

## ***Session 7 The Forerunner Message in Daniel 8***

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Daniel 8 recounts the second of Daniel’s four visions that he received near the end of his life. It focuses on the second (Persia) and third (Greek) kingdoms of Daniel’s vision in Daniel 7.
- B. Daniel saw two animals—a ram with two horns and a goat with one large horn. Both animals speak symbolically of empires in the ancient world; they may also have an end-time application.
- C. The “ram empire” refers to Persia, or Iran, attacking nations to the west, north, and south, seeking to increase its military power. The “goat empire,” referring to Greece (including Turkey, Syria, etc.), defeated the ram. Gabriel explained that the ram represented Persia and the goat, Greece (8:20-21).
- D. There are two parts to this vision (8:1-8 and 8:9-26).
1. The first part of the vision describes the Persians conquering westward toward Babylon, etc. (8:3-4, 20) until they are defeated by the Greeks under Alexander the Great (8:5-8, 21). Some see an end-time fulfillment of 8:1-8—see Joel Richardson’s *“The vision of Daniel 8.”*
  2. The second part describes the reign of the Antichrist, referred to as the “little horn” (8:9-26). The Antichrist is foreshadowed by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Seleucid king based in Syria who reigned for twelve years (175-164 BC).
- E. Gabriel made his first appearance in Scripture in this vision to give insight about the Antichrist. Gabriel emphasized that this vision would be fulfilled in the end times (8:16-19). Each time he appears in Scripture, it is to make known significant events and truths related to the coming of Messiah. Gabriel did not appear to Daniel merely to affirm the coming of Antiochus Epiphanes.
- <sup>16</sup>“Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.” <sup>17</sup>...I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end”...<sup>19</sup>And he said, “Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be...”<sup>26</sup>The vision...refers to many days in the future.” (Dan. 8:16-19, 26)*

F. Outline for Daniel 8

**8:1-14 Daniel’s vision of the ram and goat**

8:1-2 The setting of this vision—Daniel’s second vision

8:3-4 Persia symbolized as a ram with two horns

8:5-8 Greece symbolized as a goat with a notable horn

8:9-14 The little horn as the Antichrist, foreshadowed by Antiochus Epiphanes

**8:15-25 Gabriel appeared to Daniel to explain and expand the vision**

8:15-19 The vision pertains to the end times

8:20-22 Gabriel explained the symbols in the vision

8:23-25 The Antichrist’s personality and power

**8:26 The importance of the vision**

**8:27 Daniel’s response to the vision**

## II. THE SETTING OF THIS VISION—DANIEL’S SECOND VISION (DAN. 8:1-2)

- A. This vision in 551 BC described the Persians conquering westward, moving towards Babylon. Persia conquered Babylon 12 years later in 539 BC. Daniel served in the Babylonian government.
- <sup>1</sup>In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar [551 BC] a vision appeared to me—Daniel...*  
*<sup>2</sup>I saw in the vision...that I was in Shushan, the citadel [future palace in Persia], which is in the province of Elam [Persia]... (Dan. 8:1-2)*
- B. **Third year:** 551 BC. Daniel was about 70 years old. This was two years after his Daniel 7 vision.
- C. **I was in Shushan:** In this vision Daniel “traveled in the Spirit” to a distant city, similar to Ezekiel (Ezek. 8:3; 40:1). Shushan was about 250 miles east of Babylon, where Daniel lived.

## III. THE RAM WITH TWO HORNS (DAN. 8:3-4): PERSIA

- A. Daniel saw a ram with two horns pushing to the west, to the north, and to the south (8:3-4).
- <sup>3</sup>I lifted my eyes and saw...a ram [the Medo-Persian Empire] which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.*  
*<sup>4</sup>I saw the ram pushing [conquering] westward, northward, and southward, so that no beast [nation] could withstand him...but he did according to his will and became great. (Dan. 8:3-4)*
- B. **A ram:** The ram in the vision represents the Medo-Persian Empire (8:20).
- C. **Two horns:** This speaks of two ancient kingdoms—Media and Persia—that formed an alliance.
- D. **The ram pushing:** The ram pushed or made conquests to the west, north, and south. Historically, the Persian Empire conquered lands in three main directions: *westward* (Babylonia, Syria, Israel, Asia Minor), *northward* (regions around the Caspian Sea), and *southward* (Egypt and Ethiopia).

