

RESPONDING TO GOD**Daniel 8:1-27**

Daniel chapters 1-6 are mostly narrative although Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a prophecy. That same prophecy was expanded in a vision given to Daniel in chapter 7. Chapters 7-12 are mostly prophecy of end times.

The first part of Daniel, 1:1 to 2:3 is in Hebrew; but 3:4 to 7:28 is written in Aramaic. Now in chapter 8 it switches back to Hebrew through the end of the book. No other book of the Bible has such dramatic changes in language.

Boice suggests that Daniel wrote in the language of the people that he primarily intended these parts to be directed. Aramaic was for the Gentiles and Hebrew for the Jews. Up until the fall of the Roman Empire, with the Jews in captivity in Babylon, the history mainly deals with pagan nations. With the fall of Rome the Gospel is spread and believing Jews and Gentiles are blessed.

How do we understand language that pictures empires as animals and powers as horns? Some horns rise up and destroy other horns.

Two years after Daniel had the vision of four world empires [7:1-8] and he has a further revelation in chapter 8 about two of these four empires. Daniel is living in the first empire which is Babylon. He will survive into the second empire which is Medo-Persia. In this vision Daniel sees Medo-Persia and the Macedonian [Greece] Empire that will overtake Persia.

Daniel sees a ram and a goat. The ram is Medo-Persia with two horns [Media and Persia] with one horn higher than the other. The bear "raised up on one side" is Persia and was more powerful than Media.

The goat is the kingdom of Greece under Alexander. The goat has one horn, which represents Alexander himself. The goat is described as "crossing the whole earth without touching the ground" [8:5]. It took Alexander only three years to conquer the Persian Empire.

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MEDIA

[MEE dih uh] -- an ancient country of Asia situated west of Parthia, north of the Persian Gulf, east of Assyria and Armenia, and south of the Caspian Sea. The country is now included in parts of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey.

A mountainous country, Media contained some fertile sections; but much of it was cold, barren, and swampy. In the southern area lush plains were used as pasture land for the large herds of horses used in the Median cavalry.

The history of the Medes is complex, because it involves many entangling alliances and the rise and fall of several nations. The Medes were an Indo-European people who invaded the rough mountain terrain south of the Caspian Sea. In the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., Assyrian kings conducted campaigns against these people, forcing them to pay tribute. The mighty Tiglath-Pileser (745 BC - 727 BC) invaded Media and added part of it to the Assyrian Empire. By 700 BC, the era of the prophet Isaiah, a prosperous realm had been established.

Media is first mentioned in the Old Testament as the destination to which Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, deported the Israelites from Samaria around 721 BC (2 Kings 17:6; 18:11). Medes are mentioned in Ezra in connection with Darius' search for the roll containing the famous decree of Cyrus that allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 6:2). Laws of the Medes are mentioned in the Book of Esther (1:19) and in Daniel (6:8, 15).

The prophet Daniel prophesied that King Belshazzar's Babylonian kingdom would fall to "the Medes and Persians" (Dan 5:28). Medes were also among the people from many different nations in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9).

About 710 BC Sargon II of Assyria defeated the Medes and forced them to pay a tribute consisting of the thoroughbred horses for which Media was famous. The Medes, however, increased in strength and joined forces with Babylon. The Medes under Cyaxares and the Babylonians under Nebopolassar captured Asshur, the ancient capital of Assyria; in 614 BC. In 612 BC this alliance overthrew Nineveh, the proud capital of Assyria, causing the crash of the Assyrian Empire. The seventh century Hebrew prophet Nahum expressed the great relief felt by neighboring nations at Nineveh's fall (Nah 2:3; 3:19). Nebopolassar's son, Nebuchadnezzar, married Cyaxares' daughter, strengthening the bond between the two countries. During the era of Nebuchadnezzar and the time of Jeremiah (about 605 BC - 552 BC), the Median kingdom reached the height of its power.

