

# The Ram and the He-Goat

**Daniel 8**



# Compare this chapter to Daniel 7

## Daniel 7

- Written in Aramaic
  - 1<sup>st</sup> year of reign of King Belshazzar 553 BC
  - 4 human kingdoms depicted as 4 beasts and a 5<sup>th</sup> eternal kingdom
  - Little horn= Antiochus IV
  - Heavenly court, condemnation of the little horn, Kingdom of God and fate of the holy ones of God.
- End of time and judgment

## Daniel 8

- Written in Hebrew
- 3<sup>rd</sup> year of reign of Belshazzar 550 BC
- 2 kingdoms mentioned- Medo-Persia and Greece depicted as a Ram and a Goat.
- Little horn = Antiochus IV
- Character of the little horn
- Gabriel interprets the vision for Daniel
- End of persecution and restoration<sup>2</sup> of Temple

# Daniel's vision takes him through time and space..

- In this vision, not only are we given the date, but in his vision, Daniel is transported to a specific location as well.
- This vision occurred in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of King Belshazzar – 551 BC
- In the vision, Daniel is not in Babylon, but in Susa, in the province of Elam which is in Persia.

“In my vision I saw myself in the fortress of Susa in the province of Elam” (8:2)





## “I saw a ram-”

I was beside the river Ulai. <sup>3</sup>I looked up and saw standing by the river a ram with two great horns, the one larger and newer than the other. <sup>4</sup>I saw the ram butting toward the west, north, and south. No beast could withstand it or be rescued from its power; it did what it pleased and grew powerful.

- This vision represents the then-combined kingdoms of the Medes and the Persians. They conquered lands to the “west, north and south.
- In 539 B.C.E., King Cyrus decided to expand the boundaries of Persia. He began by conquering Babylon.

# The Medo-Persian Empire



The Persian Empire spanned from Egypt in the west to Turkey in the north, and through Mesopotamia to the Indus River in the east.

# Enter the He-Goat



- As I was reflecting, a he-goat with a prominent horn on its forehead suddenly came from the west across the whole earth **without touching the ground.** <sup>6</sup> It came to the two-horned ram I had seen standing by the river, and rushed toward it with savage force. <sup>7</sup> I saw it reach the ram; enraged, the he-goat attacked and shattered both its horns. The ram did not have the strength to withstand it; the he-goat threw the ram to the ground and trampled upon it. No one could rescue the ram from its power.



## The rise and fall of kingdoms is foretold.

- The Ram represented the Mede-Persian Empire. By the 5th century B.C.E., it was the largest empire the world had ever seen, surpassing the size of their Assyrian predecessors.
- The He-Goat is the Greek empire. **The prominent horn is Alexander the Great.** Alexander rose to power in 331 B.C.. Only in his early twenties, Alexander had no equal as a military strategist. He swept through the ancient world, conquering all of the Persian Empire.





## The Horns of the He-Goat

- <sup>8</sup> The he-goat grew very powerful, but at the height of its strength **the great horn** was shattered, and in its place came up four others, facing the four winds of heaven. <sup>9</sup> Out of one of them came a **little horn** which grew and grew toward the south, the east, and the **glorious land**. (Israel/Palestine)
- The He-goat had one horn, representing Alexander the Great. Alexander never lost a battle. He died in Babylon in 323 BC. In the years following his death, a series of civil wars tore his empire apart, resulting in the establishment of several states ruled by the Diadochi, Alexander's surviving generals and heirs.



## The Little Horn



- Antiochus IV Epiphanes was the eighth in a succession of twenty-six kings who ruled from 175—164 BC over the Syrian section of Alexander's empire. Antiochus IV Epiphanes is undoubtedly one of the greatest prototypes of the Antichrist.
- In Jerusalem, he killed over eighty thousand men, women, and children and sold forty thousand into slavery (2 Macc. 5:11-17). The holy place was robbed of its treasures and the temple was defiled.

# Acts of power by the Little Horn

- <sup>10</sup> It grew even to the **host of heaven**, so that it cast down to earth some of the host and **some of the stars** and trampled on them. <sup>11</sup> It grew even to the **Prince of the host**, from whom the daily sacrifice was removed, and whose sanctuary was cast down. <sup>12</sup> The host was given over together with the daily sacrifice in the course of transgression. It cast truth to the ground, and was succeeding in its undertaking. (8:10-12)
- **Prince of the host** = God of Israel
- **Host of heaven and some of the stars** = God's holy people.
- Everything this horn tries to do seems to succeed. Truth is thrown to the ground, (8:12) and he defies God, his holy people and sacred Temple.

