

A Vision of a Ram and a Goat
Welcome to Harvest Community Church
Series: Daniel
Text: Daniel 8:1-2

Daniel chapter 8 takes place several years after chapter 7. This chapter tells of something specifically horrible that will happen a couple of hundred years **before** Christ. It also reveals an incredible and scary time yet to come when the antichrist is given seven literal years of freedom to devastate the Earth.

Shushan was one of the palaces of Babylon, it was located 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf in Iran. (Think of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, The White House and Camp David). In this vision God shows Daniel several issues:

- The fall of Medo-Persia
- The battle between Judaism and **Hellenism** (Greek)
- The eventual rise of the antichrist

In Chapter 2 we studied the statue that was in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It is remarkable that Greece overcame such a large empire like Medo-Persia. **Why** should we care? This story is found in both the Bible and in our History books.

Several hundred years after Daniel's death, the **influence** of Greek culture had already **invaded** Israel. In the trading centers such as Gazza, Joppa, and in Amman Jordan, Greek influence was strong. This was not done by force or by military power, it was done with a quiet sociological change. That would change when the Greeks did in fact invade. This is a foreshadowing or a prototype of what is to come.

Daniel 8:3-8

The Jews in Israel were not happy with the cultural invasion of their country. This is true of Christians and followers of Jesus Christ in America today. There are powers that are working to **change** our national customs, culture and values. This is something that has happened throughout history. Remember, the Greeks were supposed to be the height of culture, intellect, philosophy, education, thought and entertainment. Then, as is happening now, they incessantly and without mercy chip away at the values that are held dear and true. The values that helped establish and strengthen a society. Those who value the truth of both, Holy Scripture and untarnished American history, are waking up to see how **pagan** and unbiblical ideas are destabilizing our people as individuals and our **foundations** as a nation. All without a shot fired. This is why we must understand that our real battles are not against flesh and blood.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Ephesians 6:12 When we lose battles in the Spiritual, we will many times see actual national battles in the natural. History teaches us this. (For instance, Israel taken captive to Babylon, America's need to fight the civil war, WW2 and the world fighting not just the German military but the philosophies and values of the Nazi's, which involved the genocide of the Jewish people)

The Babylonian Empire collapsed around 540 B.C. (Daniel 5) That Empire was followed by the Medo-Persian Empire and Darius the Mede took the kingdom. This is fulfilled in **Daniel 8:3** This empire lasted 200 yrs. The first horn was Media and the second Persia. Then Daniel saw a **goat** coming eastward. This angry, fast-moving goat was Alexander the Great.

Alexander conquered Palestine or Israel in 334 B.C. but did not mistreat the Jews still living there. These people had already started being **Hellenized**. To be Hellenized means - devotion to or imitation of ancient Greek thought, customs, or styles.

Most Christians do not stop to realize that before Jesus was born the Jewish people were already dealing with both Greek Philosophies and Roman thinking and morals that had deeply infiltrated the culture and had deeply affected the thinking and behavior of the Jewish people. It was into this culture and into these customs that the disciples began taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was into this culture that Jesus became the sacrifice for our sins and died on a cross.

America had its **foundations** in the word of God. Like the Jewish people who had their foundations in the “Law of the Lord” and saw the outside influence of the culture change their nation. We are seeing the same thing in a “Post – Christian” America. While America was once the greatest influence for good in sending missionaries around the world to spread the Gospel. Now America’s greatest export is our immoral culture that has “**westernized**” the rest of the world. Many nations have now adopted our western look, music, food, mood and desire for more. The impact on Asian nations is clearly seen as their cultures clash (think old world Japan and China) **Colossians 2:6-10**

Alexander died in his early thirties and almost immediately his four generals divided and took over this empire. – Fast forward 150 years.

Between the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, and the first one in the New Testament, Matthew – 400 years passed. In theological circles this is known as the **silent** years. During this time there is no record of God speaking to anyone. Time did not stand, still history still had some major developments.

- Israel returned to the promised land following the collapse of Babylon with the help of Cyrus.
- A temporary temple had been erected to replace the one destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar This was built by Nehemiah and Ezra. The Temple that Jesus knew was built by King Herod.
- Under the Medes and Persians and then the Greeks, the Jews had a secure time lasting about 350 years.
- Under the Tyrant Antiochus the Jews suffered greatly.
- The Roman Empire begins midway through the 400 years between the Testaments. People like Julius Caesar and Pompey became leaders of the known world. Remember that Rome was the identity of the legs of iron in King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

During the 400 years, the royal line of David had fallen; there was no **Jewish** king on the throne of Israel. There were no political factions or divided party groups. By the time we come to the book of Matthew there are four main groups.

The **Pharisees** were members of a party that believed in resurrection and in following legal traditions that were ascribed not to the Bible but to “the traditions of the fathers.” Like the scribes, they were also well-known legal experts. These were keepers of the law but developed so many “rules” contained in the Mishna and Talmud that were impossible for people to keep. The Pharisees believed in the supernatural -- angels, demons, heaven, hell, the Pharisees asserted that God could and should be worshipped even away from the Temple and outside Jerusalem. To the Pharisees, worship consisted not in bloody sacrifices—the practice of the Temple priests—but in prayer and in the study of God's law. These would have been considered ultra conservatives.

The **Sadducees** were the party of high priests, aristocratic families, and merchants—the wealthier elements of the population. They came under the influence of Hellenism, tended to have good relations with the Roman rulers of Palestine, and generally represented the conservative view within Judaism. They did not believe in Resurrection. These would be considered religious liberals. Some other things they believed were –

- There is no fate.
- God does not commit evil.
- Man has free will; "man has the free choice of good or evil".
- The soul is not immortal; there is no afterlife.
- There are no rewards or penalties after death.