## IV. GOAT WITH ONE HORN (DAN. 8:5-8): GREECE

- A. Daniel saw a male goat attacking the ram—the Greeks defeated the Persian Empire in 331 BC.
- <sup>5</sup>...a male goat [Greece] came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn [Alexander the Great]...*  
*<sup>6</sup>Then he came to the ram [Persia]...and ran at him with furious power. (Dan. 8:5-6)*
- Without touching the ground:** This speaks of speedy military victories. Alexander conquered the Persians and the Middle East within three years (334-331 BC).
  - Notable horn:** The notable horn was Alexander the Great, Greece’s first king (8:21).
- B. Alexander the Great attacked Persia with great rage and completely defeated Persia (8:7).
- <sup>7</sup>I saw him [Alexander] confronting the ram [Persia]; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him [Alexander], but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him... (Dan. 8:7)*

C. Alexander the Great's rapid triumphs were very great (8:8).

<sup>8</sup>*The male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken [death of Alexander], and in place of it four notable ones [Alexander's four generals]... (Dan. 8:8)*

1. **Large horn was broken:** Alexander suddenly died in Babylon at the age of 32 in 323 BC.
2. **Four notable ones:** Alexander's four main generals divided his kingdom into four kingdoms.
  - a. **Seleucus** ruled parts of Syria, Babylonia, Turkey, Persia, and a region to the east.
  - b. **Cassander** ruled Macedonia and Greece.
  - c. **Lysimachus** ruled Thrace (Bulgaria) and much of Asia Minor (western Turkey).
  - d. **Ptolemy** ruled Egypt, Cyprus, and Israel.

## V. THE LITTLE HORN: THE ANTICHRIST (DAN. 8:9-14)

A. Daniel saw the Antichrist as a "little horn" that defiled Israel (8:9-14).

<sup>9</sup>*Out of one of them came a little horn [the Antichrist] which grew exceedingly great toward the south [Egypt], toward the east [Babylon], and toward the Glorious Land [Israel]. (Dan. 8:9)*

1. **A little horn:** The Antichrist will start with a little measure of authority—a regional leader.
  - a. The little horn in 8:9 is the same man as the little horn in 7:8—the Antichrist.
  - b. Many see the little horn as having its ultimate fulfillment in the Antichrist yet with a partial fulfillment in the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC).
2. **Out of one of them:** The Antichrist will come "out of" one of the four Greek kingdoms (8:9) that resulted from the division of the empire that occurred after Alexander the Great's death.

B. The Antichrist may come out of the geographic territory or people groups that are associated with both the Seleucid Empire (Greeks) and the Roman Empire which included Greece and Turkey.

C. The little horn will affect the host of heaven (8:10). This is considered as the most difficult verse in the book of Daniel. A host means an army. The host of heaven speaks of an army related to heaven.

<sup>10</sup>*"And it [little horn] grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground and trampled them." (Dan. 8:10)*

1. **Grew up to the host of heaven:** The Antichrist will "grow up" to the host of heaven. This may refer to his actions creating a "chain reaction in the spirit realm" that affects the hosts in heaven—fallen angels (demons) being cast to the earth in a war with Michael (Rev. 12:7-9).