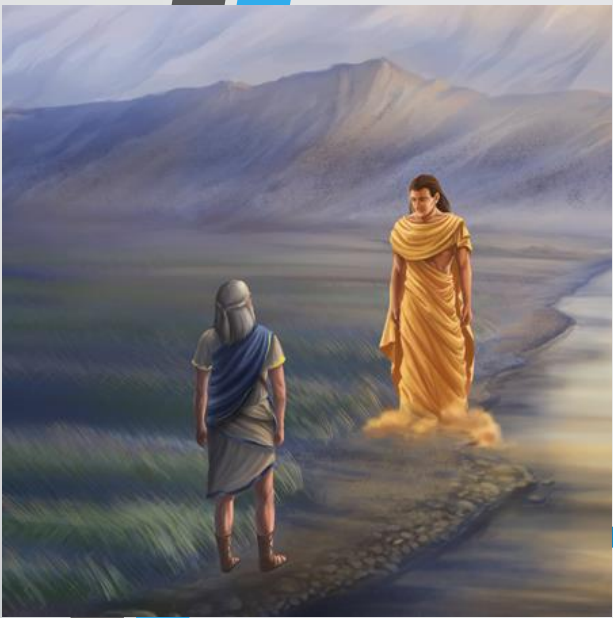


## How Long is this allowed to go on?

- <sup>13</sup> I heard a holy one speaking, and another said to whichever one it was that spoke, “How long shall the events of this vision last concerning the daily sacrifice, the desolating sin, the giving over of the sanctuary and the host for trampling?” <sup>14</sup> He answered him, “**For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings;** then the sanctuary shall be set right.”
- **Holy ones** here means angels.
- **2300 evenings and mornings** = 1150 evening sacrifices and 1150 morning sacrifices = almost 3 ½ years.

## Getting together with Gabriel 8:15-19

- While I, Daniel, sought the meaning of the vision I had seen, one who looked like a man stood before me, <sup>16</sup> and on the Ulai I heard a human voice that cried out, “Gabriel, explain the vision to this man.” <sup>17</sup> When he came near where I was standing, I fell prostrate in terror. But he said to me, “Understand, O son of man, that the vision refers to the end time.” <sup>18</sup> As he spoke to me, I fell forward unconscious; he touched me and made me stand up. <sup>19</sup> “I will show you,” he said, “what is to happen in the last days of wrath; for it is for the appointed time of the end.



# Angels in Daniel

- This was the same Daniel that was gifted at interpreting dreams and visions of kings. But here, he does not understand.
- A voice from between the banks of the Ulai called out to the one standing near Daniel, in his vision. He calls the angel “Gabriel”. This is the first time in the Old Testament that an angel is identified by name. Gabriel is mentioned by name twice in Daniel, here and in 9:21. Michael is mentioned three times, 10:13, 21, and 12:1.

# The Interpretation

“Understand, O son of man, that the vision refers to the **end time.**” <sup>18</sup> As he spoke to me, I fell forward unconscious; he touched me and made me stand up. <sup>19</sup> “I will show you,” he said, “what is to happen in the last days of wrath; for it is for the appointed time of the end.

Most scholars do not believe this refers to the **end of time.** They believe it refers to the end of an era, the end of the persecutions that did last 3 ½ years. After the Maccabees and their troops recovered the Temple and restored it to its sacred nature, the Jews lived in relative peace to practice their faith properly for over 100 years. Israel was an independent state until the onset of the Roman era in 63 BC.



## Daniel is overcome

- Gabriel did explain the meaning of the goat and ram. He says that the little horn “shall be broken without a hand being raised” much the way the vision of Nebuchadnezzar was destroyed.
- But Daniel still did not understand.
- He became faint or unconscious and Gabriel had to revive him (8:18), he was filled with terror (8:17)
- Daniel, was “weak and ill for some days; then arose and took care of the king’s affairs. But the vision left me desolate, without understanding.” (8:27)



## A Difficult Message



- One problem with this type of prophecy for the prophet, is that it is still in the future which does limit understanding.
- The suffering and glory of the Messiah now makes sense to Christians. But even Jesus' disciples did not understand his prophecy about how he needed to suffer and die.
- Prophecy is not given so we will understand all that Almighty God is doing or going to do. Prophecy is given to remind us that God is in control.

# What would Daniel 8 mean to an Israelite who lived after the time of Daniel?

- Shortly after the time that Daniel lived in Babylon, the Jews were released from exile to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple.
- The joy of the moment might make them believe that the promised kingdom had come. This prophecy reveals that the Kingdom of God was still far away. It explains that a time of suffering and persecution was still to come, but it would not last forever.
- The Jews would be released during the Medio-Persian Empire only to be conquered again by the Greeks. But God does have a plan and a purpose. It is increasingly important to preserve the faith and the sacred rituals so that the chosen people can survive the upcoming trials and persecutions.

# Final Reflections.

- Consider the trials and hardships placed on the Jewish people over time. Can we discern why they were so persecuted? Or were these all tests of faith and preparation for something greater?
- Abraham was tested. He was deemed worthy.
- Israel was enslaved by Egypt. They emerged after 400 years as a band of refugees. They became a holy people when the Law was received through Moses. They were tested for 40 years in the desert.
- They were tested as a settled people and judged. Assyria conquered the Northern tribes in 722 BC. (the lost tribes of Israel)
- Judah was warned by prophets to put aside idols. They were tested. They were conquered by the Babylonians and sent into exile.

# After the Exile

- A “remnant” returns to Israel to strengthen the faith and practices. (538 BC).
- They are tested once again by Antiochus IV. Many are killed, but a strong and faithful remnant remains. (167 BC)
- They restore the Temple and resume ritual practices and worship.
- It is from this remnant, strong, faithful, tried and true, that the Messiah is born 150 years later.
- Is this the reason for all the testing of Israel?

# Let us pray



- The eyes of the Lord are on those who love him, a mighty shield and strong support, a shelter from scorching wind and a shade from noonday sun, a guard against stumbling and a help against falling. Ecclesiasticus 34:19,
- **Lord God Almighty**, whose eyes keep watch over the whole world, we come before you with the evil from our surroundings still clinging to us. Grant that our lives may be in your hands. Give us your strength to find the way, even through suffering and distress. For we are yours, O Lord our God, and you have chosen your people to be strong and to be freed from all evils. Help us, we beseech you. May we know that you are with us and may your Word bring us blessing, to the glory of your name forever. Amen.