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a *Grace Notes* course

## **Daniel**

an expositional study  
by Dr. Grant Richison

Lesson 108

### **Daniel Chapter 8**

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## Daniel 108 – Chapter 8

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## Daniel 8

### Daniel 8:1-4

**In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time.**

**I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai.**

**Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.**

**I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.**

Chapter seven presented the history of the times of the Gentiles from the Neo-Babylonian Empire until the Second Coming of Christ to establish His kingdom on earth. The eighth chapter introduces God's program for Israel in relation to Gentiles (8-12). This chapter returns to the Hebrew from the Aramaic language (2: 4-7: 28). Daniel writes in the Hebrew from this point because the subject matter relates to Israel.

Chapter eight is Daniel's vision of the ram and the goat. This is a more detailed revelation about the Persian and Greek empires and how they relate to Israel. This is the last of the symbolic visions in Daniel.

The third year of the reign of King Belshazzar was 551 B.C., two years after the events of chapter seven. This vision occurred toward the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

The ram vision covers verses two to four. While in Babylon, Daniel had a vision of himself

in Shushan. Shushan or Susa (Greek) was two hundred miles east of Babylon and approximately 150 miles due north of the Persian Gulf. Few knew much about Susa in Daniel's day but Susa became the capital of the Persian Empire when Medo-Persia conquered Neo-Babylonia.

Esther lived there eighty years later (Esther 1:2). Nehemiah left Susa to return to Palestine 107 years later (Nehemiah 1:1). Archeologists discovered the code of Hammurabi there in 1901.

The citadel was the royal residence or palace, a place of strong fortification. Ulai may have been an artificial canal nine hundred feet wide.

The ram represents Medo-Persia (v.20). Chapter seven presented Medo-Persia as a lopsided bear (7:5). The two horns stand for the power of the two nations Medo and Persia. The longer horn symbolizes Persia, the more powerful kingdom. Persia presented itself as a ram. The Persian king carried the head of a ram to war.

The Medo-Persian Empire pushed its borders westward to Lydia, Ionia, Thrace and Macedonia. It went northward to the Caspian Mountains, the Oxus Valley and Scythia and southward toward Babylonia, Palestine and Egypt. Cyrus and Cambyses were the primary leaders of this conquest.

**PRINCIPLE:** Greatness depends on the ethics behind the desire for greatness.

**APPLICATION:** God does not assail doing great things. God does great things (1 Sam 12:24; Psalm 126:2, 3). Man can take something great and turn it into arrogance (Jeremiah 48:26; Joel 2:20; Zech. 2:10; Psalm 35: 26; Psalm 55:13).

### Daniel 8:5-8

**And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.**

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**Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power.**

**And I saw him confronting the ram; 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, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.**

**Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.**

The goat vision runs from verse five to verse eight. This vision symbolizes Greece (v.21). Alexander the Great is the obvious horn. Alexander advanced with lightening speed against Persia. His feat of conquering the Near and Middle East within three years is acknowledged as a great military achievement. Alexander's strategic brilliance and use of the phalanx proved decisive in the face of massive numerical superiority of the Persian army.

The goat (Alexander) ran at the ram (Persia) with particular ferocity. This description corresponds to the third beast of 7:6. Alexander crossed the Hellespont with about 35,000 troops. After crossing the Granicus River, he encountered the Persian army. His hatred for the Persians expressed itself in this ferocious battle in 334 B.C. Alexander subsequently fought the Persians on two other occasions.

Alexander was victorious in Asia Minor in 334 B.C. at the Granicus River and at Issus in Phrygia in 333 B.C. He finally conquered Persia at Gaugamela near Nineveh in 331 B.C. At this point Alexander possessed all the land of the Persians.

After Alexander conquered Persia, he extended his borders into Afghanistan and the Indus Valley. Alexander regarded himself as divine.

This verse indicates the premature death of Alexander and the division of his empire among his four generals. Alexander died of dipsomania (drunkenness) in June 323 B.C. He could conquer the world but he could not conquer himself. He died of debauchery in Babylon at age thirty-three. He died at the zenith of his triumphs.

His four generals Lysimachus, Cassander, Seleucus and Ptolemy (11: 4) divided the kingdom of Greece. Lysimachus took Thrace, Bithynia and most of Asia Minor; Cassander ruled over Macedonia and Greece; Ptolemy ruled over Egypt and maybe Palestine and Arabia Petraea; Seleucus took Syria and lands to the east including Babylonia.

