

Daniel

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Chapter Eight

The language of the book now changes to Hebrew from Aramaic for reasons discussed in the introduction. The first chapter of Daniel through verse four of chapter two is written in Hebrew and from 2:4 to the end of chapter 7 the language is Aramaic. Chapters 2-7 concern primarily the Gentile nations and world empires, which have Aramaic as their official language. Chapter 8-12 are written in Hebrew because they primarily concern the Jews whose main language was Hebrew after coming back from exile. Chapter five was in the 7th and last year of the rule of Belshazzar, chapter six was in the 1st year of the rule of Darius, chapter seven was in the 1st year of the rule of Belshazzar, chapter eight was in the 3rd year of the rule of Belshazzar, chapter nine was in the 1st year of the rule of Darius, chapter ten was in the 3rd year of the rule of Darius, and chapters 11/12 was written concerning the 1st year of the rule of Darius. This vision focuses on the middle portions of the vision of chapter 2 but with more details.

Dan 8:1-4

In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. (2) I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal. (3) Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last. (4) I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself.

This vision came to Daniel before the banquet episode of chapter 5 and thus there is no mention of the Babylonian Empire. The vision is two years after the previous one: “*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it.*” (Dan 7:1) Within twelve years Babylon would be taken by Cyrus and the rule of the Medes and Persians. Susa was a city about 200 miles southeast of Babylon and would later become the capital of the Persian Empire (Nehemiah 1:1; Esther 1:2). The Ulai Canal was an artificial canal that ran through or by the city. Soon the Medes and Persians would overtake Babylon so God placed Daniel in the future capital of the conqueror. It is not likely that he was literally in this city although some interpreters think that God placed him there like He placed Ezekiel in Jerusalem (Ezek 8:40). It is possible that he was on a diplomatic mission but since Belshazzar seems unacquainted with Daniel (5:13), It seems unlikely that he was on some government appointed mission. It is also unlikely that Nabonidus would have sent him on such a mission without consulting his son Belshazzar.

The ram has two horns and represents the Median-Persian Empire. One horn was longer than the other representing that the Persian element of the coalition was dominant. The three areas of Medo-Persian expansion was along the three directions of the vision. In the initial phases of the conquest, the Medo-Persian troops were invincible so he indeed did as he pleased but his attitude seemed to illustrate a great pride that would be a symptom of a coming fall.

Dan 8:5-8

While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. (6) He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. (7) I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power. (8) Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

The goat represents the Greeks under Alexander and describing him moving from the west over all the earth without touching the ground refers to the quick pace of Alexander in his three-year conquering of the entire Persian Empire. Alexander came from the regions of Macedonia and Greece in 334 B.C., which would be from the west. The single horn between his eyes represented leadership under one person, Alexander. Daniel sees the Greeks wage war against the Median-Persian Empire in such a ferocious attack that none could rescue them from the attack of Alexander. Alexander highly exalted himself and even required his Persian subjects to prostrate themselves before him in an Oriental custom. But at the height of his power Alexander died at age 33 and his empire was divided into four parts as previously discussed. He was seized by a fever after a nightlong drinking orgy and died in Babylon in 323 B.C. The three empires all fell in a drunken orgy and we should learn from that as many of our leaders develop strategies and interactions during drinking parties.

Dan 8:9-11

Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. (10) It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. (11) It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down.

It is important to not confuse this small horn with the one from chapter seven. This horn rises from the Grecian Empire whereas the one from chapter seven was from the Roman Empire. He does not replace any horn but came forth and he is directed against the Jewish people and their sanctuary. This must be descriptive of the career of the Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes who was a great enemy of the Jewish people. He had coins minted that bore his image: Theos Epiphanes (“God made manifest”) so it is obvious what he thought of himself! As early as 175 B.C. he began a campaign to suppress Jewish worship. The host is a term often used of the

angels in service to God or of the stars in heaven. It is also used to refer to the people of God who are to become as numerous as the stars (Gen 12:3; 15:5) and the people of God are also spoken of as the hosts of Yahweh (Exodus 12:41). Daniel also states in 12:3 that the true people of God will shine like the stars of heaven. Since this Greek tyrant cannot affect either the angels of heaven or the literal stars of the heavens, this host must represent those Jewish believers who will join with the Maccabees in defending their faith. So this portion of the vision shows that Antiochus will trample down many Jews during this time of tribulation.

