

Daniel Chapter 8

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Introduction:

1. This chapter *expands* the visions of chapters two and seven. It was written before the fall of Belshazzar in chapter 5.
2. The text is written in Hebrew from here to the end of Daniel. The content relates to Israel, Daniel's people. The visions no longer relate to Babylon and so Aramaic, its diplomatic language, is not used.
3. The change in language used by Daniel may be relevant to us as Gentiles. In the next chapter, Daniel learns which year the Messiah is to appear and we are all interested in that.

(8:1.) During the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, saw another vision, following the one that had already appeared to me.

- This **vision** was two years after the dream of the last chapter (Daniel 7:1). The Babylonian Empire was still strong.

(2.) In this vision I was at the fortress of Susa, in the province of Elam, standing beside the Ulai River.

- In Daniel's **vision**, he was in a city 250 miles east of Babylon and in a **fortress** which may not have been built yet (this is a vision). In reality, Daniel was still living in Babylon.

(3.) As I looked up, I saw a ram with two long horns standing beside the river. One of the horns was longer than the other, even though it had grown later than the other one. (4.) The ram butted everything out of his way to the west, to the north, and to

the south, and no one could stand against him or help his victims. He did as he pleased and became very great.

- Like the vision presented in the previous chapter, the future is unfolded by the use of animals enhanced to convey certain truths.
- Daniel saw a **ram** with **two long horns**, but **one of the horns was longer than the other**. The angel Gabriel explained these horns:

The two-horned ram represents the kings of Media and Persia. (8:20 NLT)

- The **ram** pushed **westward** against Babylon, Syria, and Asia Minor, **southward** against Egypt and **northward** against the Armenian and Scythian nations.
- It did not push eastward because the Persians themselves came from the east. The three directions may correspond with the three ribs in the mouth of the bear in 7:5.
- The Medo-Persian empire could not be stopped. The empire nearly reached to Athens on the west, Egypt on the south and the Aral Sea on the north. It was the largest world kingdom to date.

(5.) While I was watching, suddenly a male goat appeared from the west, crossing the land so swiftly that he didn't even touch the ground. This goat, which had one very large horn between its eyes, (6.) headed toward the two-horned ram that I had seen standing beside the river, rushing at him in a rage.

- Daniel was thinking over the meaning of this rambunctious **ram** when a galloping **male goat** appeared out of the **west**.
- This **male goat** traveled so fast it didn't look like it **touched the ground**. Verse 21 shows it to be a Greek **goat** and the notable **horn** is explained as the first king. This corresponds to the four wings of the leopard in Daniel 7:6.
- Galloping **goat** encounters rambunctious **ram**.

■ *Wikipedia* reads:

Born in Pella in 356 BC, Alexander (the Great) succeeded his father, Philip II, to the throne (of Greece) at the age of twenty. He spent most of his ruling years on an unprecedented military campaign through Asia and northeast Africa, until by the age of thirty he had created one of the largest empires of the ancient world, stretching from Greece to Egypt and into northwest ancient India. He was undefeated in battle and is considered one of history's most successful military commanders.

■ *Wikipedia* again:

Alexander broke the power of Persia in a series of decisive battles, most notably the battles of Issus and Gaugamela. He subsequently overthrew the Persian King Darius III and conquered the entirety of the First Persian Empire. At that point, his empire stretched from the Adriatic Sea to the Indus River.

(7.) The goat charged furiously at the ram and struck him, breaking off both his horns. Now the ram was helpless, and the goat knocked him down and trampled him. No one could rescue the ram from the goat's power.

(8.) The goat became very powerful. But at the height of his power, his large horn was broken off. In the large horn's place grew four prominent horns pointing in the four directions of the earth.

- For added drama, the galloping **goat** rammed the **ram** and broke off its **horn**. This took place where Daniel was (in vision) standing in the capital city of the Persian Empire. Persia was being destroyed in its own citadel.

- The national emblem of Greece was a **goat** and is found on ancient Greek coins.
- The ancient capital of Macedonia was called Aegae - the **goat** city. The waters next to Greece was called the Aegean, or “**Goat** Sea.”
- This was one self-glorifying Greek **goat**. “...whereupon he was exalted and his heart was lifted up.”



1 Maccabees 1:3 reads:

“And went through to the ends of the earth, and took spoils of many nations, insomuch that the earth was quiet before him; whereupon he was exalted and his heart was lifted up.”

