

## **Series: The Book of Daniel**

### **Title: Eternity Will Triumph Over Time**

#### **Chapter 8**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Eight is a fascinating chapter. As Daniel expands on his vision, we zero in on the Ram, the He-Goat, and the Horn. The insights we gain from Chapter 8 are very encouraging, even though the vision announces a time of great evil and suffering.

In this chapter, we realize that God is not bound by time; he is eternal and beyond time. God sees the past, present, and future simultaneously and has ordained the length of time. We also see that the events of the future are all known to God, yet His "knowing" (Omniscience) does not negate our free will.

In addition, we see the conflict between Persia and Greece, Alexander the Great's victory, and the establishment of the Grecian Empire. Then we see the rise of Antiochus IV as king of the Seleucid Empire, his devastating rule over Israel, and how he becomes a picture of the end-time ruler, we often call the Antichrist.

This vision occurs two years after the vision of Daniel in Chapter 7 in the third year of Belshazzar's reign – 551 B.C. when Belshazzar was co-regent with his father, Nabonidus. In the ancient manuscripts, the section from Daniel 2:4 to 7:28 was written in Aramaic. But now, in Chapter 8, Daniel resumes writing using the Hebrew language.

In Verse 1, Daniel introduces us to the vision. "In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar, a vision appeared *to* me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time. I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I *was* in Shushan, the citadel, which *is* in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai." (Daniel 8:1-2 NKJV)

This vision happened while Babylon was still securely in power. Greece had not yet become an empire when this prophecy came to Daniel. Shushan, also called Susa, would become known as the Persian lily palace near the river, Ulai.

In his vision, Daniel sees himself in Shushan and envisions an attack that would be made on the Medo-Persian kingdom by a future King we now know was Alexander the Great. Then the great horn, which is broken, pictures the death of Alexander, and the four notable horns that arise are his four generals, who divide the empire among themselves.

In verse 3, Daniel sees a mighty ram pushing in different directions. "Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns *were* high; but one *was* higher than the other, and the higher *one* came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor *was there any* that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great." (Daniel 8:3-4 NKJV)

In verse 20, Daniel identifies this ram as the Medo-Persian Empire, which conquered the Babylonian Empire. The ram was the national emblem of Persia. A ram was stamped on Persian coins and part of the crown of Persian emperors.

The ram had two horns, but one was higher than the other. The Persians emerged as the more prominent and stronger in their partnership with the Medes. The Persians fought wars with the Scythians to the North, the Greeks to the West, and the Egyptians to the South.

In verse 5, Daniel sees a male goat challenge and conquer the ram. "And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand. Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven." (Daniel 8:5-8 NKJV)

Verse 21 will reveal that the male goat from the West is Greece, and the horns represent Alexander's generals. Interestingly, the symbol of the Greek Empire would become the goat, and the people were known as the goat people.

What's amazing about this vision is that it occurred two hundred years before Alexander the Great was born. Daniel says this goat crosses the earth's surface without touching the ground. It accurately describes how quickly the Grecian Empire rose to power. Alexander the Great led the famous war against the Medo-Persian Empire and conquered the known world of that day within twelve years.

These two empires hated each other, and with furious power and rage they fought some of the greatest, fiercest battles of ancient history. The Greeks conquered the Medo-Persians, but the reign of Alexander the Great was suddenly cut short by his untimely death. Alexander's empire was divided among his four generals, and Daniel says that a notable horn (ruler) emerged from one of them.

Each general ruled a portion of the empire: Cassander ruled over Greece, Lysimachus ruled Asia Minor, Seleucus ruled over Syria and Israel and Ptolemy ruled Egypt.

Alexander the Great was determined to spread Greek civilization, culture, and language across every land he conquered. Because of Alexander's influence, *koine* (common), Greek became the language of the civilized world - and the language of the New Testament.

In verse 9, Daniel sees the strong horn that arises from the four horns of the male goat. "And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious *Land*. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some* of the host and *some* of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted *himself* as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily *sacrifices* were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over *to the horn* to oppose the daily *sacrifices*; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did *all this* and prospered." (Daniel 8:9-12 NKJV)

Since the dominion of this horn extended toward the south, the east, and 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.

The Seleucid and Ptolemy dynasties fought over Israel's land, but the Seleucids gained power over the region in the days of Antiochus III (198 B.C.). Antiochus IV gained the throne by murdering his brother, the former king Seleucus Philopator. Antiochus IV assumed the title "*Epiphanes*," meaning "illustrious" and alluding to deity. The Jews turned it into "*Epimanes*," meaning "madman."

Antiochus Epiphanes is such an accurate fulfillment of this historical prophecy that critics insist the Book of Daniel *must* have been written *after* his time. Antiochus Epiphanes' attacks against Israel and God's people were a part of God's judgment.

The "little horn" didn't think anything too exalted for his aspiration. There's no question Antiochus was an infamous persecutor of the Jewish people. He was willing to use murder and violence to compel the Jews to submit to Greek culture and customs.

Antiochus's hatred 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. He erected an idol of Zeus, desecrated the altar with an offering of swine, and sprinkled the pig's juices in the sanctuary.

As a result, sacrifices ceased because the temple was desecrated. By some estimates, he is responsible for the murder of more than 100,000 Jews. But it was the Jews, and especially their leaders, who invited God's judgment upon them through Antiochus because of their sinfulness. One writer says, "This was the reason why God set over them such a breathing devil, as was Antiochus, for a punishment of their open impiety and formal apostasy." (Trapp)

Verse 13 says the duration of the sanctuary's desecration will be 2,300 days. "Then I heard a holy one speaking, and *another* holy one said to that certain *one* who was speaking, "How long *will* the vision *be*, *concerning* the daily *sacrifices* and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?" And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed." (Daniel 8:13-14 NKJV)

Daniel heard the holy ones speaking together, and one asked the question of how long the sacrifices would be suspended and how long the sanctuary would be defiled. Daniel heard one of them say, "For two thousand three hundred days." The date when the temple was cleansed is well documented as December 25, 165 B.C. If we count back 2,300 days from there, we come to the year Antiochus Epiphanes began his persecution in earnest (171 B.C.).

This amazing prophecy was written some 350 years before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Great prophetic fulfillment like this demonstrates that God knows the future and *guides* the future.

In verse 15, Gabriel appears to Daniel with the interpretation. "Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between *the banks of* the Ulai, who called and said, "Gabriel, make this *man* understand the vision." So he came near where I stood, and when he came, I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision *refers* to the time of the end." Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end *shall be*." (Daniel 8:15-19 NKJV)

During his vision, Daniel sees himself on the shores of the Persian river and hears someone instruct Gabriel to explain the vision to Daniel. Gabriel also tells Daniel that this vision concerns the end times. The prophecy of Daniel 8:1-14 was fulfilled in the days of the Medo-Persian and Greek Empires, especially in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

The terms "time of the end" and "latter time of the indignation" commonly refer to what we call "the *end times*." Even though Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled this prophecy, it also has a later fulfillment in the Antichrist, referring to the time of the end.

Antiochus Epiphanes was a ruthless ruler, but he is also a picture of the Antichrist of the end times. