in Daniel 7. Compare visually the two terms ...

Daniel 7:8      זְעִירָה   אֲחֵרִי   קֶרֶן  
Little/small   another   horn

Daniel 8:9      מְצַעֲרָה   קֶרֶן־אַחַת  
Insignificant/young   another horn

<sup>2</sup> Walvoord, John, *Daniel*, pp. 225.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, pp. 223.

The meaning of the term in Daniel 8:9 literally means “insignificant because of its youth/size.” What is the meaning of this little horn (NASB translators chose the term “rather small horn,” perhaps to indicate this horn is not the little horn on chapter 7). Ancient history tells us that the eighth ruler of the Seleucid region of the empire was a nasty ruler who reigned from 175–164 BC. His name was Antiochus Epiphanes.

What are some indications that this “rather small horn” is not the same as the “little horn” of chapter 7 (as all critical scholars insist). While we could spend much time dissecting the reasons why this cannot be so, let me use the following table from <https://www.preceptaustin.org/>

<b>The Little Horn verses The Rather Small Horn</b>		
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Daniel 7</b>	<b>Daniel 8</b>
Kingdom	Fourth kingdom - Rome	Third Kingdom - Greece
Horn "Number"	Out from the ten => "11th"	4 Horns => "5th"
Time of Persecution	Time, times, and half a time => 3	2300 mornings & evenings => 6+ years
Messianic Kingdom Follows Destruction of Little Horn	YES	NO

There are many other reasons why the little horn of chapter 7 and the rather small horn of chapter 8 are not the same person. Please consult any good conservative commentary on Daniel for a discussion of these issues.

We come to our first interpretive challenge in verse 10. This little horn “grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall down to the earth.” Ordinarily, with the aid of the rest of scripture (though it is future scripture from Daniel’s perspective) we would initially see the host and stars to be angelic beings. Certainly, the NT describes the devil as being cast down from heaven with a third of his angels with him (Rev. 12:4, 9, 13); but we know nothing of the book of Revelation in the time of Daniel. While there is some merit to this interpretation, most conservative scholars view that the contextual factors favor a view that sees the host/stars of heaven as a reference to God’s people and the blasphemy against the prince or commander of the host. The single most useful verse to support his is verse 12 ... “on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice ...” Transgression is usually associated with continuing human sin and the giving over to the horn is an apt description of the persecution that Antiochus inflicted upon the Jews during his rule. That Antiochus Epiphanes blasphemed God and heavenly power as well as persecuting the people of Israel is well documented in history. A brief summary is in order, provided by Miller ...

Starting “small or little with the idea of insignificance,” indicates that Antiochus would have an insignificant beginning. Although his nephew, son of his older brother Seleucus IV, was the rightful heir to the throne, Antiochus gained this position through bribery and flattery. He made notable conquests in “the south” (Egypt), “the east” (Persia, Parthia, Armenia), and “the Beautiful Land” (Palestine). Palestine is called “Beautiful” not because of its scenery but because of its spiritual significance. Antiochus’s persecution of the Jews may be considered to have begun in 170 BC with the assassination of the high priest Onias III and terminated in 164 with the rededication of the temple in December of that year. During this period, he executed thousands of Jews who resisted his unfair regulations. In 169 BC, after a humiliating experience in Egypt when Antiochus was turned back by the Roman commander Popilius Laenas, the Syrian king plundered the temple in Jerusalem; taking furniture in the temple adorned with precious metals and committing “deeds of murder.” These “deeds of murder” are described in the historical book (Maccabees) as to have included the slaughter of eighty thousand men, women, boys, girls, and even infants by Antiochus’s soldiers during this attack on Jerusalem. In December 167 BC Antiochus committed his crowning act of sacrilege against the Jewish religion by erecting an altar to Zeus in the temple precincts and offering swine on it.<sup>4</sup>

The final part of verse 14 tells us how long this persecution by Antiochus will last, 2,300 evenings and mornings; which is a little short of six and a half years. This certainly is within the historical record of the persecution of Antiochus, from 170 BC till 164 BC. The close of verse 14 mentions the holy place (the temple) being properly restore refers to the cleansing and rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus on December 14, 164 BC. Today the Jews celebrate the Feast of Hanukkah (“dedication”) to commemorate this event.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted and summarized (by me) from Miller, Stephen, R., *Daniel*, The New American Commentary, pp. 225–226.