- But the **large horn** was soon **broken** (vs. 8) and replaced by **four prominent horns** going **four** different **directions**. The breaking of the large horn corresponds to the death of Alexander the Great.



(9.) Then from one of the prominent horns came a small horn whose power grew very great. It extended toward the south and the east and toward the glorious land of Israel. (10.) Its power reached to the heavens, where it attacked the heavenly army, throwing some of the heavenly beings and some of the stars to the ground and trampling them. (11.) It even challenged the Commander of heaven's army by

canceling the daily sacrifices offered to Him and by destroying His Temple.

- A **small horn** developed out of one of the four horns of verse 8.
- This **small horn** focused on conquering including the **glorious land of Israel** (vs. 9). The Jewish reader would understand (Daniel 11:16). This was a small horn (vs. 9), but talked big (vs. 11).
- **Paul Butler** writes,

“The description given here and in subsequent verses of this chapter is so definite and specific that the “little horn” here can be no other than Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) and his immediate predecessors (The Seleucids). Ptolemy I, one of the four who succeeded Alexander to his empire, appointed Seleucus Nicator (312-280 B.C.) to administer Syria for him.”
- *The Message* says:

It humiliated heaven's army and dishonored its leader by keeping him from offering the daily sacrifices. In fact, it was so terrible that it even disgraced the temple and wiped out true worship. It also did everything else it wanted to do. (vs.11-12).
- Continual ceremonies like burnt offering, lighting of lamps, and others routines of temple worship were ended.
- Just as Daniel was vitally interested in Israel’s future, so Christian believers today can be interested in the challenges and developments of the church in other nations. This writer prays each morning for the believers in Pakistan, a mostly Muslim nation. Next door in Afghanistan, there are a tiny handful of believers that I learned about from a magazine. A retired U.S. general is working to meet their physical and spiritual needs. Several have been baptized into Christ as a result of his heart-felt involvement. Iran is a place where the gospel is flourishing.

While the politicians are dedicated Muslims, many among the rank and file are turning to Jesus.

(12.) The army of heaven was restrained from responding to this rebellion. So the daily sacrifice was halted, and truth was overthrown. The horn succeeded in everything it did.

- 1 Maccabees 1:41-43:

Moreover king Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom, that all should be one people, And every one should leave his laws: so all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king. Yea, many also of the Israelites consented to his religion, and sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the sabbath.

(13.) Then I heard two holy ones talking to each other. One of them asked, "How long will the events of this vision last? How long will the rebellion that causes desecration stop the daily sacrifices? How long will the Temple and heaven's army be trampled on?" (14.) The other replied, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the Temple will be made right again."

- **Paul Butler** writes:

The period (2300 days) are undoubtedly referring to the period of Antiochus' abominable treatment of the Jews. This began in the year 171 B.C., one year before his return from his second expedition to Egypt. In this year began the laying waste of the sanctuary. The termination would then be the death of Antiochus (164 B.C.). The 2300 days cover a period of six years and about 4 months.

(15.) As I, Daniel, was trying to understand the meaning of this vision, someone who looked like a man stood in front of me. (16.)

And I heard a human voice calling out from the Ulai River, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of his vision."

- It was important for **Daniel** to understand the visions. One appearing like a **man** appeared to him (vs. 15). It is reasonable to say this was the *second person of the Godhead*, the One who was later born in Bethlehem. This *personality* who appeared was able to command the angel **Gabriel**. Notice how Gabriel described his job:

Then the angel said, "I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was He who sent me to bring you this good news!" (Luke 1:19 NLT)

(17.) As Gabriel approached the place where I was standing, I became so terrified that I fell with my face to the ground. "Son of man," he said, "you must understand that the events you have seen in your vision relate to the time of the end." (18.) While he was speaking, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground. But Gabriel roused me with a touch and helped me to my feet.

- **Gabriel** came near to Daniel. The **time of the end** may well be the end of the captivity and the end of the history period covered by this billy goat. It could not be the end of time as we think of it.
- The vision was emotionally draining for Daniel and he **fainted**.

(19.) Then he said, "I am here to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath. What you have seen pertains to the very end of time. (20.) The two-horned ram represents the kings of Media and Persia. (21.) The shaggy male goat represents the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes represents the first king of the Greek Empire. (22.) The four prominent horns that replaced the one large horn show that the Greek Empire will break into four kingdoms, but none as great as the first.

- *The Message* translation is informative here:

And then he continued, 'I want to tell you what is going to happen as the judgment days of wrath wind down, for there is going to be an end to all this!'

