

DANIEL

Chapter 8 – Notes

Overview

Daniel's first vision (chapter 7) surveys the rise and fall of world empires until Christ and His people receive the Kingdom. The second vision (chapter 8) narrows the lens to one pivotal era within that broader story. Daniel is shown that Israel will still falter and face a season of severe judgment; yet the vision also overflows with hope, for God's grace and mercy never run dry.

Though the prophecy points to events roughly two centuries after Daniel's lifetime, it remains an archetype that continues to instruct, encourage, and comfort God's people in every age.

Daniel 8 Outline

- Daniel receives a vision
 - A ram appears with power and dominion
 - A goat appears and takes power and dominion from the ram
 - The horn of the goat becomes four horns, and a little horn arises from one of the four
 - The little horn exalts itself wages war against God and his people
 - A promise is given that all will be restored, after a time
- Gabriel interprets the dream
 - The ram is Media/Persia
 - The goat is Greece, and the one horn its first king
 - The four horns are four kingdoms that arise from the one
 - The little horn is a king that will rule with might, and desecrate the Temple

- The vision concerns events far into the future (for Daniel)
- Daniel is alarmed

Elements of the Dream

- Ulai canal
 - A canal that ran alongside the citadel of Susa, in the province of Elam. This was the Median capital city
- Ram
 - Appears beside the Ulai, in front of the citadel of Susa
 - A shorter horn in front, with a longer horn behind it
 - Butting and defeating all other beasts to the North, West, and South
 - Magnifies itself
- Goat
 - Comes from the west, without touching the ground
 - Possesses one horn between its eyes.
 - Enraged at the ram, and so kills it
 - Magnifies itself, and so the one horn was broken
 - Four horns arise from the one, and grow towards the four winds of heaven
- Small Horn
 - It comes from one of the goat's four horns.
 - Grows great toward the south, east, and the beautiful land (Israel)
 - Grows towards the host of heaven and causes some of the host and the stars to fall

- Challenges the Commander of the hosts and throws down His sanctuary and ends sacrifice to Him
- Accomplishes this on account of transgression, and is allowed to succeed
- Holy one speaking
 - Asks how long the little horn will be allowed to succeed
 - 2300 evenings and mornings must pass, then restoration will come

The Angel's Interpretation

- Ram
 - Media/Persia
- Goat
 - Greece
 - First horn is first king (Alexander the great)
 - Four horns are four kingdoms that will arise from the original kingdom of the first horn (the four realms of kingdoms that arose after the death of Alexander)
- The Little Horn
 - Appears during the later period of the reign of the four kingdoms
 - Will be very bold, wicked, shrewd, and deceptive
 - He will be powerful, but reliant on others
 - Will destroy many things, and be very successful
 - He will destroy the people of God, stand against God, and magnify himself
 - He will be destroyed without hands
- Time
 - This all takes place during a time of “indignation”

- Final events described will not take place for many days in the future

Fleshing out the Dream

- Ram
 - Appears outside the citadel in Meida as a foreshadow of what they will become
 - The two horns are likely representing the combined kingdoms of Media Persia, which will come to be one united empire. The shorter horn that is first, is Media. The longer horn is Persia.
 - They dominate as the world power, for a time, as God grants.
 - They fall, however, in their magnification of themselves, and are thus judged
- The Goat
 - This is Alexander the Great, and the kingdom of Greece. He is the first king represented in the one horn.
 - He came from the west, with great speed and expediency, dominating the world. This speed and swiftness is embodied in the detail about not touching the ground as he came.
 - Historically, Alexander was furious with Persia for trying to conquer them, and so it was his goal to defeat them. However, the rage of the goat is the instrument of God's own rage towards the self-exultant Persians.
 - Alexander lived for his own glory, and so was broken. He died suddenly of disease at the age of 30. From him, his generals waged a war for the remnants of his empire. Ultimately, four kingly families arose which oversaw a number of kingdoms in different regional realms. They were given rule by God, and ruled the ancient world until the time of Rome's ascension to power.

