

CAPITOL STUDIES

MARCH 6, 2024 • WEEK 9



DANIEL: CHRIST'S CIVIL SERVANT IN BABYLON

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Verse of the Week

Daniel 8:19

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."

Clash of World Powers



LOOKING BACK INTO THE BOOK OF DANIEL through the eyes of history, chapters like this one may seem somewhat uninteresting and insignificant. But when we realize the events in the chapter were prophesied many years—hundreds of years—before they actually occurred, we ought to be struck with a sense of renewed amazement. God gave Daniel prophetic insight like no one else in his day and few others in all of time. Although interwoven with prophetic symbols and terminology, chapter 8 sets forth (in chronological order) God's plan for the nations as it relates to the Jews.

The eyes of the world have been riveted on the Middle East. Again and again, newscasters declare that Jerusalem is a strategic center for that part of the world. Arabs and Jews have daily conflicts across the boundaries that divide them. Hostility has mounted ever since the Israeli victory in June 1967. Israel is to be trodden under foot until the end of the times of the Gentiles. Daniel 8-12 focuses our attention upon Israel, chapter 8 mentioning her sacrifices and sanctuary, her crime and chastening.

Pastor Arin Hess, *Chaplain, Capitol Studies*



INTRODUCTION

As was indicated at the beginning of our study, Daniel 7 and 8 set before us two coming dictators, both depicted as a “little horn.” The one in Daniel 7 prefigures the coming of the Antichrist of Revelation. The one in Daniel 8 prefigures the coming of Antiochus Epiphanes.

The visions of Daniel 7–8 are not the same. The scenes in Daniel 7 are wide from beginning to end; they have the entire world as a stage. Although the scenes of Daniel 8 begin with a fairly wide field of vision (the conflict of two world powers, Greece and Persia), they narrow quickly until the focus is on persecution raging in the tiny land of Judah. The atmosphere of Daniel 7 is cosmopolitan and Gentile; that of Daniel 8 is theocratic, local, and Levitical. Daniel 7 widens until it ends with a kingdom that will last forever and will embrace all nations of the earth; Daniel 8 ends with the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem. Daniel 7 is concerned with the coming of the Antichrist; Daniel 8 is concerned with a petty tyrant who, despite his blasphemies and persecutions, is only a shadow of that evil one. Daniel 7 is concerned ultimately with the Roman world; Daniel 8 is concerned solely with the Grecian world, particularly the Syrian segment of that world.¹

I. THE VISION

A. The Time and Place

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. ²I 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.²

God intervenes in history; God acts in history. Don’t forget that the sovereignty of God is one of the major themes of the book of Daniel. Daniel consistently gives us the time, place, and circumstances of divine revelations given to him, linking them to calendar dates and specific geographic places, as do most biblical writers. Time and, consequently, history are thus connected to eternity and God’s plan for the world. In Daniel’s vision, Daniel is transported to the palace at Susa in Elam, one of the capitals of the Persian empire. Both Nehemiah and Esther, many years later, resided in this royal city. The vision comes in the third year of Belshazzar’s reign, before his blasphemous banquet of chapter 5. When Daniel is asked to interpret the writing on the wall, he has already received this vision and is thus somewhat prepared to face the terrified Belshazzar.

From now on, everything in this book will be seen from the perspective of the Hebrew people. Daniel’s prophecies are preeminently prophecies of the Antichrist, in contrast to those of Isaiah, which are preeminently prophecies of the Christ.¹



B. The Ram

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. ⁴I 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 beast is representative of an empire or a king. “The ram, in ancient times, symbolized power and control, and its horn stood for strength. But it was particularly the symbol of Persia.... It appeared on Persian banners and documents.”³ Daniel saw a ram standing on the side of the river, about to begin a westward assault that would crush every opponent in its path.

C. The Goat

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. ⁶He 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. ⁷I 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. ⁸Then 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.

D. The Little Horn

Daniel 8:9-14

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. ¹⁰It 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. ¹¹It 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. ¹²And 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. ¹³Then 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?” ¹⁴He said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.”





Out of the kingdoms came a little horn which moved to the South (Egypt), to the East (Babylon and Persia), and to the pleasant land (Palestine). Bible interpreters are almost unanimous as to the identity of this little horn. Most think it is Antiochus Epiphanies, who usurped the Syrian throne and reigned for twelve years at Antioch in Syria (from 175 BC to 164 BC). He came out of the northern division of the Greek kingdom and mercilessly persecuted the Jews. This Antiochus Epiphanes is but an illustration, a foreshadow, of the Man of Sin, the Antichrist, the other “little horn” of Daniel 7:8.⁴

Israel in these verses is referred to as “the host of heaven” and “stars.” Antiochus brought suffering to the Jews that was literally Satan-energized, bringing Israel down to the dust. He magnified himself against the “Commander of the host”—YAHWEH Himself, by ordering the discontinuation of the burnt offerings, drink offerings, and sacrifices in the temple, and by profaning the Sabbath. He outlawed the rite of circumcision. He took the blood and broth of a pig and poured it over the sacred furnishings in the temple to show his utter disdain for the Jews and their God. His contemptuous actions toward the Jews and their God continued for over six years.

II. THE INTERPRETATION

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. ¹⁶And 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.”

¹⁷So 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.” ¹⁸Now 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. ¹⁹He 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.”

