



An Exploration of Eschatology in Exile

WEEK 8: November 10, 2020, 10 am

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Seneca Church of God of Prophecy

12 Week Discipleship Course

The Four Great Beasts: Daniel 8

Objectives

- Recognize God's Sovereignty
- Submit all glory and honor to God
- Christ will reign for eternity

Chapter Outline

- Daniel's Second Vision (Daniel 8:1-2)
- The Ram with Two Horns (Daniel 8:3-4)
- The He Goat (Daniel 8:5-12)
- The Days of the Desolation of the Temple (Daniel 8:13-14)
- Gabriel's Appearance to Daniel (Daniel 8:15-22)
- The King of Fierce Countenance (Daniel 8:23-27)

Review

- Daniel one begins with the history that leads up to this point in history.
- Daniel two discussed the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's interpretation of it, both historically and futuristic.
- Daniel three discussed the King's image of gold and the faith of the three Hebrew boys.
- Daniel four discussed the King's dream of God's judgment against him. The 7 years of judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar occurs.
- Daniel five discussed the hand-writing on the wall.
- Daniel six discussed Daniel's faithfulness to prayer and the judgment pronounced against him to be placed in the lions den.
- Daniel seven discussed the four beasts that are symbols for the four powerful kingdoms.
- Each chapters common thread is that Yahweh is the only true God.
- Chapters 1-4 each end with worship and adoration directed towards Yahweh.
- Chapter 5 ends with the downfall of a wicked pagan king.
- Chapter 6 returns to the end theme of chapters 1-4, in which Yahweh is given honor and glory.
- Chapter 7 breaks with the traditional ending of chapters 1-4 and 6. Instead of glorifying God for all that will be done, Daniel is very troubled and worried about the end of days.
- Chapter 8 was so powerful and hard on Daniel that he ends the chapter by stating that he fainted from the anxiety and pressure of the vision.

Daniel's Second Vision (Daniel 8:1-14)

- The third year of the reign of King Belshazzar: This vision happened while Babylon was securely in power. Though the vision will deal with the emergence and destiny of the Greek Empire, the Greek Empire was not much of anything at the time the prophecy came to Daniel.
- I was in Shushan, the citadel: Daniel was in Shushan on business for the king ([Daniel 8:27](#)).
- A ram which had two horns: In this same chapter ([Daniel 8:20](#)) this ram was clearly identified as representing the Medo-Persian Empire, which succeeded the Babylonian Empire.
 - It wasn't a stretch to use a ram to represent the Medo-Persian Empire. "Ammianus Marcellinus, a fourth century historian, states that the Persian ruler bore the head of a ram as he stood at the head of his army." (Wood) "The ram was the national emblem of Persia, a ram being stamped on Persian coins as well as on the headdress of Persian emperors." (Strauss)
- The two horns were high; but one was higher than the other: The ram was noted for the proportion of its two horns – one was higher than the other. This was an accurate prediction of the partnership between the Medes and the Persians, because the Persians were larger and stronger in the partnership. They also emerged *after* the Medes (the higher one came up last).
- Pushing westward, northward, and southward: The Medo-Persian Empire exerted its power to the north, south, and west. It took territory but made no major conquests towards the east.
 - "The principle theatre of their wars, says *Calmet*, was against the SCYTHIANS, *northward*; against the GREEKS, *westward*; and against the EGYPTIANS, *southward*." (Clarke)
- A male goat came from the west: In this same chapter ([Daniel 8:21-22](#)) this male goat was clearly identified with Greece and its horns are identified with the rulers of the Greek Empire.



- From ancient history we know this wasn't a strange symbol. The goat was a common representation of the Greek Empire. "Newton very properly observes that, *two hundred* years before the time of Daniel, they were called, the *goats' people*." (Clarke)
- Across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground: This prophetic description of the male goat was proved to be accurate regarding the Greek Empire.
 - The Greek Empire rose from the west of previous empires.
 - The Greek Empire rose with great speed (suddenly... without touching the ground).
 - The Greek Empire had a notable ruler, Alexander the Great (a notable horn).
 - The Greek Empire had a famous war with the Medo-Persian Empire (I saw him confronting the ram).
 - The Greek Empire and the Medo-Persian Empire greatly hated each other (with furious power... moved with rage). Some of the greatest, fiercest battles of ancient history were fought between the Greeks and the Persians.
 - The Greek Empire conquered the Medo-Persian Empire (no one that could deliver the ram from his hand).
 - The reign of the notable leader of the Greek Empire was suddenly cut short (the large horn was broken).
 - After the end of Alexander the Great's reign, the Greek Empire was divided among four rulers (in place of it four notable ones came up).
 - The four rulers of the Greek Empire after Alexander ruled their own dominions, not the entire empire together (came up toward the four winds of heaven).
- Alexander did not divide the empire among his four generals himself. His four leading generals divided it among themselves by force after his death. The four generals were:
 - Cassander, ruling over Greece and its region.
 - Lysimachus, ruling over Asia Minor.
 - Seleucus, ruling over Syria and Israel's land.
 - Ptolemy, ruling over Egypt.
- The male goat grew very great: The greatness of Alexander's Empire was not only in its vast dominion but also in its cultural power. Alexander the Great was determined to spread Greek civilization, culture, and language across every land he conquered.
 - As God guided history, He used Alexander's passion to spread Greek culture to prepare the world for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of Alexander's influence, *koine* (common) Greek became the common language of the civilized world – and the language of the New Testament.
- A little horn which grew exceeding great: This was fulfilled in one of the four successors to Alexander the Great. Since the dominion of this horn was extended toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land, we can identify the historical fulfillment of this little