Persia was dominated by Media until the time of Cyrus II who was founder of the Persian Empire. In 549 BC Cyrus defeated Media. Yet under the Persians, Media remained the most important province of Persia. As a consequence, the dual name, "Medes and Persians," remained for a long time (Esther 1:19; Dan 5:28). The expression, "The laws of the Medes and the Persians," depicted the unchangeable nature of Median law, which even the king was powerless to change (Esther 1:19).

The Medes and Persians were Indo-European peoples known as Aryans. Their religion was Zoroastrianism. Its adherents believed that spiritual reality was divided between Ahura Mazda, the god of light and goodness, and Angra Mainja, the god of darkness and evil.

Influenced by the moral teachings of his religion, Cyrus II of Persia was known for his humane attitude toward conquered peoples. He treated the vanquished Medes with respect. Medo-Persia, a dual nation, became a great empire that ruled Asia until it was conquered by Alexander the Great (330 BC). After Alexander's death, Medo-Persia became part of Syria and later a part of the Persian Empire.

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1. THE CHARGING 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 capital, 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. ESV

It is now 551 B.C., some 12 years before the fall of Babylon. Daniel may have been concerned about what was to happen to his people, the Jews, as their time of captivity came to an end.

He was "in Shushan." The citadel was a summer palace of the Persian kings. Nehemiah lived there, and that is where the events of the Book of Esther took place. Daniel is seeing in a vision a Persian palace before came into existence!

Archaeologists discovered a fortress that covered two and a half acres with a throne room with a ceiling 67 feet high! It was supported by 36 fluted columns of Lebanon cedar. The interior was decorated with glazed bricks arranged in various designs. They also discovered a now extinct branch of the River Ulai that flowed near Shushan.

Daniel saw a ram on the bank of the River Ulai, charging in three directions. (Fierce, determined expansion.)

The ram was a symbol of power and control and a horn stood for strength. The ram was a symbol used by Persia and it appeared on banners and documents.

Persia was the second of the world powers in the Chapter 2 dream-image of Nebuchadnezzar and the bear-like beast of Chapter 7. The two horns are Media and Persia. Media developed first and became the most powerful empire known up to that time. But Persia, under Cyrus almost completely absorbed Media.

Cyrus and his son Cambyses thought they were invincible. No kingdom could stand against them. For a long time they dominated the world, but in the fourth century B.C., the freedom-loving Greeks defeated Persia.

2. THE CONQUERING 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.

Two centuries before Daniel's time, the Macedonian [Greek] people were called Aegeadae, "the goat people." Their first king went with a multitude of Greeks to establish their first colony in Macedonia and was advised by an oracle to take goats for his guides. Afterward, when he saw a herd of goats fleeing from a violent storm, he followed them to Odessa and established the seat of his empire there. This ruler, Caranus, made the goat his ensign, or standard, and called the city Aege, or "goats' town."

The wild animals in Chapter 7 - the bear and the leopard - represent Persia and Greece in their relationship to each other. Here domestic animals represent these same powers in relation to Israel.

The text (8:21) tells us that the male goat is the symbol of Greece, the third empire, and the "large horn" is "the first king," i.e. Alexander the Great. Alexander was the son of Philip II. Before Alexander consolidated them, Macedon was a number of independent city-states.

It was a new thing for a power to arise from the west (Occident) instead of the east (Orient). [Latin: setting & rising of the sun]

In (8:5) the vastness of Alexander's conquest is "across the whole earth" and its rapidity is "without touching the ground."

When Alexander approached Jerusalem he sent messengers in for tribute money. They refused him and expected to suffer for it. The Jews went out to meet Alexander led by their priests. To their surprise Alexander bowed before the high priest. He explained that he had seen a man dressed like that in a dream and had been directed in his conquests by such a man. He then offered sacrifices as directed by the high priest. He was then shown the prophecy in Daniel and supposed that he was the person intended. {Josephus}

Alexander went on to sweep eastward and conquer what was there. He died from dissipation at age 32, in the 13th year of his reign.

