

Daniel – Chapter 8

Back to Hebrew

After the first chapter Daniel wrote in Aramaic, the gentile language of the day. He writes of his present time in the Gentile kingdom of Babylon and about the future time of the Gentiles. In this chapter he reverts back to Hebrew, and chronicles in the future history of Israel, including their interaction with the other nations. A key then to understanding the rest of Daniel is to remember that the focus is on Israel and must be seen from that perspective.

- *Time of Daniel's vision*

Daniel 8:1 In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me.

This vision was given to Daniel two years after the one we studied in the previous chapter twelve years before the banquet in Belshazzar's palace where the handwriting on the wall appeared. The first seven chapters in Daniel are in chronological order, and the rest of the book of Daniel can be looked at as a kind of appendix containing the prophetic visions.

- *Two places simultaneously ?*

Daniel 8:2 In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal.

Physically Daniel was in Babylon, yet in his vision he was 230 miles east in what was to become the main residence of the Persian kings, a little known town at the time Daniel, when was shown these things.

- *Transported through time and space*

There is debate whether Daniel merely saw, as in dream or whether he was actually taken to the time and place to experience first hand what he writes. Because God is Lord of Time and Space, He has that capability and has shown that He uses it to place a person in a time and place of His choosing and for His purpose.

Ezekiel 8:3 He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance to the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood. □

Ezekiel 40:1 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city--on that very day the hand of the LORD was upon me and he took me there.

Ezekiel 40:2 In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city.

Ezekiel 40:3 He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand.

Acts 8:39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 8:40 Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

Apparently time travel can be exhausting for a mortal body normally confined to space-time, especially when coupled with such a puzzling vision. (8:27)

- *City of Nehemiah and Ester*

The palace at Susa was also familiar territory to Nehemiah and Esther

Nehemiah 1:1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa,

Esther 1:2 At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa,

- *More animals -- Ram and Goat*

Daniel 8:3 I looked up, and there before me was a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later.

Daniel 8:4 I watched the ram as he charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him, and none could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

Daniel 8:5 As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground.

Daniel 8:6 He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage.

Daniel 8:7 I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power.

Daniel 8:8 The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven.

- *The Medes and Persians are coming*

God begins by showing Daniel what was to come in the time not very distant from where he was at the time when he saw this vision. In the near future the Babylonian empire would be replaced by the Medes who were dominant at the beginning, but were later relegated to second fiddle by the Persians.

- *The dominant Persians*

Note that there was a single animal -- a ram -- which had two horns, the later growing one becoming longer, signifying greater power. Even before the Babylonians were taken over, the Persians were already dominant. The Bear in chapter 7 was raised up on one side -- lopsided -- with again the picture of one animal, but with an imbalance. Consistently the Holy Spirit uses an animal (a beast) to picture an empire.

- *A Ram's head*

When the Persian king went into battle at the head of his army, he laid aside his jeweled crown and wore a Ram's head. In the signs of the zodiac, the one that is associated with the king of Persia is Aries which is depicted as a ram.

- *The goat*

The zodiac sign of the ancient Macedonians, the ancestors and territory of Greece, is Capricorn, (capri > goat; corna > horn) depicted as a one horned goat. A young man named Alexander, the son of Philip of Macedon, rises to power and quickly overpowers the Persians. In a series of battles culminating in the decisive battle at Gaugamela near Nineveh in October 331BC.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Gaugamela) The Greeks hated the Persians and powered by that hatred (*attacked the ram furiously v7*) and innovative military tactics defeated the vastly more numerous opposition. Many cities that Alexander came up against welcomed him with open arms and celebration. Josephus records that Jerusalem was taken over without a fight and damage after Alexander was shown the prophetic writings concerning himself.

- *The horn broken -- replaced by four*

Alexander died of a fever in a drunken stupor at the height of his power at the young age of 33 in Babylon which was his secondary capital. He was succeeded by his four Generals, **Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus**

and Ptolemy who took 22 years to divide the empire amongst themselves which Alexander only took 11 years to build.

- *A little horn -- again*

Daniel 8:9 Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land.

- *The beautiful land*

The expression beautiful land, or pleasant land is an expression that Daniel uses perhaps in a nostalgic way to remember his homeland and to remind his readers of the now Hebrew text of their heritage.

Daniel 11:16 The invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have the power to destroy it.

In an almost plaintive, pleading appeal, the Lord of the universe cries out to the people he loves:

Jeremiah 3:19 "I myself said, "'How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.' I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me.

Malachi 3:12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.

- *Starry host*

The term host of heaven is used of heavenly beings, such as angels, planets, stars and other astronomical objects, but also in reference to the people of God in both the old and new testaments.

Daniel 8:10 It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them.

- *The people of God*

Genesis 15:5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Daniel 12:3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Philippians 2:14 Do everything without complaining or arguing,

Philippians 2:15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.

