

**8 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.**

**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.**

**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."**

Imagine yourself in Israel. The time is way past when the exiles returned under King Cyrus. The people returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. They rebuilt the

walls and the temple. And then, as time went on, trouble set in. What are they supposed to think about all of this? At some point in the future, generations later, Antiochus Epiphanes invades and desecrates the temple. How should the people of God respond to this? What should they think? Then later the Romans take over the country. What should they think of that?

When we read Daniel, we read most of it as **history**. But that is not how the **Jewish** people read it **before Christ**. They read it to **let them know** what to expect. Can you imagine what some of the faithful ones might have thought when these troubles struck Israel? They may have thought God had **totally abandoned** them. They may have thought **evil would ultimately triumph**. They may have thought everything was going crazy.

But God gave them Daniel's prophecy to let them know that things are happening exactly as **He had ordained** them. Scripture tells us that God will not allow His people to live in sin. There will be a **discipline** for the children of God and a **punishment** to the enemies of God. He preordained it all. So what a blessing it was that Daniel wrote these prophecies down.

It is important to note that Daniel 7 was written in **Aramaic**, which the general populace would be able to understand. Daniel 8 was written in **Hebrew** which only the Jews could read. This exposes some of Daniel's purpose in recording it. He was recording it so his countrymen would be able to understand what was happening to them in the future.

For us it serves a different purpose. We read it as primarily fulfilled prophecy. So we see Daniel prophesying hundreds of years prior to the prophecies coming true. First God showed Daniel that the **Medes and Persians** would take over. That was only a few years away when Daniel received this prophecy. Then God predicts that the **Greeks** under Alexander the Great would become the world power. While, when it happened, it may have looked chaotic to everyone else, the students of the Word of God would say, yes, I expected this. I just did not know when. Daniel was prophesying of the Greeks as a world power before the Greeks had any power at all. We look at it and we say, of course God could predict all of this. Our God sees the beginning from the end. Time is not a constraint to Him like it is to us. God ordains history. He plans history.

So we can look at Daniel and say, yes, we can trust our God to do His will **now** as He did **then**. We can know that our world is not out of kilter. We can know that **the Bible is true**. We can know that God is **still on His throne**. And there is more evil to come. But He will overcome in the end.

So we can thank God for the assurance that the book of Daniel brings to our souls.

Let's look at the text-

**8 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.**

There are a couple things to note here. First, Daniel was not in Susa. Susa was the winter headquarters for the Medes and Persians. It was 220 miles East of Babylon. It was in what is now Southwestern Iran. Nehemiah and Esther were written about Susa.

The second thing is the emphasis given to things **He Saw**. As we read this chapter, we are meant to share **Daniel's experience** more than to understand some kind of writing. It is possible that if Daniel **could have** he would have passed this on as a picture book. Daniel invites us to experience with him the things he was experiencing.

So here is the first action that he saw.

**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.**

It is wonderful that we are not left **guessing** about **what is what** in this verse. We read later in our chapter and find out **exactly** who the two beasts represent in our text this morning. Prophecy is not always so clear. We jump down in the text.

**Daniel 8:20–22 (ESV)**

**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.**

OK, so this ram is Medes and the Persians. It turns out that the Persians were actually the more powerful of the two. Cyrus was far greater than Darius. He ended up being very powerful.

Remember in Daniel 7 where we learned about the bear on its side with one side higher than the other. Well it is Persia that was higher than the Medes. The Medes were in power **before** the Persians, but the Persians **were superior militarily** to the Medes.

Also it is interesting that the Persians actually used a Ram as their symbol for their kingdom. Like we use an Eagle for the US, Persia used a ram. A ram's head with two horns, one higher than the other, actually was found in different parts of the

ruins of Persepolis. So the early readers of Daniel would probably not have needed the explanation of who this beast was. They could probably guess.

**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.**

History tells us that the SCYTHIANS were northward; the GREEKS were westward; and the EGYPTIANS were southward. The Persians conquered all of them. In our not so recent history it would have been like the Germans attacking all their border countries. No one could stop them. They looked invincible. That is how the Medes and Persians would have looked.

**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.**

Ok, this horn between his eyes is clearly Alexander the great. This is an amazing piece of human history. Alexander the great was in his twenties when he began his conquests.

The kingdom of Greece began 200 years before Daniel. They were actually called the goats people. The name is believed to be a result of the following story.

**Caranus**, their first king went looking for a place to live and set up a kingdom.

**Caranus** was advised by an oracle to follow the goats. So he did. There was a herd of goats trying to avoid a storm. He followed the goats to Edessan and set up his kingdom there.