The **Herodians** were a Jewish political party who sympathize with the Herodian rulers in their general policy of government, and in the social customs which they introduced from Rome. They were in agreement with the Sadducees in holding the duty of submission to Rome, and of supporting the Herod's on the throne. These are people with a form of belief but believe in always standing with the government.

The **Hellenists** were the lovers of Greek culture became the foundation and the rise of the Sadducees. These again were the liberals. They incorporated Greek Philosophies into Jewish tradition. They turned from a strict observance of the Law and gave society a sloppy view of what a devout follower of Judaism looked like. (Remember Jesus wasn't born yet, He was born into this culture). This gave rise to the “monster” Antiochus Epiphanes, who is the **prototype** of the last days antichrist.

Daniel 8:8-12

Remember the goat represented Greece, and the great horn that was broken was Alexander the Great.

About 203 B.C. Antiochus arrived capturing control over the Middle East. When he died his brother Antiochus Epiphanes took control. He gave himself the last name Epiphanes and it means visible god. He claimed that he and Jupiter were one and the same. Jupiter was the chief deity of the Romans, to the Greeks he was known as Zeus.

His goal was to turn everyone into Greeks if not by birth than by actions and desire. He prohibited the observance of the Sabbath and circumcision. He placed a statue of Jupiter, resembling himself in the Jewish temple and a pig (the most unclean animal) was killed on the Holy Alter. He outlawed Judaism and many Jews were murdered rather than violate the Law.

Many Jews went over to Hellenism. Some were wealthy aristocrats who adopted Greek customs and dress. Some even changed their names to Greek ones and sent their children to Greek universities. It was Greek education and ideas that was used to indoctrinate and change Jewish culture.

It was during this time that the great revolt by the Maccabees took place. It was during this time that the Feast of Chanukah was established as God honored their desire to purify and rededicate the Temple to God and a small amount of oil was miraculously able to be enough to last for a week as new oil was being made.

Within a short time, the Romans would arrive and the “legs of iron” would then become a reality.

Daniel 8:13-14

Antiochus desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem. An angel told Daniel that this would last 2,300 days or between six and seven years. That is how long this Greek madman who was one of Alexander the Great’s generals would rule the Holy Land.

From scripture we are going to see that Daniel’s vision was not only about the Greek era, but how the fullest revelation is yet to come. First Daniel is shown the vision’s meaning between the Old and New Testament – We have already covered this.

Daniel 8:15-22

Gabriel clearly identifies who Daniel saw in his vision. (This is the same Gabriel who appeared Zacharias and to the virgin Mary)

The Ram- Media-Persia

The Goat- Greece

The great horn – Alexander the Great

The little horn – Antiochus Epiphanes – Who would have hated being a little horn.

Remember that He is a prototype of the coming antichrist.

Daniel 8:23-25 (NKJV & NLT)

The “latter times” are days that are just ahead of us in history. **2 Timothy 3:13**
Just as Antiochus Epiphanes rose to power with force and intrigue, so will the antichrist. As he persecuted the Jews, so will the antichrist. As he stopped sacrifice and desecrated the temple, so will the antichrist. As he seemed to be a complete success, so will the antichrist. From what Antiochus did to Jews in his day, one may know the general **pattern** of what the antichrist will do to them in the future. Greece with all its refinement, culture and art, produced the Old Testament antichrist while the so-called Christian nations produce the New Testament antichrist Daniel describes the antichrist as wicked, fierce and a man of **intrigue**. **Revelation 13:7**
Intrigue deals with flattery, lying, deception and conspiracies. His power will be global.

Daniel tells us that the power of the antichrist will be vast but that he is really empowered by someone else – that someone is **Satan**.

There are four things that will characterize the actions of the antichrist:

- He will bring **prosperity** to his followers. **Revelation 13:17**
He will control the economy.
- He will exalt himself. The coins of Antiochus Epiphanes were inscribed with this title: THEOS EPIPHANES meaning, “God manifest.” The coming antichrist will also exalt himself **2 Timothy 2:4, Revelation 13:5**
- Antiochus Epiphanes not only destroyed his enemies, but also harshly persecuted the people of God. The coming antichrist will also destroy and persecute. The antichrist will at first come in peace – the rider on a white horse – but soon he is followed by the **red** horse of war. Both the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes in the past and of the antichrist in the future are marked by **deceit**. **2 Thessalonians 2:9-10**
- He shall even rise against the **Prince** of princes. Though Antiochus Epiphanes hated the people of God and fought against them, it was because he really hated God. The same will be true of the coming antichrist, who will hate the Jews because he hates God. In all of his insanity the antichrist will stand up to Jesus Himself.
- The Bible gives us a promise that he shall be **broken** without human means. History tells us that Antiochus Epiphanes died of disease, not by the hand of man. In a similar way no *man* will defeat the coming antichrist, but the hand of Jesus will strike him down.

Daniel 8:26-27

The vision that Daniel had would not be fulfilled in his day. Daniel was **physically** and spiritually affected by what he saw for several days. After those days he got up and went back to work - **“I went about the king’s business”**. Daniel didn’t let either spiritual mysteries or physical weakness keep him from doing his duty. This shows us that our interest in prophecy should make us **more** concerned with our **King’s business**, not **less**.

No one understood it – it wasn't because God never wanted this prophecy to be understood. There is no reason for God to reveal something to man that can never be understood. The reason why no one understood it was because the vision was sealed up in light of its ultimate fulfillment in Daniel's distant future. It is worth noting that the time is *not* distant for us in light of **Revelation 1:3**, and the book of prophecy is not sealed in light of **Revelation 22:10**.