- *Successor to Seleucid*

Daniel 8:11 It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low.

Daniel 8:12 Because of rebellion, the host {of the saints} and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground.

It is evident from the fact that it this little horn is a person, a successor to one of the four Generals. Seleucid was the one who took over the part of the empire that included the land of Israel. So we must look to one of his successors to do this throwing down and trampling of the people of God. The phrase "Prince of the Host" also is a clue that this person vexed the people of God, and we are told in a very specific way.

- *Antiochus Epiphanes*

There was a person in history who fit the description of what Daniel is writing about. He was the 8th king of the Syrian dynasty, brother of Cleopatra, Antiochus Epiphanes, {http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_IV_Epiphanes} who ascended to the throne after the murder of his brother, the former king Seleucus Philopator. Ruling from 175BC to 164BC he gave himself the title "Epiphanes" means "The Illustrious One".

- *Rightful heir held hostage*

The rightful heir was the son named Demetrius who was still alive, but was being held hostage in Rome.

- *Desecration of the temple*

Antiochus as conqueror does everything possible to offend the Jews to try to get them to lose their identity through their religion and to prohibit them from practicing their faith. It was one of many attempts by Satan to thwart the plan of God for salvation by exterminating the Jewish people from whom the Messiah would come. This is what historians, among them the writers of the apocryphal book of Maccabees tell us:

"And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane Sabbaths and feasts, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars in sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances. And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die."

If they found a Jewish mother who had her son circumcised, they would kill the mother and murder the children in front of their fathers. It was a brutal time for the children of Israel.

- *A revolt*

The forced sacrificing of a pig on the altar in the temple and the erection of an idol to Jupiter in the holy of holies was the last straw and provoked a revolt under Judas Macabees where the nation of Israel threw off the yoke of the Seleucid oppressors. Three years after this revolt they re-dedicated the temple, and this feast of dedication is still celebrated as the Hanukkah, around the same time as we celebrate Christmas. This begins the Hasmonean period (about 200 years) of Jewish history which ends when the Romans install Herod.

- *Does this desecration happen again?*

A gross desecration in the temple called the abomination of desolation was a historic event two centuries earlier, yet Jesus speaks of it in his discourse about His second coming, clearly yet future. Daniel mentions this again in chapter 9 and as we'll see when we study that later, it refers to an event of entirely different circumstances than here in chapter 8.

Matthew 24:15 "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--

- *Saints speak to each other*

Daniel 8:13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled--the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?"

Daniel 8:14 He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be re-consecrated."

- *Evening and morning sacrifices*

Scholars have widely varying views of the time period given as 2300 evenings and mornings. Some opine that it has to do with the morning and evening sacrifices and thus there is a period of 1150 days which doesn't readily fit anywhere else in scriptural timings.

- *Date of desecration*

On September 6 of 171 B.C., Onias III the legitimate high priest was murdered by Menelaus and his wicked brother Jason assumed power. He had bribed Antiochus for the position. In 172 B.C. Menelaus, succeeded in replacing Jason by promising a larger bribe. Interestingly, the desecration occurred Dec 25, 167 B.C. and Antiochus died in 164 BC. Some scholars apply the year-day theory and the 7th day Adventists predicted the return of Jesus in 1884 on this premise.

- *The first mention of an angel by name in the Bible*

The name of Gabriel means warrior of God. He is mentioned by name in the context of bringing messages of great importance to Daniel, Zacharias and Mary. There are only three angels mentioned by name in scripture. Michael is shown as a commander of the armies -- in a military context -- as it were and the fallen angel named Lucifer who becomes the adversary of God and God's people.

Daniel 8:15 While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man.

Daniel 8:16 And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision."

- *Far and near prophecy*

Up until this point it seems that what was shown to Daniel was yet future to him, but had happened by the time of Messiah's first coming and yet points also to the second coming because we are specifically told that it applies to the time of the end.

Daniel 8:17 As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. "Son of man," he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end."

Daniel 8:18 While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet.

Daniel 8:19 He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end."

Again, we get the impression that Daniel is in some way participating in this vision to the extent he becomes unconscious and requires resuscitation.

- *Repeated history with a twist*

In the explanation we are again told that there out of these four **kingdoms** will arise a powerful leader and in chapter 2 and 7 we learned that a powerful leader will arise out of one of the four **empires**. So in a sense we see that what Antiochus Epiphanes did on a local basis to Israel not too long before the first appearing of Messiah, in limited extent of the middle eastern setting, will be repeated by another leader on a global basis before the second appearing of Messiah.

- *Dual fulfillment of prophecy*

God told Israel how to recognize a true prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:20 But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."

Deuteronomy 18:21 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?"

