

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE RAM AND GOAT

Chapter 8



In the third year of Belshazzar's reign (548 BC) ¹ Daniel, who is about 70 years old, has a frightening dream of a two-horned ram and shaggy goat.

As we have seen, each of the visions described in Daniel 2 and 7 pictures the successive rise of four kingdoms, followed by their complete destruction and replacement by a universal kingdom of righteousness. Though differing in some respects from Chapter 2 and Chapter 7, Chapter 8 has features in common with each of them. Chapter 8, like Chapter 7, predicts political history through animal symbolism and predicts one of the greatest crises in the history of the God's people.

¹ (Hasel)

A. WHAT TO WATCH FOR



Notice the parallels between this chapter and Chapters 2 and 7. Notice also another “little horn” in Chapter 8 which is different from the “little horn” in Chapter 7. Each horn comes out of a different kingdom, yet both bring calamity on God’s people. In these chapters a horn represents someone having a lot of political or military power. Even though the interpretation is given in Chapter 8 it does not reveal everything we’d like to know about it, but it does reveal precisely what God intended man to know.

B. BACKGROUND

Chapter 8 takes place during the third year of Belshazzar (ca. 551). Daniel sees himself in the citadel in Susa, beside the Ulai Canal, where he sees the vision of a ram and a goat.

The ram with two horns represents the Medo-Persians (8:20). One horn was longer than the other (8:3) probably representing the shift in power from the Medes to the Persians.



The goat represents Greece (8:21) with Alexander the Great most likely being represented by the conspicuous/great horn.

In this context horns represent kings who have strong political and military power (Dan. 7:24). The goat attacked the ram viciously, shattering the two horns depicting Greece’s conquering of the Medo-Persians.

After the goat’s great horn is broken, four more arise. These are most likely Alexander’s four generals, each of whom receives a portion of the Greek Empire when he died. Out of one of these four horns came another horn (8:9) which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land (Palestine). Scholars believe this horn (8:9) and the “stern-faced king” (8:23) both apply to the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes IV who reigned from 175-164/3 BC. He brought one of the greatest crises in the history of the God’s people during his reign.

C. DANIEL CHAPTER 8 (ESV)

THE RAM (8:1-4)

" In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. ² And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the citadel, which is in the province of Elam. And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai canal. ³ I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal. It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. ⁴ I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

THE GOAT (8:5-8)

⁵ As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. ⁶ He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath. ⁷ I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him. And there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power. ⁸ Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

THE LITTLE HORN (8:9-14)

⁹ Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. ¹⁰ It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. ¹¹ It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. ¹² And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. ¹³ Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" ¹⁴ And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."

GABRIEL BRINGS THE INTERPRETATION (8:15-17)

¹⁵ When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. ¹⁶ And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the

vision." ¹⁷ So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end."

THE VISION INTERPRETED (8:18-26)

¹⁸ And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up. ¹⁹ He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end. ²⁰ As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹ And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. ²² As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power. ²³ And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise. ²⁴ His power shall be great-- but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. ²⁵ By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken-- but by no human hand. ²⁶ The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now."

DANIEL'S REACTION (8:27)

²⁷ And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it."

D. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In the third year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel in a vision sees himself in Susa, which is in Elam, in modern-day western Iran. In his vision he sees a ram with two horns, one greater than the other; the ram charges to the west, north and south, and no other beast can stand against it. Daniel then sees a male goat with a single horn come from the west without touching the ground; it strikes the ram and destroys it. At the height of his power the goat's horn is broken and in its place four horns grow [Daniel 8:5–8]. One of the horns is small but grows great and prospers in everything it does, throwing stars down to the earth, stopping the daily sacrifice, destroying the sanctuary and throwing truth to the ground [Daniel 8:9–12]. Daniel is told the vision will be fulfilled in 2,300 evenings and mornings, when the sanctuary will be cleansed [Dan. 8:13–14]. The angel Gabriel appears and tells Daniel that this is a vision about the time of the end [Dan. 8:15–19].

E. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Fill in the row of the table below titled, "Chapter 8."

"TIMES OF THE GENTILES" (Luke 21:24)					
Kingdom	Babylonian 606-539 BC	Medo-Persia 539-331 BC	Greek 331-146 BC	Roman 146 BC- AD 476	Revived Roman Kingdom
Chapter 2	Head	Chest	Waist	Legs	10 Toes
Chapter 7	Lion	Bear	Leopard	4 th Beast	10 horns (+ little horn)
Chapter 8					

2. What does the ram with two horns represent? What is the meaning of two horns?
3. In verse 5 it states, "the male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground." What does this suggest about the characteristic of this goat?
4. How many horns came up from the goat's great horn after it was broken?
5. What are the characteristics of the "little horn" (8:9-14)?
6. Summarize the interpretation of the dream given in 8:18-26.

F. CHAPTER WRAP UP

1. Although God is just and good, we cannot always know why he allows evil ones to gain power over and oppress others..._____.
2. Crises which come to God's people are the crucial moments for choosing _____.
3. Sometimes we need not understand all the _____.