Verse 11 shows how Antiochus will even think himself equal with God. He ended daily sacrifices at the temple, forbade circumcision of Jewish infants, and made it a crime to possess a copy of the Jewish Scriptures. In 168 B.C. he seized Jerusalem and desecrated the altar by offering swine upon it, which became known as “the abomination of desolation” (Dan 11:31). This was also referred to by Jesus:

- Mat 24:15-16 "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), (16) then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.
- Mar 13:14-17 "But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. (15) "The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; (16) and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. (17) "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

God protected many Christians who remembered this and fled Jerusalem before it and the temple were destroyed by the Romans who came in and set up horrible sacrifices in the temple. The actions of Antiochus then were a type of what would occur later as an antitype.

Dan 8:12-14

And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. (13) Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?" (14) He said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."

During this tribulation the Jewish believers will be persecuted and the truth of God will be turned aside as he performs his will and God allows him to prosper. Daniel then heard at least two holy ones interacting. It seems that it was a third angel who clarified the time period of this tribulation. The time period before the altar would be cleansed is said to be 2300 evenings and mornings. The religion Seventh-day Adventist was established by thinking that this time period was 2300 years and they set the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ to be 1843! Obviously this was wrong! However, this could either be six years and 111 days or 1150 days and 1150 evenings that would be three years and 55 days. Historically we know that Judas Maccabaeus reconsecrated the temple on December 14, 164 B.C. that would be about three years after the abomination began. This is the historical truth and the cause of the establishment of the continuing celebration of Hanukkah that was celebrated at the time of Christ. It is a feast that was

established in the intertestamental period between the Old and New Testaments. We read in verse 25 that Antiochus IV Epiphanes was destroyed but not by human power.

Daniel 8:15-18

When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man. (16) And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, "Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision." (17) So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end." (18) Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright.

Gabriel means “man of God” and this is the first introduction of him by the Bible. He explained the vision to Daniel as well as the seventy weeks of chapter nine. Centuries later, Gabriel would be sent to Zechariah to announce the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-20) and then to announce to Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah (Luke 1:26-28). Other than Lucifer, the only other named angel is Michael (“Who is like God?”) who was specifically assigned to care for the nation of Israel (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev 12:7). The reaction of Daniel was similar to that of John on Patmos (Rev 22:8). Daniel was only restored to function by the transforming touch of Gabriel.

Daniel 8:19-22

He said, "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end. (20) "The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. (21) "The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. (22) "The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power.

Gabriel here gives Daniel a summary of the rise of the second and third kingdoms: the Medo-Persian and the Greek Empires. He said that the Greek Empire would be broken into four kingdoms but that none of them would be equal with the power of the initial kingdom. History confirmed this prophecy.

Daniel 8:23-25

"In the latter period of their rule, When the transgressors have run their course, A king will arise, Insolent and skilled in intrigue. (24) "His power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people. (25) "And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify himself in his heart, And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency.

These verses consider the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes and such descriptions also seem to apply to other rulers who have arisen in my lifetime. This description also reminds us of:

2Th 2:3-4 *Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.*

Note in verse 24 Daniel reveals that his mighty power is not of his own doing for God is in control and it is ultimately His authority that allows any success made by him. The “holy people” refers to the believing Jews whom he will torment and interfere with their worship as previously mentioned. The “Prince of princes” is the Lord Jesus Christ so he will even oppose and seek to replace Him. Ultimately Jesus Christ will defeat him and assign him, his false prophet, and Satan to the lake of fire forever (Rev 20:1-3). He is prophesied as being so shrewd that his deceitfulness will succeed, although not forever. In his mind he will think so highly of himself as to have a coin made with his image and the words “God manifest” on them as previously mentioned. He erected a statue of Zeus Olympius in the temple of Yahweh and sacrificed swine on the altar. He died in 163 B.C. of a sudden illness that made him fall out of his chariot and then to die a horrible death of some sort of intestinal disease.

Daniel 8:26-27

"The vision of the evenings and mornings Which has been told is true; But keep the vision secret, For it pertains to many days in the future." (27) Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it.

Gabriel then tells Daniel that the vision pertains to the far future but there is no indication that this means the End Times. In this context, the “many days” probably refers to the time before the crisis years of 167-164 B.C. He was told to keep the vision secret and this may be the reason that he wrote it and the rest of the chapter in Hebrew since Aramaic was the accepted language of the Babylonian area. Daniel became ill and had to rest for days. He then got back up and went about the business assigned him by the king. However he continued to be amazed at the vision, perhaps because he was puzzled why Yahweh would permit such a tribulation time for His people.