**PRINCIPLE:** The Word of God can have an effect on unbelievers.

**APPLICATION:** History gives us an interesting story about Alexander and Jerusalem. The Jewish historian Josephus says that when Alexander approached Jerusalem to take the city, the high priests showed him this prophecy in Daniel eight. Alexander was so impressed with this prophecy that he spared Jerusalem.

#### **Daniel 8:9-14**

**And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land.**

**And it 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.**

**He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.**

**Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily**

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**sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.**

**Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, 'How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?'**

**And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.'**

Verses nine through fourteen cover the little horn of the goat. This little horn grew out of the four horns (v.22) that displaced the single horn on the goat (Greece, v.21). This horn is not the same as the little horn that came out of the ten horns of the fourth beast (Rome, 7: 8, 11, 24-26). This is Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) from the Seleucid dynasty. Antiochus Epiphanes ruled Syria from 175 to 164 B.C. (1 Macc 1: 10; 6: 16). His capital city, Antioch, was named after him. This was also the city where Christians were first called Christians (Ac 11: 26).

While there are similarities between the little horn of chapter seven and that of chapter eight, the dissimilarities are significant. The fourth kingdom in chapter seven is Rome while the goat in chapter eight is not Rome. The Messianic kingdom in chapter seven will be erected after the final world empire, while this is not true of the goat in chapter eight. These two men (little horns) are alike in many respects but they are not the same.

Antiochus went south to Egypt, east to Mesopotamia (especially northeast to Armenia), and to the glorious land (Palestine). He dominated the land of the Jews. The Jews called Antiochus Epimanes (madman). He conquered Jerusalem because of this insult. He defiled the high priests and entered the temple. He erected a pagan altar and offered unclean swine as sacrifice upon it. He sprinkled the blood of the swine throughout the sanctuary defiling the entire sanctuary.

The Glorious Land is Palestine. Antiochus especially hated the Jews. He killed 40,000 Jews on one assault on Jerusalem and carried 10,000 into captivity. In 168 B.C., Antiochus sent Apollonius with 20,000 troops to take control of Jerusalem. As a final insult, he erected an idol of Zeus in the temple and offered a swine on the altar. The Jews called this idol the abomination of desolation.

A Jewish nationalist by the name of Judas Maccabaeus led a rededication of the temple on December 25, 164 B.C. This is the event that caused the Jews to celebrate the Hanukkah ever since.

The little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes, caused some of the children of Israel to fall. Verse twelve indicates that the little horn controlled the host, the Jews in Palestine. The stars may be the leaders of the Jews.

Antiochus desecrated the temple attempting to make himself superior to Yahweh. Attack on the temple is equivalent to an attack on God Himself. He suspended sacrifices in the temple. This Antiochus anticipates the final Antichrist. Antiochus commanded the Jews to reject the law of Moses.

God gave the Jews over to Antiochus (the little horn) because of their transgression. God used Antiochus as an instrument of divine discipline on the Jews. God allowed Antiochus to prosper even with his shocking behavior because He has a greater plan for the Jews.

The holy ones here are angels (4: 17) who speak of the violation of Antiochus' transgression of the temple sanctuary.

Daniel predicted that the sacrifices of morning and evening would be taken away for a definite period. An angel replied to Daniel in answer to the question regarding the length of time the sanctuary would be trampled under foot. The answer was that the sanctuary would be trampled for 2300 days. These days are the time that Antiochus persecuted the Jews in round numbers from 171 B.C. to his death in 164 B.C.

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**PRINCIPLE:** Antiochus' desecration of the temple anticipates the desecration of the temple in the last days.

**APPLICATION:** Jesus used the desecration of the temple symbol as a picture of Jerusalem in the last days.

**Matthew 24:15,16.** Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

#### Daniel 8:15-26

**Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man.**

**And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, 'Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.'**

**So he came near where I stood, and when he came 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.'**

**Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright.**

**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.'**

**The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia.**

**And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king.**

**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.**

**And in the latter time of their kingdom, When the transgressors have reached their fullness, A king shall arise, Having fierce features, Who understands sinister schemes.**

**His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; He shall destroy fearfully, And shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people.**

**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; But he shall be broken without human means.**

**And the vision of the evenings and mornings Which was told is true; Therefore seal up the vision, For it refers to many days in the future.'**

Verses fifteen through twenty-six give the interpretation of the vision. Gabriel, appearing as a man, stood before Daniel.

