

THE VISION OF THE RAM AND THE GOAT

TEXT: DANIEL 8:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

1. The book of Daniel can be divided in half. Though the first half has some fascinating prophecies (e.g., King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2), it is primarily historical -- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into the fiery furnace; King Belshazzar's drunken feast and the fall of Babylon; Daniel cast in the lion's den, etc.
2. The second half is entirely prophetic.
3. Beginning with chapter 8, the language returns to Hebrew instead of the Aramaic used by Daniel from 2:4 through 7:28.
4. Though these prophecies concern the Gentile nations, they emphasize human history as it relates to the nation Israel.
5. Daniel's visions recorded in Daniel 7 give us a broad summary of the times of the Gentiles, with an emphasis on the climactic events culminating in the second coming of Christ.
6. Beginning in chapter 8, Daniel's second vision deals with the empires of Persia and Greece as they relate to Israel.
7. Under Persian government, the Israelites went back to rebuild their land and the city of Jerusalem, and the temple.
8. But later, under Grecian domination, particularly under Antiochus Epiphanes, the city and the temple were once again desolated.
9. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, "The eighth chapter gives details concerning the second and third world-kingdoms: the silver and brass kingdoms of Dan. 2; the bear and leopard kingdoms of Dan. 7., viz., the Medo-Persian and Macedonian kingdoms of history. At the time of this vision (Dan. 8:1) the first monarchy was nearing its end. Belshazzar was the last king of that monarchy."

I. DANIEL'S VISION AT SHUSHAN (8:1, 2)

1. This second vision of Daniel occurred about two years after the vision of chapter 7. Because it took place in the reign of King Belshazzar, it is clear that both chapters 7 and 8 occur chronologically before chapter 5, the night of Belshazzar's feast.
2. The vision of chapter 8 is somewhat different from that of chapter 7, as it apparently did not occur in a dream or in a night vision (8:1; 7:1).
3. Shushan was the capital city of Persia. The book of Nehemiah tells us that Nehemiah was also at Shushan, when he obtained permission

- from King Artaxerxes to return into Judea, and to repair the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1).
4. There are also many references to the palace in Shushan in the book of Esther (1:2, 5; 2:3, 5, 8; 3:15; 4:8, 16; 8:14, 15; 9:6, 11-15, 18).
 5. According to Daniel 8:1 (during the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar), Daniel must have been in Babylon, but was transported to Shushan in vision only.
 6. The prophet Ezekiel also was transported in vision (Ezekiel 8:1-3; 40:1, 2).
 7. Daniel was projected in vision to a town little known at that time, but yet destined to one day be the important capital of Persia.
 8. Beginning in 1884, the site of ancient Susa (Shushan), then a large mound, has been explored and has divulged many archeological treasures. The code of Hammurabi was found there in 1901. The famous palace referred to by Daniel, Esther and Nehemiah was begun by Darius I and enlarged by later kings. Remains of its magnificence can still be seen near the modern village of Shush (Iran).
 9. John Walvoord wrote, "This unusual setting described in detail by Daniel in the opening verses of the eighth chapter now becomes the stage on which a great drama is portrayed in symbol describing the conquests of the second and third empires" (*Daniel, The Key to Prophetic Revelation*).

II. THE RAM WITH THE TWO HORNS (8:3, 4).

1. Daniel, in his vision, sees a ram with two horns which are unequal, one higher than the other, and the higher one growing out of the ram last. Persia came after Media but was "higher than the other" (8:3).
2. As Daniel watched, he saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward; but no mention is made of the ram pushing toward the east (8:4). Persia did expand to the east, but its principal movement was to the west, north and south.
3. This prophecy describes the advances of the Persian army, especially in the direction of Palestine, Asia Minor, and Egypt.
4. No other beast is found to stand before the ram nor was anyone, whether man or beast, able to deliver from his power. As Daniel summarizes it, the ram does according to his will "and became great" (8:4b).
5. In Daniel 8:20 we are told that the ram is Medo-Persia, and the "two horns are the kings of Media and Persia."

6. Daniel's vision predicts the rule of the Medes and the Persians which lasted for almost two hundred years, until Alexander the Great came into power.
7. The description of the two horns, representing the Medes and the Persians, is very accurate, as the Persians did come up last and were more prominent and powerful.

