

Daniel

Week 22, chapter 8

Daniel chapter 8 is a first-class maze and expert-level puzzle all rolled into one. But if you want to understand history not just of the End Times but also world history from the time of Nebuchadnezzar onward, than deciphering Daniel is the key. And this is because while the secular world views history as a random, linear and non-repeating, unfolding of human affairs, in reality history is a divinely controlled, pattern-based, intimately overseen unfolding of God's plan of redemption. We'll do our best to sort out the various symbols used in Daniel chapter 8 and see where, and how, and if they connect to the earlier visions that we studied in Daniel. Please be aware that we are taking Daniel as it comes; so indeed as we eventually move into the following chapters, what we learn will be expanded upon as more information is given in the form of progressive revelation.

Chapter 8 signals a return to a Jewish/Kingdom of God focus as the language of the document itself now shifts from the gentile-oriented Aramaic that began with chapter 2 and concluded at the end of chapter 7. So from here through the end of the Book of Daniel, the language of the text is Hebrew. In the remaining chapters of Daniel we're going to get 3 additional visions or revelations that Daniel received while serving 3 different Masters. The vision we'll read momentarily takes place while the Babylonian King Belshazzar is still Daniel's king; the next one will be after the Babylonian Empire falls and Darius the Mede is the new king; and then after that Daniel receives a vision when Cyrus the Persian king is in power.

I'm sorry to say that the only good and uplifting news to be had in this section is that there will come a time when the Ancient of Days along with the Son of Man will come to rescue oppressed Israel. And yet, as we wind our way through the maze of Daniel 8 it becomes clear that this deliverance-of-Israel event isn't really connected to the problem of the exile in Babylon that the Jews are currently undergoing in Daniel's time because it was foretold that their Babylonian exile would only last for 70 years and then come to a satisfactory end. And in fact, the Jews would even be treated quite well by their Babylonian conquerors (history tells us that the Jews thrived in Babylon). In other words, there was no existential threat to the survival of the Jewish people as a result of their being conquered by the Babylonians and sent away to Babylon for a period of time. The primary catastrophe of the Babylonian exile lay in the loss of their homeland, Judah, and of their priesthood and Temple. Now they were stuck in Babylon without a means to atone for their sins, unable to keep kosher, unable to keep so many of God's ritual laws and appointed times and festivals as they were ordained in the Torah.

However the opposite will become the case at some later point, long after Daniel's time, as the extinction of the Jewish people (and all those who join them in spirit) will become the aim of the

final gentile world government. We got just a hint of this in chapter 7, but now beginning in chapter 8 we are briefly told of a coming war of survival between the Hebrew people and some gentile world rulers, that will culminate in the rule of a single powerful ruler (called the little horn) whose goal seems to be to eliminate the very concept of biblical Jewishness and what we can rightly call a Hebrew Roots theology, including abolishing God's laws, His Sabbath, and His appointed times, and bringing about oppression and genocide of the Hebrew people on an unheard of scale. And as we learned from Zechariah 14, this single powerful world ruler will be winning and succeeding (and no doubt have the full backing of the vast majority of the world's citizens, and equally without doubt the backing of the apostate portion of the institutional church who sees no future for Israel and the Jewish people). Without divine intervention to stop this final world leader (who must be that little horn of Daniel chapter 7) he will achieve his goal. But then suddenly the Ancient of Days awakens. At precisely the perfect, pre-ordained moment He comes, leads His holy ones to victory, Daniel's little horn is destroyed, and the everlasting Kingdom of God is brought in to rule over all the earth, with Yeshua Our Messiah as its king, forever.

Let's read Daniel 8.

READ DANIEL CHAPTER 8 all

Verse 1 gives us the timing of this latest vision. It is about 2 years after the first vision Daniel received (the one presented in chapter 7) so he had quite some time to contemplate and digest the best he could what that first vision might have meant. Daniel was probably close to 70 years old at this time. The Hebrew word used here for "vision" is **hazon**, and while vision is not a wrong translation, recognize that in other places in English bibles **hazon** is translated as "revelation". While we don't want to take the point too far, it seems as though this vision of Daniel was a bit different in how it was transmitted to Daniel than the first one because the first was said to be a dream and vision, which probably means that Daniel was in a semi-conscious state. But here in chapter 8, it seems as though his experience in receiving this message from God might be more akin to what the NT John received and wrote down that we call the Book of Revelation.