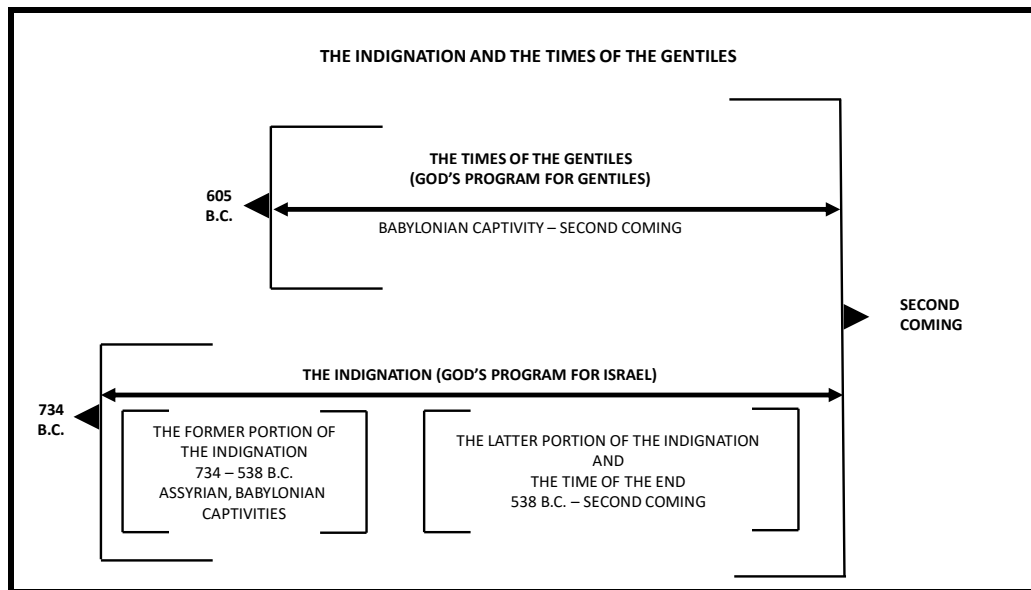
A noteworthy comment is appropriate at this time. William Miller was a preacher who lived from 1782 to 1849. He was “famous” for predicting the Second Coming of Christ based upon this passage of the 2300 days. He interpreted the days to be years and computed the return of Christ to occur between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. To his credit, Miller admitted his error and removed himself from any further chronological speculation. His followers would go on to start the Seventh Day Adventist denomination.

### Daniel 8:15–26

The interpretive section begins with Daniel seeking to understand the vision. The voice of a man (presumably The Lord God) instructs the angel Gabriel to “give this man understanding.”

One of the sources of interpretive ambiguity involves the various terms in verses 17, 19, and 26. The first term is in verse 17 and it says “the vision pertains to the time of the end.” What is meant by “the end” here? There are two schools of thought. One, the term is a general prophetic expression for the end of the existing prophetic horizon, which in this case is the transition from the Medio-Persian empire to the Greek empire. Two, others would see the parallels between the rule of antichrist during the tribulation period and would thus interpret “the end” as the eschatological end. I favor the former view as the Second Coming of Christ is not really in the context and it seems to focus on the second and third Gentile kingdoms.

In verse 19 we have another interesting aspect. It is mentioned by Gabriel that what he is telling Daniel will “occur at the final period of the indignation.” What is meant by “the indignation?” I believe Dr. Showers<sup>5</sup> has the best explanation of these terms:



Gabriel began the interpretation by declaring that the vision pertained to “the time of the end,” “the appointed time of the end,” and “the latter portion of the indignation.” It is apparent that “the time of the end” and “the latter portion of the indignation” are synonyms referring to the same period of time. But to what do they refer? A study of the term *indignation* throughout Scripture reveals that the indignation refers to the period of history during which God is indignant or angry with Israel because of its rebellion against Him. It is the time when God chastens Israel, usually at the hands of the Gentiles. The indignation included Israel’s conquest and cruel treatment by Assyria and Israel’s conquest and captivity by Babylon, and it will continue through the end of the Tribulation Period (the end of the Antichrist’s rule at the second coming of Christ). Thus, the indignation began during the 730’s BC and will continue to the second coming of Christ. It is basically parallel to the times when the Gentiles are the predominant power in the world. It could be said that *The Indignation* is the title of God’s program for Israel, and *The Time of The Gentiles*, is the title of God’s program for the Gentile during the same basic period of history.

While we could spend another couple of weeks surveilling the historical details of the fulfillment of Daniel 8, we must press on if we are to finish by Christmas. Please consult any of the conservative commentaries referenced this week for further discussions and details.

<sup>5</sup> The figure is adapted from, and the text is copied from, Showers, R. E., *The Most High God*, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1991.