horn in Antiochus IV Epiphanes who ruled over Syria and Israel's land under the Seleucid dynasty.

- Israel's land was contested between the dynasties of Seleucid and Ptolemy, but the Seleucids gained power over the region in the days of Antiochus III (198 B.C.).
- Antiochus IV gained the throne of his father (Antiochus III) by murdering his brother, the former king Seleucus Philopator. The son of Philopator was the rightful heir to the throne, but Antiochus IV had him held hostage in Rome. Antiochus IV legitimized his rule mainly through flattery and bribery.
- Antiochus IV assumed the title *Epiphanes* meaning, "illustrious" and alluding to deity. The ancient Jews twisted his name into "*Epimanes*" meaning, "madman."
- It cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground: The host and stars are symbols used in the Old Testament for angels, kings and leaders, or the people of God at large. This prediction was fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes and his attacks against rulers and against God's people in general.
 - The terms *stars of heaven* ([Genesis 12:3](#) and [15:5](#)) and the *hosts of the LORD* ([Exodus 12:41](#)) are at times used of God's people in general.
- And trampled them: Antiochus was an infamous persecutor of the Jewish people. He wanted them to submit to Greek culture and customs and was more than willing to use murder and violence to compel them.
 - Antiochus's suppression of the Jews came to a head in December of 168 B.C. when he returned in defeat from Alexandria. He ordered his generals to seize Jerusalem on a Sabbath. There he set up an idol of Zeus and desecrated the altar by an offering of swine and sprinkling the pig's juices in the sanctuary. Sacrifice stopped because the temple was desecrated.
- Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices: This was fulfilled in the terrors of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Jews, especially their leaders, invited God's judgment upon them through Antiochus because of their sin.
 - The first attack of Antiochus against the Jews of this time was to settle a rivalry for the office of high priest. A pious high priest, Onias III, was removed from office and was replaced with his brother Jason because Jason bribed Antiochus. Then in 172 B.C. another brother (Menelaus) gave Antiochus an even bigger bribe and replaced Jason. A year later Menelaus started selling many of the temple's gold utensils to raise money to pay off the bribe. Onias III rebuked him, and Menelaus had him murdered. Meanwhile, Jason gathered armies and fought against Menelaus to regain the office of High Priest. Antiochus Epiphanes came in to Jerusalem in 171 B.C. to defend the man who paid him a bigger bribe to be the High Priest.

- How long will the vision be? Daniel didn't ask this question; he heard the holy ones speaking together and one of them asked the question. They wanted to know how long the sacrifices would be suspended and how long the sanctuary would be desecrated.
- For two thousand three hundred days: Literally, Daniel heard a holy one say "two thousand three hundred *mornings and evenings*." Bible students debate if this means 2,300 days or 1,150 days. 2,300 days is almost seven years.
 - Either understanding is possible, but it is more likely that this means 2,300 days. The date when the temple was cleansed is well established as December 25, 165 B.C. If we count back 2,300 days from then, we come to the year when Antiochus Epiphanes began his persecution in earnest (171 B.C.).
 - However, if we take it to mean 1,150 days it can refer to the time the temple was actually desecrated. Philip Newell makes this case: "For a duration of time during which 2300 daily sacrifices would ordinarily have been offered, one at evening and one in the morning, as specified in Exodus 29:38-43. Since there are two of these daily, the actual time period involved is 1150 days, or slightly over three years. This, in fact, was the time of the Maccabean tribulation, 168-165 B.C., at the end of which the sanctuary was 'cleansed' by Judas Maccabeus in his restoration of the evening and morning sacrifices (2 Maccabees 10:1-5)."
 - This passage has been a favorite springboard for elaborate and fanciful prophetic interpretations. A popular and tragic interpretation of this passage took one year for every day, and William Miller used 2,300 "year-days" to calculate that Jesus would return in 1844 (2,300 years after Cyrus issued the decree to rebuild the temple). His movement ended up giving birth to the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and several other movements.
 - We can know that Miller and other "year-day" theories are wrong because this passage was fulfilled before the time of Jesus. Jesus recognized that the temple was properly cleansed and rededicated when He attended the Feast of Dedication, commemorating the cleansing and rededication of the temple after the desecration brought by Antiochus Epiphanes (John 10:22).
 - Adam Clarke's comments show what a hold the year-date approach had to many of his time: "Though literally it be *two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings*, yet I think the *prophetic day* should be understood here, as in other parts of this prophet, and must signify so many *years*. If we date these years from the vision of the he-goat, (Alexander's invading Asia), this was A.M. 3670, B.C. 334; and *two thousand three hundred years* from that time will reach to A.D. 1966, or *one hundred and forty-one years* from the present A.D.