^{CJB} **Revelation 1:1 *This is the revelation which God gave to Yeshua the Messiah, so that he could show his servants what must happen very soon. He communicated it by sending his angel to his servant Yochanan,***

² *who bore witness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Yeshua the Messiah, as much as he saw.*

The second verse of Daniel 8 says that Daniel found himself in Shushan, the capital of Elam, and that he was standing by the Ulai Canal. Shushan is also known as Susa, and in modern times in the Farsi language of Iran as Shush. Archeologists claim that it is a very ancient city that was first built in 4000 B.C. and remained occupied until around the time of the Crusades. Shushan is called a citadel or a fortress meaning that it was a walled city with excellent defenses and a most desirable and strategic location. Thus we find that when Persia

conquered Babylon, they chose to make Shushan as their new capital city. And no doubt since this vision of Daniel was prophetic, the reason that Daniel was taken to Shushan is because this place would soon become the seat of the government for the 2nd gentile world empire, the Empire of the Medes and Persians.

There is much debate in Judaism and in Christianity whether the words of this passage are meant to say that Daniel was actually physically in Shushan (visiting there) at the time of his revelation, or that he was “taken there in the spirit” so to speak. That is, Shushan was like a backdrop in a theatrical production to help Daniel understand and visualize the meaning and purpose of this revelation from God. And yet Daniel’s tomb is located in Shushan because many Jews believed that indeed he was there in person to receive this strange revelation. And in fact, he might have been a visitor to Shushan (more than once) as a visiting diplomat on behalf of Babylon. But the existence of a marked tomb doesn’t necessarily mean anyone actually occupies it. For example: the famous Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron (the Cave of Machpelah) has marked tombs for Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Rebecca, and Leah. However investigation has proved conclusively that none of those people occupy those tombs. In fact no one is in them (at least not any more). They are today more memorial than gravesite. And it is the same with the Tomb of Daniel that is located in Shushan.

The words of chapter 8 verses 1 and 2 seem straightforward enough to me, and to most bible scholars, that Daniel was in Babylon at the time of the vision but that the setting for the vision was Shushan, the place that would soon be the capital city of the 2nd world empire: the one depicted in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream as the silver chest and arms of his dream-statue, and in Daniel’s first vision as the 2nd beast that was like a bear. But then with verse 3 we get some more information about this 2nd gentile world kingdom. And the symbolism used to give us this additional information is of a ram with 2 horns.

The use of the ram was not intended to replace or update the use of the bear as the prophetic symbol of the 2nd world empire. Rather it was that in Daniel’s first vision the bear had certain attributes that well described Media-Persia. But here in his second vision a ram is used because the ram was the commonly recognized form of Persia’s Guardian Spirit.

In fact in the Zendevesta, the holy book of the religion founded by Zoroaster around 1000 years before Daniel’s day, it is said that the god ***Ized Behram***, appeared like a Ram with cloven feet and sharp pointed horns. The religion that Zoroaster created began in the area that became Persia and now is modern day Iran. In time this ram-god became known as Aries in the Zodiac, whose symbol is to this day a ram. Thus most folks in Daniel’s era recognized the connection between Persia, the ram, and the city of Shushan. It would be like folks the world over today recognizing the connection between the USA, the eagle, and the city of Washington, D.C.

So there wasn’t much mystery for Daniel regarding the identity of the ram as Persia. Notice that there is one ram with two horns. Remember that a horn is biblically symbolic of a kingdom and/or of a king. Thus we have one creature (a ram) that carries two kings or kingdoms (2 horns) on its head. Both horns were long (meaning they both had substantial power) however one was even longer than the other (one had incrementally more power than the other). And

the longer one (the more powerful one) showed its superiority a bit later. This ram with 2 horns fits wonderfully with the symbolism of the 2 arms of Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue that are connected at the chest. Obviously this is representative of the combined Empire consisting of the two kingdoms of the Medes and the Persians. And historically we find that while at first the Medes were given the honor of providing the king over the former Babylonian Empire (King Darius), soon the more powerful Persians replaced him with a Persian king (King Cyrus). Nonetheless the 2 kingdoms remained firmly allied.

As Daniel watched this ram, the spiritual symbol of Persia, it forcefully pushed its way to the west, north and south, and no animals could stand up against it. The idea is that Media-Persia would expand its empire to the west, north and south, but not to the east. Every gentile nation had gods and protective spirits that were worshipped as in the form of an animal of some sort; so the idea of saying that no animal could stand against the ram means that the god of Persia (the ram) was victorious over the gods (represented by other animals) of these other kingdoms and nations.

