

Daniel 8 records a third prophetic vision focused on two of the four great Gentile kingdoms: the second kingdom (Persian) and the third kingdom (Greek). The chest and arms of the image prophecy of chapter 4, the second beast (the bear) of chapter 7, and now the two-horned ram of chapter 8 are all figures of the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. The belly and thighs of the image, the four-headed leopard of chapter 7, and now the one-horned goat of chapter 8 are figures of the coming kingdom of Greece under Alexander.

Verse 1 tells us that this vision appeared to Daniel in the third year Belshazzar, 2 years after the vision recorded in chapter 7. This vision would have still been years before Belshazzar's pagan feast recorded in chapter 5.

It is very important to note that these two kingdoms are pictured as domestic animals, a ram and a goat, which is far different than the voracious bear, and the winged leopard of the previous chapter. The change is likely due to the fact that in chapter 7 the nations are chiefly represented in their relations to one another in that they were ravenous, seeking to devour one another. In chapter 8, the vision depicts these nations' treatment of the nation of Israel. Cyrus and his successors would be friends of the Jews.

#### 1. The Visions (1-14)

##### a. Shushan the Palace (2).

- i. In Daniel's vision, he saw himself in Shushan the palace. This palace had not yet been built.
- ii. Xerxes would one day build his palace in Shushan and rule the Persian empire from that city.
- iii. It is likely that Cyrus was the "Ahasuerus" of the book of Esther.
- iv. Esther would one day spend her life in the palace of Shushan.

##### b. The River Ulai (2)

- i. Daniel was standing beside the river Ulai. This river is no longer in existence today, but both the Assyrians and the Greeks record that this river flowed through Shushan and down to the Persian Gulf.
- ii. The Greeks report that Alexander the Great sailed down this river to the Persian Gulf.

##### c. The Vision of the Ram with Two Horns (3-4)

- i. The ram is a picture of leadership. The ram pictured the coming kingdom of Cyrus and the kingdom of the Medes and Persians (3).
  1. The ram's 2 horns pictured the dual nature of this kingdom. The smaller horn pictured the older kingdom of the Medes, and the taller horn which came up last pictures the Persian kingdom which overcame the kingdom of the Medes.
  2. It was under Cyrus' leadership that the Persians became the masters of the Medes in this coalition of empires.
- ii. The ram would be so strong that none could resist him (4).
  1. Cyrus and his son Cambyses would do what they willed.
  2. They would make their empire fabulously wealthy.

##### d. The Vision of the Goat (5)

- i. This great leader would come from the west (5).
  1. Macedonia was across the Hellespont, the narrow space of water that separates Asia from Europe. When Alexander took his armies across that stretch of water, from Greece in Europe into Asia, he changed the course of history, shifting the center of the world dominion from Asia to Europe.
  2. Before this time, the East had been supreme – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and the Medes and Persians were all of the East. Alexander was of the West. Never again has the balance of power shifted back to the East. The advancing civilization of the world from that day to this has been the civilization of the West.
- ii. This great leader's conquest would be rapid (5).
- iii. The goat's single horn depicted Alexander the Great (5)

- e. The Victory of the Greeks Over the Persians (6-7)
    - i. Alexander took all of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) in a few months.
    - ii. Darius arrived in great style with a massive army and with his family and court in attendance.
    - iii. Alexander defeated the Persian army which was 600,000 men strong, and captured the king's family, but Darius escaped.
    - iv. Alexander met Darius and his massive army a second time near the city of Nineveh and defeated them.
    - v. In his anger, he leveled the cities of Persepolis and Ecbatana.
  - f. The Division of Alexander's Kingdom (8)
    - i. Just as quickly as Alexander rose to power, he suddenly died at the young age of 32 after struggling with a fever for 10 days.
    - ii. After 20 years of quarreling, Alexander's empire was divided by his four generals, two of whom are significant in the Book of Daniel:
      - 1. Ptolemy ruled Egypt, who becomes known in Daniel as the king of the South.
      - 2. Seleucius ruled Syria and becomes known as the king of the North.
  - g. The Vision of the Little Horn and His Conflict with Israel (9-14)
    - i. Out of the king of the North comes the little horn, which we know as Antiochus IV, Epiphenes (Magnificent), a king of the line of Selucius, who reigned in Syria.
      - 1. Note: This "little horn" is not the same as the "little horn" of chapter 7, which comes from the fourth Roman kingdom.
      - 2. He would expand his kingdom toward the south and east.
      - 3. He would also dominate, Israel, the pleasant land (9; Psalm 48:2).
    - ii. He would attack the center of Jewish worship (9-10).
      - 1. He dissolved the priesthood (9).
      - 2. He destroyed the temple (10-11).
      - 3. He was an instrument of God's judgment upon the Jews for their sins of apostasy (12).
      - 4. The sanctuary would be desolate for 2,300 days (13-14).
2. The Interpretation of the Vision (15-26)
- a. Gabriel interprets the vision for Daniel (15-18).
  - b. The scope of the prophecy seems to relate not only to Antiochus and the persecution of the Jews, but also to the "last days" (19).
  - c. Fulfillment in the antichrist (23-27)
    - i. In the latter time of the kingdom seems to correspond to "the latter days."
    - ii. Transgressors are come to the full seems to correspond to the growing evil of the "latter days."
    - iii. The antichrist will have a fierce countenance and have unusual intellect.
    - iv. He will operate with supernatural power (24).
    - v. He will destroy the Jewish people (24).
    - vi. He will use deceit to control and destroy (25).
    - vii. He will stand up against the "Prince of Princes", the King of Kings, and be destroyed.
3. Applications for the Church Today
- a. The reason God allowed Antiochus to persecute the Jews was because of the Jew's apostasy.
    - i. After the Jews returned to the land of Israel, they became spiritually soft and focused on pleasure.
    - ii. Antiochus persuaded many of the Jews to worship pagan gods.
  - b. One of the chief evils for which God allowed this persecution was because of their worldliness.
    - i. They built a Greek-style gymnasium in Jerusalem so the youth could learn the pagan ways of Greece.
    - ii. There was greater interest in Greek literature and philosophy than the study of the Scriptures.
    - iii. The Jewish religious system became nothing more than a tool of the state to be bought and sold.
  - c. The spirit of that day was "liberal" and "broad minded" as it is today.
  - d. The Christian culture of today is in a very similar condition.
  - e. These prophecies should make us very sober-minded and should affect us spiritually, and even physically.
  - f. Jesus is coming to earth to judge unrepentant hearts. What are you doing to turn those hearts to Christ?