1825.” There is no foundation for Clarke’s approach, and it has led many others off into serious error.

The Vision Interpreted (Daniel 8:15-27)

- Between the banks of the Ulai: Daniel was still in the midst of his vision when he saw himself on the shores of this Persian river. He heard someone instruct Gabriel to explain the vision to Daniel.
- The vision refers to the time of the end: Gabriel assured Daniel that this vision had to do with end times, with the latter time of the indignation.
 - Just as Antiochus Epiphanes rose to power with force and intrigue, so will the Antichrist. As he persecuted the Jews, so will the Antichrist. As he stopped sacrifice and desecrated the temple, so will the Antichrist. As he seemed to be a complete success, so will the Antichrist. “From what Antiochus did to Jews in his day, therefore, one may know the general pattern of what the Antichrist will do to them in the future.” (Wood)
- The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king: This was fulfilled in history by Alexander the Great (see comments on [Daniel 8:5-8](#)).
- Four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power: This was fulfilled in history by the four generals who divided Alexander’s Empire between them (see comments on [Daniel 8:5-8](#)).
- In the latter time of their kingdom: The prophecy in this passage reads equally true of both Antiochus and Antichrist. This is an example of a prophetic passage that has both a *near* and *far* fulfillment.
 - Having fierce features: Antiochus Epiphanes was known for his cruel brutality. This will also be true of the coming Antichrist.
 - Who understands sinister schemes... through his cunning: Antiochus was known for his flattery and smooth tongue. The coming Antichrist will strike a covenant with Israel ([Daniel 9:27](#)).
 - His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: Antiochus Epiphanes was empowered by Satan and allowed by God. The same will be true of the coming Antichrist.
 - Shall prosper and thrive: Antiochus Epiphanes looked like a total success. The coming Antichrist will look like a complete winner until God topples his reign.
 - He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people: Antiochus Epiphanes not only destroyed his enemies, but also harshly persecuted the people of God. The coming Antichrist will also destroy and persecute.

- He shall cause deceit to prosper: Both the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes in the past and of the Antichrist in the future are marked by deceit. *The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10).*
 - He shall exalt himself in his heart: The coins of Antiochus Epiphanes were inscribed with this title: THEOS EPIPHANIES meaning, “God manifest.” The coming Antichrist will also exalt himself: *So that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).*
 - He shall even rise against the Prince of princes: Though Antiochus Epiphanes hated the people of God and fought against them, it was because he really hated God. The same will be true of the coming Antichrist, who will hate the Jews because he hates God.
 - Broken without human means: History tells us that Antiochus Epiphanes died of disease, not by the hand of man. In a similar way no *man* will defeat the coming Antichrist, but the hand of Jesus will strike him down (Revelation 19:20).
 - Therefore seal up the vision: Daniel must do this because in his day the vision referred to a period far distant in its ultimate fulfillment. For us, the time is near (Revelation 1:3) and the book is unsealed (Revelation 22:10).
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- Fainted and was sick... I was astonished: Daniel probably couldn’t understand why God would allow such a mighty persecutor of His people to come to power and seeming success.
 - I went about the king’s business: Daniel didn’t let either spiritual mysteries or physical weakness keep him from doing his duty. This shows us that our interest in prophecy should make us *more* concerned with our king’s business, not *less* concerned about it.
 - No one understood it: It wasn’t because God never wanted this prophecy to be understood. There is no reason for God to reveal something to man that can never be understood. The reason why no one understood it was because the vision was sealed up in light of its ultimate fulfillment in Daniel’s distant future.
 - It is worth repeating: the time is *not* distant for us in light of Revelation 1:3, and the book of prophecy is not sealed in light of Revelation 22:10.