Alexander actually named one of his sons Alexander the goat. So you can easily see why he is referred to as a goat. And everyone would have understood the symbolism who lived during the rise of the Greek kingdom.

**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.**

Again this is describing something that we can read in history. Alexander attacked the Medes and Persian empire several times.

The conflicts between the Greeks and the Persians were very violent. Alexander first conquered the generals of Darius, at the river Granicus, in Phrygia;

After this he attacked and totally routed Darius, at the straits of Issus, in Cilicia;

After that he again attacked and routed Darius at the plains of Arbela, in Assyria.

Where it says, **He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal**

This is probably referring to Alexander at the river Granicus. You can picture Darius's army on one side of the river and Alexander's on the other. Alexander's troops actually swam across the river and attacked Darius's army with a great fury.

Then Alexander fully conquered Persia and Media and sacked and burnt the royal city of **Persepolis**, the capital of the Persian empire. Now there is a little back story that explains why Alexander applied so much fury. Evidently Darius kept trying to bribe Alexander's captains and was trying to get some of his troops to **assassinate Alexander**. That didn't sit well with Alexander. Alexander eventually killed off all the royal family of the Medes and Persia and ruled in their place.

**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.**

Alexander had conquered most of the known world by age 33. And that is when he died. Now how he died is very interesting.

Evidently someone challenged Alexander to drink a whole punch bowl of wine, which he did. It was probably up to 6 quarts of wine. Then he fell ill. After 10 days of intense fever he viewed his soldiers for the last time. He could no longer speak. He just looked at them in a way that they knew he recognized them. He was declared dead on June 13. But what happened next was a real mystery. His body did not **decay** or go into **rigor mortis**. In fact, some of those around him concluded because of this that he must have been a god, since he was not suffering the normal human fate.

Since then, a doctor at the school of medicine in New Zealand theorized that Alexander actually had Guillain-Barre syndrome. This is an auto immune disease where your body attacks itself so severely that often the person cannot even move. Many times people with this syndrome need to be hooked up to ventilators to assist their breathing. If that is true, it makes sense that the doctors could not sense a pulse or his breathing. What probably killed Alexander the great was the embalming process.

After Alexander's death his natural brother, Philip Aridæus, and his two sons, Alexander Ægus and Hercules, ruled the Greek kingdom; but they were all murdered within fifteen years; and thus the great horn, the Greek kingdom, was broken. None of Alexander's family were on the throne.

At this point governors of provinces took the title of kings for themselves

1. SELEUCUS, who had Syria and Babylon.
2. LYSIMACHUS, who had Asia Minor.
3. PTOLEMY, son of Lagus, who had Egypt
4. CASSANOER, who had Greece

**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.**

There are two popular theories presented about who the little horn is. Most, I think, believe it to be **Antiochus Epiphanes**. He took over the Seleucid empire. And history records that he actually committed the abomination of desolation that we will talk about later.

The other theory is that the Roman empire actually arose out of the Greek empire so the little horn was one of the emperors of Rome. I think since we can easily match the characteristics described with Antiochus and there is really no Roman emperor that is an accurate match, we should probably go with Antiochus.

Antiochus Epiphanes IV was in power from 175–164 B.C.

I have a quote from the Reformed Expository Commentary.

**Once again, with the benefit of historical hindsight, we can clearly identify the little horn of Daniel 8 as a historical figure, Antiochus, whose nickname “Epiphanes” means “God made manifest,” was king of the Seleucid empire, one of the four kingdoms that emerged from Alexander the Great’s former territory. Initially he was not first in line for the throne, but he seized it from his nephew through intrigue and then enlarged his kingdom through substantial military successes. Antiochus was a tyrant who tried to unify his kingdom by forcing all of his subjects to adopt Greek cultural and religious practices. He banned circumcision, brought an end to sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem in 167 B.C., and then deliberately defiled it by burning pig’s flesh on the altar and placing an object sacred to Zeus in the Holy of Holies. He also burned copies of the Scriptures and slaughtered those who remained true to their faith in God, fitting perfectly the description of a stern-faced king who was completely wicked. This king was part of the fulfillment of the dream, for the angel had prophesied that “in the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people” (Dan. 8:23–24).**

**These acts of gross sacrilege by Antiochus triggered a rebellion on the part of faithful Jews, who were led in their revolt by the Maccabees. After a lengthy struggle, their rebellion culminated in the Seleucid forces being driven out of Judah and the temple being cleansed and rededicated in 164 B.C. Antiochus himself died in somewhat obscure circumstances during a campaign in the eastern part of his empire in 164 B.C. These events of real history faithfully reflect the events described in Daniel 8, reinforcing once again the message of God's control of all of history.**

*Iain M. Duguid, Daniel, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Iain M. Duguid, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 128–129.*

We read on in our text:

**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.**

So Antiochus grew more and more powerful.

