

# “DANIEL’S SECOND VISION”

## Daniel 8:1-37

When Daniel 8 opens, we learn that Daniel is now in the third year of the reign of the King Belshazzar. If you remember, King Belshazzar was the last king of Babylon. This vision, like the previous one we saw in Daniel 7, is set at some point between the events of Daniel chapter four and Daniel chapter five. At this point in Daniel’s life, he had been in exile for approximately 55 years. Daniel learned a very important lesson, and we see it clearly in chapter 7. There is great hope in store for God’s people.

**Daniel 7:27... “Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.”**

While there is great hope in store for God’s people, there are many long and difficult days that lie ahead. God promised that the Jewish exile would last for 70 years. Yes, the temple would be rebuilt, and temple worship would be restored. However, they would still face unrest, injustices, sin, and oppression. In other words, there are some disturbing and painful realities that God’s people, even back in their land, will have to face.

**Daniel 8:1–2... 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.**

Daniel is transported to a place called Susa in the province of Elam to the Ulai canal. This is about two hundred miles to the east of Babylon. It would be in modern day Iran where Daniel was transported in this vision. Susa is what

would later become the capital of Persia, the empire that would very shortly overthrow Belshazzar and Babylon.

**Daniel 8:3–4... 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*.**

Daniel has a second vision. In this one, he sees a ram with two horns—one is larger and one is smaller. This ram is charging this way and that. Nothing could stand before it. We learn in verse four, “he did as he pleased and magnified himself.”

**Daniel 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.**

Daniel’s attention shifts to this male goat with a single horn between his eyes. He came from the west with such speed and ferocity that his feet don’t appear to even be touching the ground.

Alexander and his Greek armies came against Persia (vv. 6–7) “with savage fury.” The verbs in verse 7 are truly striking. As this goat stands over the ram in victory, the single strong horn between his eyes is broken off and four other horns arise in its place toward the four winds of heaven. Alexander’s kingdom, following his death, was divided among four of his generals:

**Cassander** over Macedon and Greece, **Lysimachus** over Thrace and Asia Minor, **Seleucus** over Syria and Babylon, and **Ptolemy** over Egypt (vv. 8, 22).<sup>1</sup>

**To review, we have a ram with two horns which leads to a goat with one horn which is broken off and replaced by four horns.**

When we compare this vision in chapter 8 with the one in chapter 7, we see some parallels. The four unusual beasts of chapter 7 included. . .

**(1) a beast like a lion, representing Babylon**

**(2) a beast like a bear, representing the Medes and Persians**

**(3) a beast like a leopard, representing Greece**

**(4) a beast unlike any known animal, representing Rome.**

The ram in chapter 8 corresponds to the bear. The goat corresponds to the leopard.<sup>2</sup> There's an important clue to the meaning and purpose of this vision in chapter 8. It's the fact that the language in which he is writing changes from Aramaic to Hebrew at this point.

**Daniel 1:1—2:3 is written in Hebrew.**

**Daniel 2:4—7:28 is written in Aramaic.**

**Daniel 8:1—12:13 is written in Hebrew.**

It seems that Daniel wrote in the language of the people to whom he primarily wanted to direct the various parts of the book. Chapters 2–7 concern the predicted flow of the various gentile world empires. So, they are written in Aramaic, the dominant gentile language of that day.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 99.

<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Daniel: An Expositional Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 89–90.

By contrast, chapters 8–12, which are written in Hebrew, chiefly concern the Jews.<sup>3</sup>

**Daniel 8:9–12...** 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. **12** 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 2300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.”

The chief new element of this vision that concerned the Jews is the prediction of another “little horn” who would desecrate the sanctuary and persecute the people of the “Beautiful Land.” This “little horn” in chapter 8 is different from the one mentioned in chapter 7 (19-25). The little horn in chapter 7 is connected to the fourth of the four kingdoms, Rome.<sup>4</sup> The “little horn” in chapter 8 is connected with the kingdom of Greece and it symbolizes the wicked reign of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes). **He would reign from 175 to 163 BC.**

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<sup>3</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Daniel: An Expositional Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 90.

<sup>4</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Daniel: An Expositional Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 90.

He was the eighth king of the Seleucid dynasty, which was one of the four powers into which the Greek Empire was divided after the death of Alexander. Daniel describes him as being “wicked” and “a master of intrigue” (v. 23). In Jerusalem he tried to impose religious and cultural uniformity by suppressing Jewish worship. In 175 BC, at the beginning of his reign, he expelled the godly high priest and replaced him with a compromiser. He put an end to the daily sacrifices at the temple, forbade the circumcision of Jewish infants, and made it a crime to possess a copy of the Jewish Scriptures.<sup>5</sup>

In December 168 BC, Antiochus seized Jerusalem. He sent his general Apollonius into the city with 20,000 troops. An idol of Zeus was erected in the temple area. The altar was desecrated by offering swine upon it. The idol and the offering of swine on the altar became known to the Jews as “*the abomination of desolation*” (Dan. 11:31; Matt. 24:15). He viewed himself as “God made manifest.”