<sup>4</sup>*His [Satan] tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth...*

<sup>7</sup>*And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with...the dragon and his angels [demons]...<sup>8</sup>but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. <sup>9</sup>...Satan...was cast to the earth, and his angels [demons] were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:4-9)*

2. **Cast the host and stars:** The Antichrist will cast to the ground some of the host and the stars.
  3. Some see the host and stars as *fallen angels* cast to the earth (Rev. 12:7-9). This view sees the Antichrist as involved with fallen angels in the heavenlies being cast down to the earth.
  4. Some see the host as the *Jewish people*, and the stars as *Jewish leadership* (8:13; Rev. 12:1).
  5. Some see the stars as *persecuted faithful believers* who will shine like stars (12:3; Mt. 13:43), as the Antichrist will persecute God’s people (8:13, 24).
- D. The little horn takes away the daily sacrifices and casts down the sanctuary (8:11-12).  
***<sup>11</sup>He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host [Jesus]; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. <sup>12</sup>Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn [Antichrist] to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered. (Dan. 8:11-12)***
1. **He exalted himself:** The Antichrist will exalt himself as high as Jesus (8:11, 25).
  2. **Daily sacrifices:** The Antichrist will *take away* (8:11) and *oppose* (8:12) the daily sacrifices.
  3. **Sanctuary:** The sanctuary being cast down refers to the Jerusalem temple being defiled. Some see this as “Satan’s sanctuary” being cast down as described in Revelation 12:7-9.
  4. **Transgression:** The great end-time sin in Israel is in making a covenant with the Antichrist.
- E. The Antichrist will trouble the temple for 2,300 days (8:13-14). He will defile the temple by *removing the daily sacrifices, trampling the sanctuary, trampling the host, and committing “the” transgression*, which is to set up the abomination that results in the desolation of nations.  
***<sup>13</sup>I heard a holy one [angel] speaking; and another holy one [angel] said...“How long will the vision [of opposition] be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?”<sup>14</sup>And he said...“For two thousand three hundred days [2,300 days]; then the sanctuary [the temple] shall be cleansed.” (Dan. 8:13-14)***
1. **The sanctuary shall be cleansed:** Daniel learned in his fourth vision that the sanctuary will not be cleansed until 1,290 days after the abomination of desolation is set up (12:11). Jesus will return to cleanse the sanctuary (8:14) and remove the abomination of desolation (12:11).
  2. **2,300 days:** There will be a 2,300-day period (six years and four months) of opposing the sacrifices and defiling the temple (8:14; 11:31;12:11) until the temple is cleansed by Jesus.  
***<sup>31</sup>And [military] forces...shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices and place there the abomination of desolation. (Dan. 11:31)***
  3. The first sign of the Antichrist’s betrayal of Israel will start 2,300 days *before* the sanctuary is cleansed. Something related to *resisting or opposing the temple service* will occur 2,300 days before the abomination of desolation ends and the sanctuary is cleansed. We are not sure what the resistance will be. It will be the first sign that the “man of peace” who confirmed a covenant in the Middle East (9:27) is hiding his true identity as an evil, demonic man.

## VI. GABRIEL APPEARED TO DANIEL (DAN. 8:15-22)

- A. God sent Gabriel to give Daniel understanding of the vision (8:15-16). His appearance indicates the importance of this vision. *This is the first time that Gabriel appears in Scripture, and it is to reveal the power, cruelty, and evil of the Antichrist.* Gabriel is mentioned four times in the Scriptures.

*<sup>15</sup>When I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning...<sup>16</sup>I heard a man's voice... who called, and said, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision."<sup>17</sup>He said to me, "Understand...that the vision refers to the time of the end"...<sup>19</sup>And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be."...<sup>26</sup>"And the vision...refers to many days in the future." (Dan. 8:17-19, 26)*

1. The theme most emphasized in Daniel's four visions, surprisingly, is not Jesus, but the Antichrist. Why? Because the Lord knows that many will be *deceived* by the Antichrist and be tempted to be *offended* at God when He allows the Antichrist to persecute His people.

2. In Matthew 24, Jesus' primary warning was to avoid *deception* (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24).