- 1 Maccabees 1:1.

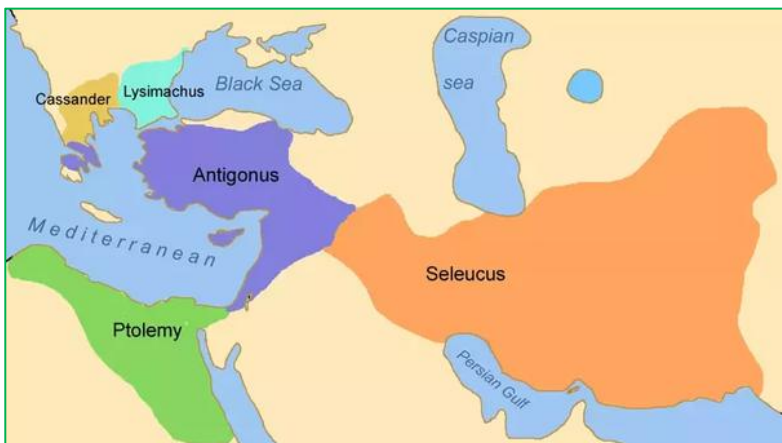
“And it happened, after that Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came out of the land of Chettiim, had smitten Darius king of the Persians and Medes, that he reigned in his stead, the first over Greece . . .”

- **Charles Boutflower** writes:

Hence that last victory at Arbela touched a vital part, since it made Alexander master of the immense wealth stored up at Shushan ; wealth which, wisely expended in the hire of Greek mercenaries, might have saved, or at any rate prolonged, the kingdom of Persia.

- **The Greek Empire will break into four kingdoms.** Notice this from 1 Maccabees 1:6:

“Wherefore he called his servants, such as were honourable, and had been brought up with him from his youth, and parted his kingdom among them, while he was yet alive.”



(23.) "At the end of their rule, when their sin is at its height, a fierce king, a master of intrigue, will rise to power. (24.) He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause a shocking amount of destruction and succeed in everything he does. He will destroy powerful leaders and devastate the holy people.

- 1 Maccabees 1:9-10 addresses this:

And after his death they all put crowns upon themselves; so did their sons after them many years: and evils were multiplied in the earth. And there came out of them a wicked root Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king, who had been an hostage at Rome, and he reigned in the hundred and thirty and seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

(25.) He will be a master of deception and will become arrogant; he will destroy many without warning. He will even take on the Prince of princes in battle, but he will be broken, though not by human power. (26.) "This vision about the 2,300 evenings and mornings is true. But none of these things will happen for a long time, so keep this vision a secret."

- The outcome of **this vision** would not be for a long, long while. There would be little use in telling others about it at this time.
- This verse, misapplied, has started religious movements in the United States of America. William Miller calculated 2,300 years from Daniel's time and announced that Jesus would return in 1844. The *Seventh-Day Adventist Church* emerged from this teaching. The *Jehovah Witness* movement also comes from this miscalculation as does the *Worldwide Church of God*.

(27.) Then I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for several days. Afterward I got up and performed my duties for the king, but I was greatly troubled by the vision and could not understand it.

- **Daniel** certainly was not working for Belshazzar, because that local **king** did not know anything about him. He must have been in the employ of the Empire instead of the city. Somewhat like working for the Federal Government instead of the local city government.
- **Matthew Henry** writes:

He (Antiochus), hearing that the Jews had cast the image of Jupiter Olympius out of the temple, where he had placed it, was so enraged at the Jews that he vowed he would make Jerusalem a common burial-place, and determined to march thither immediately; but no sooner had he spoken these proud words than he was struck with an incurable plague in his bowels; worms bred so fast in his body that whole flakes of flesh sometimes dropped from him; his torments were violent, and the stench of his disease such that none could endure to come near him. He continued in this misery very long.

At first he persisted in his menaces against the Jews; but at length, despairing of his recovery, he called his friends together, and acknowledged all those miseries to have fallen upon him for the injuries he had done to the Jews and his profaning the temple at Jerusalem.

Then he wrote courteous letters to the Jews, and vowed that if he recovered he would let them have the free exercise of their religion. But, finding his disease grow upon him, when he could no longer endure his own smell, he said, It is meet to submit to God, and for man who is mortal not to set himself in competition with God, and so he died miserably in a strange land, on the mountains of

Pacata near Babylon: so *Ussher's Annals*, A.M. 3840, about 160 years before the birth of Christ.

(from *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database*. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)