Alexander's empire was divided among his four generals, the "four prominent horns" of the goat; the "four heads" of the leopard (7:6).

Seleucus became ruler of Syria, Babylonia, and the East as far as the Indus River. Ptolemy Lagus ruled Egypt and adjacent lands.

The four heads united to one body. It is well known that when Alexander died, his empire was left to four of his generals, and that they came to be at the head of as many distinct dominions, yet all springing from the same source, and all, in fact, out of the Macedonian empire. This fact would not be so well represented by four distinct and separate animals, as by one animal with four heads; that is, as the head represents authority or dominion, one empire, in fact, now ruling by four distinct authorities. The one empire, considered as Macedonian, continued its sway until it was swallowed up by the Romans; that is, the Macedonian power or dominion as distinct from that of Babylon or Medo-Persia; as having characteristics unlike these; as introducing a new order of things, continued, though that power was broken up and exercised under distinct manifestations of sovereignty.

The fact was, that, at the death of Alexander, to whom the founding of this empire was owing, "Philip Aridaeus, brother of Alexander, and his infant son by Roxana, were appointed by the generals of the army to succeed, and Perdicas was made regent. The empire was divided into thirty-three governments, distributed among as many general officers. Hence arose a series of bloody, desolating wars, and a period of confusion, anarchy, and crime ensued, that is almost without a parallel in the history of the world. After the battle of Ipsus, 301 BC, in which Antigonus was defeated, the empire was divided into four kingdoms-Thrace and Bithynia under Lysimachus; Syria and the East under Seleucus; Egypt, under Ptolemy Soter; and Macedonia under Cassander.". It was these four powers, thus springing out of the one empire founded by Alexander, that was clearly represented by the four heads.

Out of one of the horns came "another horn which started small."

This is not the same "little horn" of 7:8 because that horn comes out of the Roman Empire, the fourth beast. This "little horn" is out of Greece.

3. THE POWERFUL 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."

Antiochus IV, called himself "Epiphanes" (glorious one), but was called by others "Epimanes" (maniac). He was a king in the line of Seleucus. He usurped the throne of Syria in 175 B.C. and reigned for 11 years.

He could not make Greeks out of the Jews (hosts – 8:10) because of their religion, so he made Judaism illegal. He forbade the Jews to circumcise their sons, observe the Sabbath, or present offering in the temple. He commanded them to worship Greek gods. He offered swine as sacrifices on their altar!

Cf. Matt 24:15; Dan 11:31

The Greek culture gradually had its effect and God used the Greek language, which became the language of commerce, to spread the Gospel.

In 8:13-14, some 2300 evening and morning sacrifices would be omitted.

Some interpret this to be 2300 to be 24-hour days. A better interpretation is that this is mornings plus evenings for 1150 days or 3 years and 55 days.

Antiochus' desecration of the temple began in 168 B.C. lasted until Judas Maccabeus cleansed the temple and restored the sacrifices 165 B.C. It is difficult to be precise but that is about three years rather than six years.

Daniel predicts the end of Antiochus, but not by human hands [8:25]. Judas Maccabaeus should have killed Antiochus but in fact Antiochus died of “natural” causes, thought to be some physical corruption. Daniel would say “divine” causes.

4. THE VISION EXPLAINED

8:15-27

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."

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."

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.

Its no big deal to "interpret" prophecy after it is fulfilled, e.g. the flood that God promised Noah.

Daniel is perplexed and asks for help. God sent Gabriel, who seems to be Associated with the ministry of revealing truth. (Cf. 9:21-23; Luke 1:11; 19, 26)

Daniel was ill for several days; but got on about his business (27).

Daniel's problem in 8:27 is not that he did not understand the facts of the prophecy but rather the reason for it. Why?

God appointed the time (8:19), which began in the Asyrian and Babylonian captivities and ends, but when?