A. The Interpreter

This is the first time in the Bible that an angel is named: Gabriel (“the mighty one of God”). In the New Testament Gabriel brought word to Zacharias that he would be the father of John the Baptizer (Luke 1:19). Gabriel also came to Mary and informed her that she would be the virgin (“seed of the woman,” Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 7:14) who would bear the Messiah (Luke 1:26). Here, Gabriel is asked to give the interpretation of Daniel’s vision.

B. The Transgression

The prophecy of the little horn would be consummated at a time when the Jewish temple had been rebuilt and the Mosaic ritual restored (v. 14). This was after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It would take place at the time of God’s indignation—in short, at the time of the end, and in the



latter time of Israel's transgression. The transgression (vv. 12-13, 23) is an expression which refers to the crowning and final act of apostasy in the nation of Israel. An idol would be placed in the temple at Jerusalem and idolatry reintroduced to the land. The apostate Jews would worship the image. Jesus called it the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15). The abomination of desolation also pictures the idolatrous connection between Israel and the kingdom of the beast. God's indignation will be poured out upon the Jews because of their transgression in returning to idolatry (v. 19).

C. The Beasts

Daniel 8:20-26

The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. ²²The 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. ²³In the latter period of their rule, when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue. ²⁴His 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. ²⁵And 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. ²⁶The 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.

The ram signified the dual kingdom of the Medes and Persians. The shorter horn was a fit emblem of Media because the Medes did not continue in power after Darius. The longer horn which came up later pictured the ascendancy of the Persians over the Medes under the leadership of Cyrus. The ram was the national symbol of Persia, and figures of this animal have been found on many ancient monuments and documents of Persia. The Persians came from the east and penetrated to Babylon, Syria, Asia Minor (Turkey), Egypt, and Armenia, subduing all nations in their thrust for world power.

The goat's horn was the king of Greece. We know him as Alexander the Great, the conqueror of the majority of the known world of his time. History tells us that he wept because there were no other parts of the world for him to conquer. Alexander died at age 33 of a condition brought about by a wicked life. His vast kingdom was divided among four generals. The large horn of chapter 8 (Alexander) is not the same as the little horn from earlier in the chapter (Antiochus Epiphanes) nor the horn in chapter 7 (the Antichrist). These all persecute the Jews, but the little horn of chapter 7 rises out of the ten-nation kingdom in the West (the Gentiles of Roman beginnings). The large horn in chapter 8 comes, with respect to where the land of Israel is situated, from the North (Grecian Empire) and so does the little horn (Syria).





D. The Tyrant

“[I]n verses 23-25, Gabriel did not elaborate on Antiochus but moved into the distant future. Thus, Antiochus became the type of another persecutor of the Jewish people, the Antichrist. What Antiochus did, the Antichrist will also do but to a more severe degree.”⁵ His fierce countenance implies his impudence and shameless disregard for God and man. He is unmoving in his feelings and pursues a cruel course without reluctance. He is skilled in intrigue (understanding dark sentences) meaning that he knows how to use falsehood and dissimulation. He will say one thing and mean another. He phrases his words in such a way as to deceive.⁶ He will be “broken without human agency” (v. 25). He contests the authority of the Messiah and meets his doom by a supernatural intervention of God. **Praise God, He is in control!**

E. The Faithful Servant

Daniel 8:27

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.

This experience left Daniel physically sick. The stunning effect of awe and dread left him like Isaiah, “Woe is me for I am ruined!” (Isaiah 6:5). But in the final verse he still arose to continue the king’s business. We must likewise continue to be about our Father’s business. We do not know the day or the hour for the return of Jesus Christ, but may He find us patiently and expectantly waiting. Be faithful!

CONCLUSION

It is interesting that there is one common feature that characterizes these human rulers: they all magnify themselves. The same Hebrew word is used in these four verses: The ram magnified himself (v. 4); the goat magnified himself exceedingly (v. 8); the little horn magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host (v. 11); the king of deception and power magnified himself in his heart (v. 25). Instead of giving God the glory and magnifying Him, most rulers magnify themselves. They seldom recognize that God is the One Who has established them in power. In His wisdom He controls the outcome of their kingdoms. Kings and emperors cannot surprise God by what they do. Eventually, they must all bow or succumb to His power. **Yes, God is always in control.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Arin Hess'.

Pastor Arin Hess



FOOTNOTES

1. John Phillips, *Exploring the Book of Daniel: An Expository Commentary*, Kregel Publications, 2009.
2. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
3. Robert Culver, *Bible Knowledge: Daniel*, Scripture Press, 1960, pg. 92.
4. Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*, Victor Books, 1993.
5. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Daniel*, Ariel Ministries, 2023, pp. 319-320.
6. Some of this material is taken from Edward Watke, Jr., *Study of the Book of Daniel*, Revival in the Home Ministries, 1992.

Cover photo from <https://www.biblicaltoolbelt.com//ram-goat-daniel-8/>.

Personal Study Notes

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Theme Verse

Daniel said,
“Let the name of
God be **blessed**
forever and ever,
For **wisdom** and
power belong to
Him.

It is He who
changes the **times**
and the **epochs**;

He **removes** kings
and **establishes**
kings;

He gives **wisdom**
to wise men and
knowledge to men
of understanding.”

Daniel 2:20-21



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