

# Daniel: *Dual Book of History & Prophecy*

## Chapter 8 – A Vision of a Ram and a Goat

In Chapter 8, Daniel changed from Aramaic back to Hebrew. Aramaic sections detail history/prophecy from a Gentile perspective; the Hebrew chapters convey prophetic history as it relates to Israel.

### Daniel's Vision at Susa (Verses 1-2)

- 1** Daniel had a second vision in 551 B.C., two years after his first <sup>Daniel 7:1</sup>, but still within the reign of the last Babylonian king, Belshazzar <sup>Daniel 5:1</sup> (co-regent with his father Nabonidus, who was the son of King Nebuchadnezzar) and chronologically between Chapters 4 and 5.
- 2** In his first vision, Daniel was "lying on his bed" <sup>Daniel 7:1</sup>; however, here he saw himself in "the citadel of Susa", in the province of Elam <sup>Genesis 10:22</sup> and next to the Ulai Canal.

The city of Susa (also spelled Shushan) was the home of Queen Esther <sup>Esther 1:2,5, 2:3,5</sup> and the Jewish exile Nehemiah <sup>Nehemiah 1:1</sup>, and located 230 miles east of Babylon, 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf. The citadel of Susa would later be the fortified capital and palace complex above the city of Susa. It was the capital of the Elamites in antiquity and later the main residence of the Persian kings, and also the place where the code of Hammurabi (Babylonian law code from 1772 B.C.) was found in 1901.

### The Ram and the Two Horns (Verses 3-4)

- 3** Daniel saw a ram with two horns <sup>Revelation 13:11</sup> standing next to the canal. Later <sup>v.20</sup>, Daniel stated: "the two-horned ram represents the kings of Media and Persia". In his vision, one of the horns was longer than the other, and the longer one "grew up later". This is a parallel description of the two-sided Medo-Persian Empire as in his previous vision <sup>Daniel 7:5</sup>.
- 4** The kingdom expanded powerfully from Susa toward the west, north and south (kingdoms did not expand east until Alexander the Great). Led by King Cyrus <sup>Daniel 6:28</sup>, the Medo-Persian army advanced, moving irresistibly forward at will and remaining unscathed <sup>Isaiah 41:3</sup>.

In pagan cultures, the guardian spirit of the Persian kingdom was a ram with sharp-pointed horns. Also, when the Persian king was leading at the head of his army, he wore the head of a ram.

### The Goat from the West (Verses 5-8)

- 5-6** Then Daniel "suddenly" viewed a goat with a "prominent horn". The goat symbolized Greece and the horn was the first Greek king <sup>v.21</sup>, Alexander the Great, whose army moved with such swiftness that it seemed to not even touch the ground. They came toward the "two-horned ram" (the Medo-Persian empire) in a great rage.

## Daniel 8

Alexander's rage against the Persians resulted from his knowledge of two earlier battles in which the Persians defeated the Greeks: the Battle of Marathon (490 B.C.) and the Battle of Salamis (481 B.C.).

**7** In 3 short years, the goat (Alexander) defeated (shattered <sup>Daniel 7:7</sup>) the ram (Medo-Persians).

Alexander III of Macedon (356-323 B.C.), commonly known as Alexander the Great, was tutored by Aristotle until the age of 16 and succeeded his father, Philip II of Macedon, to the throne in 336 B.C. By 326 B.C., he conquered the Persian Empire and expanded the Greek Empire east to India.

All important lands were associated with the signs of the Zodiac according to astronomical geography. Interestingly, Persia is under Aries, the ram, and Greece is under Capricorn, the goat.

Alexander's rapid conquest of (without destroying) the known world aided in the widespread introduction of Koine (common) Greek: the original language of virtually the entire New Testament.

**8** History tells of Alexander's greatness, but he died ("large horn was broken off") at the height of his power in 323 B.C. at the age of 33. His death led to a 20-year struggle for power, resulting in the emergence of 4 sub-kingdoms ("prominent horns" or "four heads" <sup>Daniel 7:6</sup>).

Alexander's premature death in Babylon was partly due to fatigue, a dissipated life and a raging fever.

The leaders of the four divisions of Greece: **Lysimachus** (boyhood tutor): Thrace, Bithynia & most of Asia Minor; **Cassander** (married sister): Greece & Macedonia; **Seleucus** (one of Philip's generals): Syria, Babylonia & eastern territories; **Ptolemy** (boyhood friend): Egypt, Palestine & Arabia.

The four winds of heaven represent God's power in all places and in all directions <sup>Daniel 7:2, Revelation 7:1</sup>.

### Another Horn Emerges and Desolates the Sanctuary (Verses 9-14)

**9** There is some controversy over who was the new horn in these verses, but it seems obvious that this prophecy initially refers to Antiochus IV, who is a type of the Antichrist <sup>see note below</sup>. Antiochus IV had victories in the south (Egypt) and toward the east (Syria), but his main desire seemed to be the conquering and destruction of Israel (the "Beautiful Land").