When we look back in history we see just how accurate this prophecy was. To the west Media-Persia conquered Babylon, Syria, and much of Asia Minor. To the north they conquered Armenia and the region around the Caspian Sea (sometimes called Scythia). And to the south their major conquests were Egypt and Ethiopia, but they also of course took over the former Holy Lands of the Hebrews because that was part of the Babylonian Empire that they had acquired. They tried to make gains to the east, but generally were either repulsed, or the gains were minor, or they were unable to hold on to what they won for very long.

But let's also notice something else: the beast symbol in Daniel's first vision for Media-Persia was the bear. And if you'll recall the bear carried 3 rib bones in its mouth. The symbolism of those 3 rib bones is now revealed to us, whereas before we had to speculate. The 3 bones are symbolic of Media-Persia's successful conquests to 3 of the 4 compass directions: the west, north and south.....but NOT to the east (otherwise there would have been 4 rib bones in the bear's mouth).

Next, in verse 5, Daniel says he was beginning to understand; that is, the symbolism of the revelation was pretty clear to him. And that was at least partly because the geopolitical situation at the time of his vision matched what the vision says the outcome would be. The timing of this vision was just a matter of months, maybe only weeks, before Media-Persia attacked and overran Babylon effectively taking their empire away from them. Media-Persia had been conquering and expanding into other areas and it seemed like only a matter of time before they finally targeted the big prize: Babylon. But then something that Daniel didn't understand was revealed. A male goat appeared from the direction of the west and began passing over the earth without touching the ground. In other words, it was conquering at a startling rate and seas and mountains and rivers were no obstacle for him.

Let's connect the goat with Daniel's first vision. The 3rd beast (after Babylon, and then Media-Persia, the lion and the bear) was symbolized by a 4 headed leopard that had bird's wings. Not just the standard 2 bird's wings, but 4. So this beast could really fly high and fast! Thus the idea is that the wings enabled the 3rd beast (whose is now spoken of as the he-goat), to soar

over the land and extend its range and influence at lightening speed.

The main feature of this powerful goat from the west was a single large horn on its forehead, located between its eyes (a horn, meaning a king or kingdom). And it charged the ram with such violence that the ram couldn't withstand it. The vision showed the ram standing in front of the Ulai canal that ran by the Persian capital city of Shushan. So the ram is once again firmly connected to the Persians and to Shushan, and we have the empire of the ram clearly affirmed as the Median-Persian Empire, and the empire of the goat was defeating it.

The two horns on the ram (the two kings with their kingdoms, Media and Persia) were broken by the ferocity of the goat, thus symbolizing the ram's defeat. I don't want to get ahead of ourselves (because what I'm going to tell you is said in a few more verses), but the he-goat is identified for us as Greece (or more technically as Macedonia-Greece). And therefore the single powerful big horn on the goat is none other than that incomparable conqueror Alexander the Great. But then verse 8 explains that something unexpected happened to the big horn on the goat; it was broken (destroyed), and in its place arose 4 more horns that spread out in the 4 compass directions. And history matches this symbolism perfectly.

In June of 323 B.C., at the height of his power, Alexander the Great died in his bed a month shy of his 33rd birthday. The reasons are not given for his demise except that he had a high fever, chills, was very weak and had been in bed for about 10 days. Some think he was poisoned, but more and more modern forensic doctors who consider the symptoms that are recorded think it was not treachery but rather some type of infectious disease like Typhoid Fever, which was rampant at that time.

Thus the great horn upon the he-goat was dead; but the he-goat itself (the Greek Empire) was alive and well, and very powerful. Alexander had not named a successor (who would at age 32?) and so naturally the jockeying for position as the heir to the Empire began immediately upon his untimely death. Since this was a highly militarized society, it was the generals who would, of course, succeed in ruling. Without going into great detail, it was decided that 4 generals would run the empire. The empire would be divided into 4 districts, with each district being run by one of these generals. This was NOT a carving up of the empire into separate independent kingdoms; rather it was simply a division of duties. However unlike in the military when multiple generals were given certain areas of authority, but each reported to the king, there would be no single higher authority above these 4 generals. Thus the Greek government system became known as the Diadochi, which simply means "successors". As one can imagine there were wars and assassinations and high political intrigue among these Diadochi and others who were not included in the administration of the Empire but thought they ought to be. But soon 4 men rose to the top, consolidated their power, and established their rulership: Macedonia was placed under Cassander, Thrace and Asia Minor were ruled by Lysimachus, Syria by Seleucus, and Egypt (along with most of the Holy Lands) by Ptolemy. Technically there were originally 5 Diadochi rulers and districts but the 5th ruler, a fellow named Antigonus, was quickly overthrown and so for all practical purposes there were only 4.