III. THE HE GOAT FROM THE WEST (8:5).

1. The he goat represents the king of Greece, and the "notable horn between his eyes" is "the first king," that is, Alexander the Great (cf. 8:21).
2. Like Alexander, the he goat comes "from the west on the face of the whole earth" (8:5). Verse 5 states that the he goat "touched not the ground," referring to the tremendous speed which characterized the military conquests of Alexander.
3. The "notable (conspicuous) horn" is unusual, because normally there are two. The "notable horn" symbolizes Alexander the Great's "notable" leadership.
4. Daniel saw the he goat attack the ram "in the fury of his power" (8:6). The Persians had attacked Greece earlier in history. Now it was time for the Greeks to retaliate against the Persians, and they attacked with great "fury."
5. The goat "moved with choler against him," that is, "in great anger" (8:7). He smote the ram, and broke the ram's two horns (8:7).
6. This symbolically pictures the disintegration of the Medo-Persian Empire with the result that the ram (Media-Persia) had no power to stand before the he goat (Greece).
7. The military campaign ended with the he goat casting the ram to the ground and stamping upon it (8:7).
8. All of this was fulfilled dramatically in history. The forces of Alexander first met and defeated the Persians in Asia Minor in May 334 B.C., which was the beginning of the complete conquest of the entire Persian Empire.
9. A year and a half later a battle occurred at Issus (November 333 B.C.) near the northeastern tip of the Mediterranean Sea. The power of Persia was finally broken near Nineveh in October 331 B.C.
10. Daniel 8:8 describes how the great horn was broken. The great horn (Alexander the Great) was broken just when the he goat has reached the pinnacle of its strength.

11. Out of this grows four notable horns described as being “toward the four winds of heaven” (8:8; cf. 8:22).
12. This fascinating prophecy predicts the untimely death of Alexander, and the division of his empire into four major sections.
10. Walvoord wrote, "Alexander, who had conquered more of the world than any previous ruler, was not able to conquer himself. Partly due to a strenuous exertion, his dissipated life, and a raging fever, Alexander died in a drunken debauch at Babylon, not yet thirty-three years of age. His death left a great conquest without an effective single leader, and it took about twenty years for the empire to be successfully divided" (*Daniel, The Key to Prophetic Revelation*).
13. The four divisions: (1) Cassander assumed rule over Macedonia and Greece; (2) Lysimachus took control of Thrace, Bithynia, and most of Asia Minor; (3) Seleucus took Syria and the lands to the east including Babylonia; (4) Ptolemy established rule over Egypt and possibly Palestine.
14. "Thus, with remarkable accuracy, Daniel in his prophetic vision predicts that the empire of Alexander was divided into four divisions" (Walvoord).

CONCLUSION:

1. After the fascinating prophecies describing Media-Persia, Greece, and the rise and fall of Alexander the Great, Daniel refers again to the "little horn" (8:9).
2. This "little horn" emerges from one of the four notable horns mentioned in verse 8. The horn, small in the beginning, grows “exceeding great” in three directions: toward the south (Egypt), toward the east (Media-Persia), and toward the pleasant land (Israel).
3. The Hebrew word translated "pleasant" is translated "glorious" in Daniel 11:16 and 41.
4. Israel is located between Syria and Egypt; therefore the implication is that this little horn is a Syrian. Just as Greece succeeded Persia, and Alexander's four generals succeeded him, so the little horn "waxed exceedingly great" right after the breakup of the Greek Empire.
5. Therefore, the emergence of this "little horn" should not be confused with the little horn of Daniel 7:8, i.e., the antichrist.
6. This "little horn" in Daniel 8:9 is Antiochus Epiphanes, a picture and type of the antichrist. He hated the Jews, and he sacrificed a pig on the altar in the Jewish temple. He reportedly slew over 100,000 Jews.

7. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* says Antiochus Epiphanes ("the Illustrious") was the "King of Syria; reigned from 175 B.C.; died 164. He was a son of Antiochus the Great, and, after the murder of his brother Seleucus, took possession of the Syrian throne which rightly belonged to his nephew Demetrius. This Antiochus is styled in rabbinical sources, "the wicked." Abundant information is extant concerning the character of this monarch, who exercised great influence upon Jewish history and the development of the Jewish religion. Since Jewish and heathen sources agree in their characterization of him, their portrayal is evidently correct. Antiochus combined in himself the worst faults of the Greeks and the Romans, and but very few of their good qualities. He was vainglorious and fond of display to the verge of eccentricity, liberal to extravagance; his sojourn in Rome had taught him how to captivate the common people with an appearance of geniality, but in his heart he had all a cruel tyrant's contempt for his fellow men."
8. According to I Maccabees 1:20, Antiochus first invaded Egypt and then Jerusalem, and after subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned and went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force.