Deuteronomy 18:22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

- *Near term and long term prophecy*

Frequently God gave near term prophecies, which when fulfilled gave assurance that the later prophecies would also come true. One of the most striking of these near-far prophecies is in Isaiah. Jesus, by the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophet tell us of history in advance, separated by a large period of time.

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

Isaiah 61:2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

• *Jesus quotes this, but not all of it*

Jesus tells his hearers that "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." but notice he doesn't quote all of it, but leaves out the part about the day of vengeance because that part is yet to come at or just before His second coming.

Luke 4:16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.

Luke 4:17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,

Luke 4:19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke 4:20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,

Luke 4:21 and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

• *Agreement with the Word of God*

Even if a prophet foretells correctly, if it is clearly in contradiction to the revealed Word, it must be rejected and such a prophet must be executed. Idolatry was clearly and unequivocally forbidden by God and thus any prophecy advocating or permitting such is to be ignored.

Deuteronomy 13:1 If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder,

Deuteronomy 13:2 and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them,"

Deuteronomy 13:3 you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 13:4 It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him.

Deuteronomy 13:5 That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.

• *Some history that has happened and some yet future*

Here then in Daniel this prophecy found fulfillment some 160+ years before Jesus appeared on Earth for the first time and some parts of it are for the time just before or at His second advent.

Daniel 8:20 The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia.

Daniel 8:21 The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king.

Daniel 8:22 The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.

Daniel 8:23 "In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise.

Daniel 8:24 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.

- *Another nasty guy far in the future*

Antiochus Epiphanes only partially fits here. He was extremely arrogant and made an attempt oppose God, but he was destroyed in a normal human way.

Daniel 8:25 He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.

Daniel 8:26 "The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."

- *Supernatural destruction for this one*

This person coming considerably further down the road of time will take his stand against the Lord directly and be destroyed "not by human power", but "by the brightness of His coming".

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

- *Why a sealed up vision?*

Daniel is told to specifically seal up the prophecies he was given whereas John was expressly told **not** to seal up what he was told concerning the future. Daniel is told the reason to seal the writing is because the events it relates are still a long ways down the stream of time, whereas John is told to not seal because the time is near.

Daniel 12:4 But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

Revelation 22:10 Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.

- *Daniel's visions all in the future*

The prophetic writings of Daniel were all future to him, but some of the writings of John were happening right at the time he wrote them.

Revelation 1:19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.

John is to write about what already had happened, such as the life of Jesus he had witnessed, especially the glorious event on the Mount of Transfiguration, then he writes about the present reality of the glorious Lord and the churches right there in Asia minor and finally is told "come up here, to be shown what was to come after this -- with "this" being what happens after the church.

Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

- *Transported to another dimension*

The Lord transports John through time and space, even further than Daniel who remained here in the earthly dimension, into another dimension, the heavenly realm, and John experiences and sees the future all the way to the end of time.

- *Time travel is tough on a fragile earth-suit*

Travel is often an exhausting endeavor. Again the final verse of this chapter strongly suggests that Daniel was taken on a journey through time and space by the Holy Spirit. Travel through time and space is very hard on his earth suit, this fragile human body, to the point that he lay sick and exhausted for several days. Some believe that Daniel had some kind of out of body experience, but I believe that the Lord of time and space actually took the whole Daniel, body included on a fantastic journey that totally wore the man out physically. After he finally recovered he went back to his job.

Daniel 8:27 I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.

Some conclusions so far in our study

- *God has a set time and is in control*

Jesus was energized by His Father through the Holy Spirit and this evil coming one will be energized and led by Satan and demonic power. Just as goodness was personified in human form by the Lord Jesus, so evil will be personified by this coming world leader. The main thing to understand is that the Lord is clearly in charge and wins in the end and we with Him. It matters not whether we understand or agree on the details of prophecy.

- *Hotly debated prophecies fulfilled or about to be fulfilled*

Many of the prophecies that were hotly debated centuries ago have happened and are continuously being fulfilled in our time and things we read in our newspapers and watch on TV are written in scripture. The fact that Israel is back in their land, surrounded by overwhelming numbers of enemies, are back in control of their Holy City and made it their capital over the vehement objections of most other nations and have begun to develop plans to rebuild their temple are some of the events we are seeing and shall see in the immediate future. What city other than Jerusalem is there in the world, where a zoning change threatens world peace?

- *Why study prophecy?*

Prophecy in scripture is a powerful means by which God authenticates His word. However, for us who believe in the Lord Jesus, the study of prophecy intensifies our blessed hope and becomes a tremendous incentive to allow Him to make us pure in God's eyes.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 3:3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

- *Time to live righteously*

As we see some of these prophecies become increasingly part of the daily news, especially concerning events in and around Israel we know that the events Daniel and the other prophets wrote about will surely come to pass and we must live our lives in holy obedience and expectation our coming King.