Well, so far so good with Daniel chapter 8. The interpretation of Daniel's revelation is straightforward. Media-Persia is the ram with 2 long horns, who overthrows Babylon. Greece is

the he-goat with one large horn that destroys the ram who is Media-Persia. The 2nd world empire conquers the 1st, and then the 2nd is itself destroyed by the 3rd, Greece. But now we come to verse 9 and here's where things get challenging. Here we're told that from one of those 4 horns on the he-goat another horn came, a smaller one. And part of the difficulty is that some theologians insist that this smaller horn on the he-goat must be the same as the Daniel chapter 7 little horn that grows on the 4th beast. Is it? I don't see how. But here is the reason and agenda of those theologians who insist that the little horns of chapters 7 and 8 are the same. If true, then the 4th kingdom had already come by the time that the fake Daniel had written his fake prophecies. Therefore, the 4th kingdom couldn't be Rome. Rather, the 4th kingdom was Greece, and the little horn was Antiochus Epiphanies. That is: the 1st kingdom was Babylon, the second was Media, the 3rd was Persia, and the 4th was Greece. However as I've said in earlier lessons, history doesn't know of an Empire of the Medes. It is a contrived Empire of bible theologians who need one in order for their doctrines to work out. But there are more reasons why this Greece-as-the-4th empire doesn't work, and why the little horn from Daniel 7 and the smaller horn from Daniel 8 cannot possibly be the same person.

First, the little horn from Daniel 7 emphatically comes from the 4th gentile world empire. The little horn from Daniel 8 comes from the 3rd gentile world empire (and is well associated with the 3rd beast imagery of Daniel's 1st vision). Second, the little horn from Daniel 7 sprouts from among 10 other horns and displaces 3 of them. The little horn from Daniel 8 comes from 1 of the 4 horns, and replaces it but not the other 3. Yet in fairness language scholars agree that the wording of this passage is very difficult, and what is being conveyed is not entirely clear. What it seems to be communicating is that out of one of the 4 horns a ruler of little power arose, but eventually he was able to grow into a position of great power. And the district of the Greek Empire that he would control is said to be to the south, and to the east, and to.....and this is where we arrive at yet another sticking point. Depending on your English bible translation it might say that the 3rd direction of his control was "to your desire", "to the Glory", "to the pleasant land", "to the beautiful land", "to the land of splendor", or one of a few more terms. These various English terms are attempts to translate the Hebrew words **ha tsebe**. We find this same Hebrew term used in Ezekiel 20, Jeremiah 3 and Daniel 11. And regardless of the exact English words that we'll find in our various bibles, the idea is always that it is referring to the Holy Lands. This small-horn ruler that grew great will have the Holy Lands as part of his district. But then verse 10 is even more problematic because it says that this ruler becomes so strong the he will reach up to the heavens and hurl some of the army and the hosts of heaven and the stars to the ground and trampled them. He will not **attempt** to, but rather he will **succeed** in doing it. What is this referring to? Can this ruler who reaches up to the heavens and is able to throw down the heavenly hosts be a human being or are we speaking of a spiritual being (probably the Evil One, Satan)? After all, how could a mortal man, no matter how powerful, reach into heaven and throw angels down to the earth?

Let's look at this briefly and I think the explanation is not as difficult as it might seem. Let's frame this issue by drawing on our principle of the Reality of Duality. That is, the earth and its inhabitants are generally a physical counterpart of the structure and hierarchy of heaven and its spiritual inhabitants. Further, physical events that happen on earth usually have their spiritual heavenly parallels. So the hosts of heaven are on one side of the Reality of Duality and they are God's angels (God's heavenly army). They are God's set apart **spiritual** beings

created to serve Him. On earth the Lord created national Israel and set them apart as **human** beings to serve Him. Thus we have a parallel between the spiritual and the physical. So God is the God of the hosts of heaven in the sense of the hosts as spiritual beings, and He is the God of the host of heaven in the sense of physical beings whose allegiance is to God in heaven, and whose natural home is heaven, and whose purpose on earth is the same as the purpose of angels in heaven: to serve God (something Christians have claimed, correctly, since time immemorial).