The person speaking in a man's voice was probably an angel. Gabriel is also an angel. Gabriel conveyed important communication from God to man (Luke 1:19,26).

When Gabriel came near Daniel, Daniel fell on his face before the angel. The phrase son of man here refers to human weakness. Gabriel explains to this frail human being that the vision has to do with the time of the end. It refers to the end times (v.19), a future time from Daniel's viewpoint.

The vision so shocked Daniel that he fainted dead away. Gabriel revived him.

Gabriel communicated to Daniel that the vision has to do with the latter time of the indignation and the appointed time the end shall be. This refers to both the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the end times before the Second Coming.

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The indignation is a time of judgment against Israel. God used Antiochus for corrective purposes. This also anticipates the Tribulation period after the Rapture. This is another dual fulfillment, one historical and one prophetic. The near fulfillment is Antiochus and the far fulfillment is the Antichrist in the Tribulation.

**1 Maccabees 1:11-15.** In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow.

So this device pleased them well.

Then certain of the people were so forward herein, that they went to the king, who gave them license to do after the ordinances of the heathen:

Whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem according to the customs of the heathen:

And made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen, and were sold to do mischief.

Oppression under Antiochus did not end with the death of Antiochus. The reference here is to the one Antiochus foreshadows – the Antichrist. Antiochus provided partial fulfillment of this prophecy. The Antichrist gives complete fulfillment. The actions of the coming Antichrist exceed the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes.

Gabriel clearly declares that the ram with two horns symbolized the kings of Media and Persia.

The male goat is Greece. The large horn is the first king of Greece, Alexander the Great.

The four kingdoms are Macedonia and Greece, Thrace and Asia Minor, Egypt and Palestine, and Syria and Persia (v.8).

Antiochus Epiphanes rose toward the end of the period after Greece divided into four kingdoms.

He was full of sinister schemes. The transgressors are Jews who continued to sin after the captivity.

Antiochus was powerful because God used him as an instrument of divine discipline on the Jews. The future Antichrist will form alliances with other nations and achieve world influence and will attack the Jews.

Antiochus exalted himself and opposed the Prince of princes. Antiochus falls under the principle of dual fulfillment. He is a type of the coming Antichrist (7: 8, 11, 21-22, 24-26; 9: 27; 11: 36-45; 12: 11; Matthew 24: 5, 23-24, 26; Mark 13: 6, 21-22; Luke 21: 8; 2 Thessalonians 2: 3-12; 1 John 2: 18, 22; 4: 3; Revelation 13: 1-10; 19: 20; 20: 10, 15). The coming Antichrist will do much greater violation than Antiochus did. The future Antichrist will gain power by a peace program. Direct judgment from God terminates his rule.

The phrase the vision of evenings and mornings describes the period when this vision would be fulfilled – four centuries later in 167-164 B.C. and in a future Antichrist. Daniel must seal the vision because of its impact on prophecy. Daniel sealed up the vision by recording it.

**PRINCIPLE:** Jesus will defeat the Antichrist in the last days.

**APPLICATION:** The prophecy of Daniel carries the principle of dual fulfillment. Both Antiochus and the future Antichrist are in view. Antiochus only foreshadows the Antichrist.

The details of this prophecy go beyond that fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes. This future Antichrist will deceive many through remarkable propaganda. He will promise false security. He will stand up against Jesus Christ Himself, the Prince of princes, but Jesus will defeat him in judgment.

**Daniel 8:27**

**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.**

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This verse is the epilog of the vision. The impact of this vision on Daniel was dramatic. He fell sick for a number of days. Daniel could not possibly understand all the inferences of the vision because he lived in the Neo-Babylonian period.

**PRINCIPLE:** Believers should seize on the opportunities at hand while they have time.

**APPLICATION:** Daniel went about the king's business after the vision. Jesus said, Occupy till I come (Lu 19: 13). The idea is that we carry on with our same responsibilities. Whether we live in the last days or not, we live our lives as unto the Lord.

**2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.** For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;

and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.