- The Little Horn
 - This is almost certainly Antiochus IV, who hailed from the ruling family over the Syrian region.
 - He was not in line to be king, but he usurped the throne through a series of opportune circumstances
 - He sought to unify the realm from years of civil war by crushing opposing groups and cultures. He wanted to unify the realm under a Greek nationalist identity.
 - Under financial pressure from Rome, he was driven to plundering temples and installing harsh taxes.
 - Believed himself to be divine, adopting the title “God Manifest,” and set himself as the embodiment of Zeus on earth.
 - He sacked Jerusalem, killed many Jews, destroyed the priestly class, sacrificed a pig upon the altar in the temple, destroyed the altar, banned worship and sacrifices to Yahweh, and then required monthly sacrifices to himself through a new altar he built inside the temple.
 - Soon after he died of disease.
- 2300 Evening and Mornings
 - Roughly 6 years after the destruction of the temple, a family of Jews led a successful uprising and revolt against the Seleucid reign (Antiochus). They rededicated the temple and established the Hasmonaean dynasty, which ruled over Israel for roughly 100 years, until the Herodian dynasty was established by the conquering Romans. Many historians and scholars say that the number of days between Antiochus' desolation of the temple, and its restoration by Judas

Maccabeus, was exactly 2300 days. This rededication is what Hanukkah celebrates.

Additional Details

- We note that Daniel sees and hears God speak from between the river banks. This alludes to a greater theme in scripture. The Spirit of God hovers over the waters at creation, and then speaks everything into being. God leads and protects Noah and his family from the flood water. God's leads His people through the Red Sea, and across the Jordan. The Father speaks and the Spirit descends upon the Son at His baptism in the Jordan. God over the waters symbolizes new creation, works of God, judgement, deliverance, and guidance. In this, we understand the major themes being explored in this vision.
- Ulai (canal) means: "may be." This language is often used to carry the idea of both fear, and hope. It implies what may come to be. There is fear for the uncertainties that the future holds, but it is intermingled with hopeful expectations. Thus, the setting of this vision, beside the Ulai, also captures the themes this dream explores and addresses.
- Daniel is fearful as Gabriel approaches, falling on his face. As he begins to speak, Daniel falls into a deep sleep, as if he has fainted. But Gabriel touches him and causes him to stand. This is meaningful and biblically rich language. "Deep sleep" is associated with death and types of death. We think of Adam in the garden, Abraham at the cutting of the covenant, Jonah in the whale, etc. These are instances of death and rebirth. Symbolic changes in the states of those who undergo the events. Thus, Daniel comes to personally undergo an experience that mirrors and reflects what awaits the people of God. Fear and dread is approaching, as well as judgement and death. However, they shall be lifted up and made to stand once more.

- We may also make special note at the type of animals that Persia and Greece are embodied as. They are no longer the beasts seen in chapter 7, but livestock animals. Specifically, they are common sacrificial animals. In the vision, the ram and the goat must themselves be broken and slaughtered, before the people of God may come to a place of restoration. Just as the sacrifices were necessary to reconcile the people to God, so too were they now to understand that these empires must rise and fall, in order for them to be reconciled.

Prophetic Typology

- The vast majority of Christian scholars throughout history agree with our identification of the elements of this dream. However, there are yet others who hold slightly different views, especially as it concerns the little horn. Some scholars argue that this little horn is the exact same as the one in Daniel 7, specifically, that it is the Herodian dynasty, from its inception leading up to the time of Jesus. There are indeed lots of overlap and ways it could satisfy this vision. However, it falls short, in my opinion, in some key ways.
- That being said, it should be noted that biblical prophecy may always find other “types” of fulfillments in different figures and events in different historical eras. Thus, it’s possible that the Herod’s could indeed qualify as legitimate “types” of fulfillment of the little horn, and thus God’s people may understand and interpret these texts as a comfort to them in their own context, even if it wasn’t explicitly given for them.
- This is how Jesus Himself can allude to this very text when he seeks to warn and prepare His disciples for a coming event that will transpire at the judgement He was predicting:

- ¹⁵ *"Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), Matthew 24:15*
- It could be that in our own day, or a future day, we may find a similar figure. May this text then comfort us.

The Point

- Daniel lived in a pivotal time in both world history and the history of God's people. He certainly had questions about what was to transpire on the world stage, for he served the king of a worldly empire. Moreover, he knew and understood that Isarel's time in exile was concluding. What would become of this wicked nation he now served? What would become of God's people?
- Unfortunately, Daniel was confronted with the stark reality that God would continue to raise up and tear down nations, and that God's people were yet to receive the totality of the promises he hoped for. Nevertheless, Daniel was assured that God reigned through it all, and that He would one day bring peace and restoration.
- Wicked nations and people may and will arise, and they will seek to challenge and destroy God's people, and they will even be successful. But it is through these events that God delivers His people. And this is embodied in Jesus, who comes to suffer under both wicked jews and wicked gentiles, until He is thrown down by them. Nevertheless, these things must take place, for God will lift and restore from the ashes, as He does in Christ.
- In the meantime, let us follow the example of Daniel, and continue to humbly serve where we are needed, as we await the fullness of time for God to conclude all.