*<sup>4</sup>"Take heed that no one deceives you...<sup>5</sup>Many will come in My name...and will deceive many...<sup>11</sup>Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many...<sup>24</sup>For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24)*

- B. God raised Daniel up as a forerunner prophet 2,500 years ago as a premier gift to the generation in which the Lord returns, so that God's people would be prepared with understanding of what the Word says about the Antichrist and would not yield to *fear, offense, lust, or deception* but be filled with clarity, peace, purity, and confidence in God's leadership.
- C. **The indignation:** In the Old Testament, the term *indignation* is used at times when God was indignant with Israel because of her sin and disciplined her through the oppression of Gentile armies—Assyria (Isa. 10:5, 25) and Babylon (Lam. 2:6). The term "*the*" *indignation* refers to God's discipline of Israel specifically during the Great Tribulation (Dan. 12:1, 7).
- D. Gabriel interpreted the ram with two horns (8:3-4) as referring to the kings of Media and Persia and the male goat (8:5-8) with the large horn (8:20-22) as speaking of Greece, and its large horn of Alexander the Great. Most agree that these were fulfilled by the Medo-Persian and Greek empires.
- <sup>20</sup>"The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia.<sup>21</sup>And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king [Alexander the Great].<sup>22</sup>As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power." (Dan. 8:20-22)*
- E. The *notable horn* (8:5) and the *large horn* (8:21) between the goat's eyes is Alexander the Great, Greece's first king (8:21). He is also the *broken horn* (8:8) who died at 32 years old in 323 BC.
- F. The *four notable horns* (8:8) speak of the four kingdoms that arose following Alexander's death. After Alexander died, four of his notable generals divided his kingdom into four lesser kingdoms.

## VII. THE ANTICHRIST'S PERSONALITY AND POWER (DAN. 8:23-25)

- A. Daniel 8 emphasizes the Antichrist's activities related to the Jewish people and the temple (8:9-14), as well as the great cruelty of his reign of terror over the nations (8:23-25).
- <sup>23</sup>***"In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise [the Antichrist], having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes.***
- <sup>24</sup>***His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power [by demonic power]; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty and also the holy people.***
- <sup>25</sup>***Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes [Jesus], but he shall be broken without human means [by God's power]."*** (Dan. 8:23-25)
- B. ***Transgressors will reach their fullness:*** In the end times, sin will reach the greatest heights ever in history (Dan. 8:23; 12:10; Mt. 13:30; 1 Thes. 2:16; Rev. 9:20-21; 14:18; 17:4; 18:5).
1. ***Destroy fearfully:*** He will destroy in a fearful way and on an unprecedented level (8:24). Here the Hebrew word for *fearfully* includes the concept of *unique*, as in *uniquely fearful*. He will use unique ways to kill in large numbers and will use fearful methods to produce terror.
  2. ***Destroy the mighty:*** He will not be afraid to kill the mighty—the most prominent world leaders (politics, finances, science, etc.)—as well as beloved public figures (8:24).
  3. ***Destroy the holy people:*** He will kill Jewish people as well as members of the body of Christ (Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; 11:33-35; 12:7, 10; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9, 14; 9:21; 11:7; 13:7, 15; 16:5-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4; cf. Mt. 10:21-22, 28; 24:9; Lk. 12:4-7; 21:16-19; Jn. 15:18-16:4).
  4. ***He shall destroy many in their prosperity:*** The Antichrist shall destroy many rich people (8:25). He will not be afraid to kill the rich, because he will not need their favor to succeed like most politicians do. The rich should not place their confidence in their wealth to protect them from the Antichrist, for he has no capacity for kindness or mercy.
- C. The Antichrist will prosper, exalt himself, rise against Jesus, and be destroyed (8:25).
- <sup>25</sup>***Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes [Jesus]; but he shall be broken without human means [by God's power]."*** (Dan. 8:25)
- D. Daniel fainted and was sick, overwhelmed and astonished by what he saw in the vision (8:27).
- <sup>27</sup>***And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.*** (Dan. 8:27)
- E. A potential application of Daniel 8—there will be military conflicts involving the ram (Iran) pushing to the west, the north, and the south (8:4). After this Iranian aggression, the goat (an eastern coalition from Turkey, Syria, etc.) will defeat Iran. After the leader of this eastern coalition dies, his empire will be divided into four new territories. Then a man from one of these four new eastern territories (Turkey, Syria, Iraq, etc.) will arise, starting as a little horn but then growing in power. The information in this vision may give the Church opportunity to speak into significant political and military events before they happen.