Beautiful Land is a common Biblical idiom for Israel <sup>Jeremiah 3:19, Ezekiel 20:6,15, Daniel 11:16,41,45, Malachi 3:12</sup>.

Isaiah started to describe the king of Babylon <sup>Isaiah 14:1-11</sup>, but his portrayal transitioned into the characteristics of Satan <sup>Isaiah 14:12-15</sup>. There is a similar passage in Ezekiel that began with him speaking of the king of Tyre <sup>Ezekiel 28:1-10</sup>, and ended up with a description of Satan <sup>Ezekiel 28:11-19</sup>.

In both cases, Satan is being described, because he was the evil force behind the malevolent kings. Similarly here in Daniel, the discussion of Antiochus IV spills over into a view of the Antichrist.

## Daniel 8

Antiochus IV was the 8<sup>th</sup> king of the Seleucid Empire, during the times 175-164 B.C. He ascended to the throne following the murder of his brother Seleucus Philopater. He gave himself the godly title *Epiphanes*, which means "the Illustrious One"; however, the Jews called him *Epimanes*, "the Madman".

Note Daniel's use of "it" when referring to the "horn", even though he is describing a person (persons).

- 10** This verse speaks about Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution and destruction <sup>Daniel 7:25</sup> of the Jewish people (i.e., the "starry host" <sup>Genesis 15:5, 22:17, Daniel 12:3</sup> represent the people of God). The actions of Antiochus showed his evil intent, because of his similarity to Satan in the way he was described by Daniel. Previously, Satan had rebelled against God in heaven and as he was thrown out of heaven, he swept a third of God's angels out of heaven <sup>Revelation 12:3-4a</sup> and out of his anger against God, he planned to "devour" Jesus <sup>Revelation 12:4b</sup>.

Satan's plan (as well as any who follow in his steps) has always been to thwart the plans of God.

- 11** Daniel described Antiochus Epiphanes as attempting to destroy the Jewish faith by changing the worship in Israel's temple from the law of Moses to his pagan ways (other prophecies point to the Antichrist doing much the same things <sup>2 Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 13 Matthew 13:47</sup>). Antiochus IV held himself up as equal to God, just as the Antichrist will do <sup>Daniel 11:36-37</sup>, and they both stop the daily sacrifices <sup>Ezekiel 46:13-15</sup> and desecrate the temple <sup>Daniel 9:27,11:31,12:11</sup>.

- 12** Daniel indicated that due to Israel's "rebellion", they (and the temple) would be "given over" to Antiochus Epiphanes (similar to the Antichrist <sup>Daniel 7:25</sup>). The Bible teaches that often when people reject God, He will turn them over to the evil they desire <sup>Acts 7:42a, Romans 1:21-32</sup>, and when people rebel against God, truth is always violated <sup>Isaiah 48:1</sup>.

- 13-14** Daniel described "holy ones" (probably angels <sup>Deuteronomy 33:1-2, Galatians 3:19, Revelation 5:11</sup>) discussing the length of the destruction. There is a great deal of controversy over the interpretation of the answer: "2300 evenings and mornings" – does that imply 2300 days, 1150 days or another? After this length of time, the "sanctuary" would be cleansed.

The desecration of the sanctuary would have ended at the death of Antiochus IV in 164 B.C. Assuming the time span is meant to be 2300 days, counting back 2300 days from his death, places the beginning in 171 B.C., which was when the legitimate high priest, Onias III, was murdered and a pseudo line of priests assumed power. Later, in 167 B.C., the sacrifices in the temple were forcibly ceased and a Greek altar was erected in the Temple. This seems to be the best interpretation.

Attempts have also been made to relate the 2300 days to the occurrences in the Great Tribulation when the Antichrist has predominance over the Jews <sup>Daniel 7:25</sup> and desecrates the Temple <sup>Daniel 9:27</sup>.

## Daniel 8

However the 2300 days does not match up with any of the stated time frames: the 2520 days of the Tribulation (7 years <sup>Daniel 9:27</sup>), the 1260 days of the Great Tribulation <sup>Revelation 11:3, 12:6</sup>, or the 1290 and 1335 days mentioned at the end of the book of Daniel <sup>Daniel 12:11-12</sup> concerning the End Times.

Following the death of Antiochus IV, the Jewish priest, Judas Maccabeus led a revolt that drove the Syrian army out of Jerusalem. The Jews then cleansed and rededicated the Temple. The cleansing is still celebrated by the Jews in the Feast of Dedication (Feast of Lights), also known as *Hanukkah*.

The Seventh-Day Adventists chose the most bizarre meaning of the "2300 evenings and mornings". They interpreted it as 2300 years. Using their logic, they predicted the Second Coming of Christ would occur in 1843; however, their beliefs quickly changed when Jesus did not appear at that time.

### The Angel Gabriel Begins to Give Daniel the Interpretation (Verses 15-19)

**15-16** In the midst of the vision, Daniel saw someone "who looked like a man" standing near.

A man's voice (probably the voice of God/Jesus from heaven) spoke to the "man", identified him as the angel Gabriel and told him to "tell [Daniel] the meaning of the vision" <sup>Daniel 7:16</sup>.