**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.**

There are two schools of thought about the host of heaven. Some see them as simply being God's people. Others see them as angelic beings. Most think that the stars are actually God's people.

**11 It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host.**

Some say that the text is describing what Antiochus thought of himself. He was putting himself up to the level of a god. Others think this was describing the spiritual battle that was ensuing. No matter **what** the hosts **are**, I've got to think that Jesus is the Prince of the host. In my Bible Prince is capitalized. Not that that proves anything.

I cannot see anyone actually **being** as great as Christ. So that leads me to believe that Antiochus **viewed himself** as being as great as Christ. We know a good deal about Antiochus fortunately. He certainly did think a lot of himself.

We know that Antiochus made coins with his own image that said **Fios Epiphenes** which means God manifested. He used to declare that if a person wanted to see what Zues is like, they should just watch Antiochus. Now that is a person who is full of himself.

**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.**

Antiochus reigned over Jerusalem for about 6 years and 4 months. In about the middle of that time he entered the temple of God and set up an altar dedicated to Zues. He then offered a pig on that altar. He also stopped anyone from making sacrifices to the One True God.

Where our text says that the horn will throw truth to the ground, we need to know that Antiochus made a show of burning the Torah. He tore it up first. Then he burned it.

Notice the phrase in verse 12- **because of transgression**. The question here is, **whose** transgression? Was it Antiochus's or the hosts? I believe it fits the pattern very well of God bringing in **oppressors** after the people of Israel **rebelled**. I think Antiochus was allowed to do what he did because the majority of the Jewish people were living in rebellion against God. When it reached a certain level, God gave them over to Antiochus's control so that the **true rebels** would be punished and the **true followers** would be disciplined if needed.

Now there is something interesting in this history as well. There is a book not included in the scriptures called Maccabees. In it we read a story about a Jewish hero arising to stand up to Antiochus. His name was Judas. His nickname was Judas the Hammer. It sounds so much better when Alister Begg reads it in his Scottish accent. **Judas the Hammer**. He raised a rebellion that was successful in driving Antiochus out of Jerusalem. Following his ousting the temple was cleansed and dedicated anew. That is where the feast of dedication, or Hanukkah came from.

**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."**

So Daniel overhears a conversation. It was between two Holy Ones. The question is- how long will it be that **offerings cannot be offered** on the altar and the **transgression that makes desolation**? It is interesting that it is in Maccabees that we learn about the actual **abomination of desolation**. That is where the event of sacrificing a pig in the temple was first called the **abomination of desolation**. This angel refers to it as something a little different. He said the transgression that makes desolate.



It is interesting to note that angels do not know everything. They are **curious** about things. And they need to **inquire** about things.

Anyway the answer is either 2300 days or 2300 sacrifices which would 1150 days. One is about 6 years and 4 months. The other is just over 3 years. Either answer would work, as Antiochus **ruled the city** for about 6 years and 4 months and he set up the **abomination of desolation** about 3 years before the end of his rule. Now what is the likelihood that someone could have so specifically and accurately predicted the future like Daniel did? Obviously it would be impossible to know everything that would happen from I think it was 538 Bc when Daniel spoke it to 164 BC when the temple was rededicated.

We never need to fear that God will be surprised by any event in our lives. He truly does know the beginning from the end. His plan for His people is perfectly carried out. He even gave them warnings from time to time of exactly what was about to happen so they could always know that nothing surprising was happening to them. Nothing proved that God **could not protect them or bless them**. Everything proved that God was **guarding his relationship** with His chosen people.

We will take up from this spot next week Lord willing.

This was a rare sermon in that it was largely a **history lesson**. For application I would like to repeat something I said earlier in the sermon.

You and I can look at Daniel and say, **yes**, we can trust our God to do His **will now** as He **did then**. We can know that our world is **not** out of kilter. God is still on His throne. And there is more evil to come. But He will overcome in the end, exactly as He has foretold it. No details will escape his attention. No purpose of his will be forgotten or missed or changed. You and I are as eternally safe as we could possibly be.

So this week we can thank God for the assurance that the book of Daniel brings to our souls.