It is clear from the context of the vision that the person that the smaller horn represents is a real actual human being, and not an evil spirit or an angel. And in some ways he is not unlike Nimrod who felt himself so great that lording over humans wasn't enough so he had a tall tower built (a ziggurat), whereupon he climbed to the top (because he felt it put him nearer to God), and shook his fist in disrespect at the heavens and challenged God to stand against him. That is the same sense that we get in verse 10 that this smaller-horn ruler will feel powerful enough to even challenge God. But the other reason to believe that these particular hosts of heaven are humans and not angels is that starting in verse 15 we have the angel Gabriel explaining the meaning of Daniel's vision to him. And when we get to verse 24, Gabriel says that this smaller horn will succeed in whatever he does and that he will destroy the mighty and the holy ones.

Daniel 8:23-24 CJB

²³ In the latter part of their reign(the reign of the 4 horns), when the evildoers have become as evil as possible, there will arise an arrogant king (small horn) skilled in intrigue.

²⁴ His power will be great, but not with the power the first king (Alexander the Great) had. He will be amazingly destructive, he will succeed in whatever he does, and he will destroy the mighty and the holy ones.

So while I can't be 100% certain, it sure seems to me that the mighty and the holy ones of verse 24 are Gabriel's explanation for who the hosts of heaven and the stars are in verse 10. And therefore this is indicating Israelites and Israel's leadership.

Verse 11 goes further. Here the small horn directly challenges the "prince of the heavenly host". This corresponds with Gabriel's explanation in verse 25:

^{CJB} Daniel 8:25 He will succeed through craftiness and deceit, become swelled with pride, and destroy many people just when they feel the most secure. He will even challenge the prince of princes; but, without human intervention, he will be broken.

The "prince of princes" is the prince of the heavenly hosts, and that can be none other than God. But how does the small horn challenge God?

Daniel 8:11 CJB*the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was thrown down.*

So the little horn will invade the sanctuary of God (the Temple), and will bring a halt to the offering of sacrifices to Yehoveh. This cannot be a heavenly event; it is impossible that either an earthly or spiritual being would succeed in invading God's heavenly Temple and stopping whatever the heavenly version is of sacrifices. Thus this is more proof that all that is being described concerning the stars and hosts of heaven, and of the small horn, and of the sanctuary and sacrifices is happening physically, on earth, and mortal human beings are both the culprits and the victims.

Who is this smaller horn of the 3rd kingdom of Greece? Listen to the book of 1st Maccabees, a book that is not part of the Protestant biblical canon, but is true and reliable.

7 And after Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died. 8 Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. 9 They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their descendants after them for many years; and they caused many evils on the earth. 10 From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks. 11 In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us." 12 This proposal pleased them, 13 and some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. 14 So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, 15 and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil. 16 When Antiochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become king of the land of Egypt, in order that he might reign over both kingdoms. 17 So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet. 18 He engaged King Ptolemy of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. 19 They captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he plundered the land of Egypt. 20 After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. 21 He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. 22 He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. 23 He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found. 24 Taking them all, he went into his own land. He shed much blood, and spoke with great arrogance. 25 Israel mourned deeply in every community, 26 rulers and elders groaned, young women and young men became faint, the beauty of the women faded. 27 Every bridegroom took up the lament; she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning. 28 Even the land trembled for its inhabitants, and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame. 29 Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. 30 Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel.

31 He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. 32 They took captive the women and children, and seized the livestock. 33 Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. 34 They stationed there a sinful people, men who were renegades. These strengthened their position; 35 they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great menace, 36 for the citadel became an ambush against the sanctuary, an evil adversary of Israel at all times. 37 On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood; they even defiled the sanctuary. 38 Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled; she became a dwelling of strangers; she became strange to her offspring, and her children forsook her. 39 Her sanctuary became desolate like a desert; her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into a reproach, her honor into contempt. 40 Her dishonor now grew as great as her glory; her exaltation was turned into mourning. 41 Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, 42 and that all should give up their particular customs. 43 All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. 44 And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, 45 to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals, 46 to defile the sanctuary and the priests, 47 to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, 48 and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, 49 so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. 50 He added, "And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die."

The smaller horn turned out to be Antiochus Epiphanies. But there is so much more to this story. And we'll continue with it next time.