This is the first mention of a named angel in the Bible. Gabriel is one of three named in Scripture: Gabriel <sup>Daniel 8:16, 9:21, Luke 1:19,26</sup>, Michael <sup>Daniel 10:13,21, 12:1, Jude 9, Revelation 12:7</sup> & Satan <sup>Job 1:7-12, Revelation 12:7-9</sup>.

**17** As Gabriel came toward Daniel to say the vision is about the end times <sup>Habakkuk 2:3</sup>, Daniel became "terrified" and fell prostrate (face down) <sup>Ezekiel 1:28, 44:4, Revelation 1:17</sup>.

**18-19** After passing out <sup>Daniel 10:9</sup>, Daniel was awakened <sup>Zechariah 4:1</sup> and lifted to his feet by Gabriel <sup>Daniel 10:16-18</sup>. Gabriel reiterated that the vision alludes to the end times (the time of [God's] wrath <sup>Revelation 16:1</sup> is the Tribulation [Seventieth Week of Daniel <sup>Daniel 9:27</sup>]).

### The Interpretation of the Ram and the Goat (Verses 20-22)

**20** The interpretation: "The two-horned ram...represents the kings of Media & Persia" <sup>Esther 10:2</sup>.

**21-22** The goat is Greece and the large horn symbolizes the first king (Alexander the Great). The four horns (heads <sup>Daniel 7:6</sup>) are the four kings emerging after Alexander's untimely death.

Recalling that this vision was during the reign of Babylon's last king, Belshazzar <sup>v.1</sup>, the revelations in the last three verses (naming of the Medo-Persian and Greek empires) <sup>v.20-22</sup> had to be supernatural.

### The Latter Time of the Kingdom (Verses 23-26)

**23** Toward the end of the reign of the four Greek kings <sup>see note after v.8</sup>, a "stern-faced king" arose. This is a direct reference to the Syrian king Antiochus IV (Epiphanes <sup>see note after v.9</sup>).

## Daniel 8

- 24** The power Antiochus IV attained (as all leaders) came from someone else (God <sup>Daniel 4:25</sup>). As mentioned earlier <sup>v.10,12</sup>, Antiochus used his power at will for evil by causing general devastation and the destruction of many of the Jewish people.
- 25** Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) at first made an agreement with the Jews <sup>Daniel 11:23</sup>; however, his actions revealed he was deceiving the Israelites into thinking they were secure <sup>Daniel 11:21</sup> by initially acting as if he was a man of peace, but then turning on them and became a ruthless ruler. Antiochus took a stand against the "Prince of princes" (Jesus), by killing many of His chosen people <sup>v.10</sup>, by stopping the normal temple sacrifices <sup>v.12</sup> and by setting up pagan activities in the temple <sup>v.13</sup>. He was said to "be destroyed, but not by human power", because he died as a result of insanity and a disease of the bowels.
- 26** Gabriel reminded Daniel of the truth of the vision <sup>Daniel 10:1</sup>, and even though he could not understand it all and it would not be fulfilled for a long time (will not be fully completed until the End Times <sup>Daniel 10:14</sup>), Daniel was told he should "seal" it up by writing it down <sup>Isaiah 8:16</sup>. Sometimes, the use of the phrase "seal it up" refers to documenting the truth in the Bible, which can be read by anyone; however, to antagonistic unbelievers who read the words, the meaning would be protected (sealed) from their understanding <sup>Isaiah 29:11-12</sup>. At times in the Bible, sealing of a vision indicated God's desire for a truth to not be written down (revealed) at that time <sup>Revelation 10:4</sup>.
- In this Scripture passage <sup>v.23-26</sup>, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) is specifically described. As an evil ruler who tried to destroy the Jews and their way of life (he had the spirit of the Antichrist <sup>1 John 4:1-3</sup>), Antiochus was an obvious forerunner of the ultimate Antichrist <sup>Revelation 13:1-10</sup> of the Tribulation, because the traits described in these verses fit both Antiochus Epiphanes and the Antichrist. The Antichrist will "become completely wicked" <sup>2 Thessalonians 2:9</sup>, have power by others <sup>Revelation 13:2,5,7</sup>, cause "astounding devastation" <sup>Revelation 11:2,13:7</sup>, "destroy...the holy people" <sup>Daniel 7:25</sup>, "consider himself superior" <sup>Daniel 11:36-37</sup>, "take his stand against the Prince of princes" <sup>2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, Revelation 19:19</sup>, and will be "destroyed, but not by human power" <sup>2 Thessalonians 2:8, Revelation 19:19-20</sup>.

### Daniel's Response to the Vision (Verse 27)

- 27** The result of the whole process of seeing the vision and the resulting interpretations produced exhaustion in Daniel, which lasted "several days". However, he rested and then went about his life, even though he was overwhelmed by what he had seen and experienced.