The 2,300 evenings and mornings may mean approximately seven years, or it may refer to approximately three and a half years (roughly 1,150 days). **In 168 BC the temple was desecrated. In 164 BC it was cleansed and restored.** That fits well with the three and a half years understanding.<sup>6</sup> Take a look at how Daniel responds to all of these perplexing details . . .

**Daniel 8:15–19... 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**

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<sup>5</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Daniel: An Expositional Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 91.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 100.

**talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright. 19 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.**

God sent his angel Gabriel to help his prophet Daniel understand the vision. When it comes to prophetic passages, there is a law of interpretation called *“the law of double fulfillment.”* Prophetic passages can apply to a person who lived during the time the prophecy was written *and* to a person who would surface at some time in the distant future. Stephen Miller notes,

**It is possible to be true to the text and allow that the little horn of chapter 8, Antiochus IV, may be a type of that one spoken of in chapter 7, the eschatological antichrist, for the parallels between their characters and careers are striking. (*Daniel*, 232)<sup>7</sup>**

Daniel 8 revolves around three main characters: a ram, a goat, and a “little horn” (8:9). Some things in this text are clearly explained to us. Others are less clear, requiring humility on our part. Thank goodness the angel Gabriel came to reveal the interpretation of this prophecy. Here’s what he said. . .

**Daniel 8:18–26... 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. 19 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.**

God’s people will be disciplined and suffer for their sins, but God is in absolute control of all that is and all that will happen. Human powers are merely instruments in the hands of an all-powerful and providential God.<sup>8</sup>

**Daniel 8:20-22... “The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. 21 “The shaggy goat represents the kingdom**

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 102.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 102.

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.

These verses enlighten our understanding of the main characters in the vision of verses 1–15.

- The two-horned ram refers to Media and Persia.
- The shaggy goat refers to Greece.
- The large goat’s large horn refers to Alexander the Great.
- The four horns are the four kingdoms that rose after Alexander’s death.

Daniel 8:23-26... “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. 26 “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*.”

Here is a description of Antiochus Epiphanes, referred to as “insolent (ruthless) and skilled in intrigue” (v. 23). The English Standard Version calls him “a king of He is characterized by arrogance and pride. This will happen when “God’s rebellious people have been disciplined appropriately.”

The words “he” and “his” are prominent in verses 24–25, enabling us to outline the activities of the “ruthless king” who “will come to the throne” (v. 23).

- “His power will be mighty, but not by his own power” (v. 24). He is a satanically empowered puppet.

- “He will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will (24).” He will be victorious in battle, achieve power, and amass wealth.
- “He will destroy mighty men and the holy people (24). the powerful along with the holy people (v. 24).” He will defeat many opponents in war and will war successfully against God’s people for right at seven years.
- “He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence (25).” Antiochus Epiphanes will be shrewd and deceptive, stopping at nothing to further his agenda and prosper his hand. Double-faced agreements and duplicitous dealings are his calling cards.
- “He will magnify himself in his heart (25;11).” Arrogance, pride, and self-deification are his unholy trinity.
- “He will destroy many while they are at ease (25).” He is a ruthless and unconscionable murderer.
- “He will even oppose the Prince of princes” (25).” He stands in opposition to God himself because he thinks he is a god (Zeus manifest).
- “But he will be broken without human agency (25).” His reign will be short and his downfall devastating, all at the hands of the God he mocks and opposes.<sup>9</sup>

**Look at verse 26**—Gabriel affirms the vision is true. Daniel must write it down, seal it up, and preserve it for those in the future who will need it.

This eventually led to what historians call the Maccabean revolt in 164 BC. Judas Maccabees (meaning “the hammer”) would lead the Jews to victory, the cleansing of the temple, and the restoration of their religion. Today Jews celebrate Hanukkah (the Festival of Lights) in remembrance of that event.

And Antiochus? The Jewish book of 2 Maccabees records his end:

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 102–103.



**But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him an incurable and unseen blow. As soon as he ceased speaking he was seized with a pain in his bowels for which there was no relief and with sharp internal tortures—and that very justly, for he had tortured the bowels of others with many and strange inflictions. Yet he did not in any way stop his insolence, but was even more filled with arrogance, breathing fire in his rage against the Jews, and giving orders to hasten the journey. And so it came about that he fell out of his chariot as it was rushing along, and the fall was so hard as to torture every limb of his body. (2 Macc 9:5–7)<sup>10</sup>**

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 104.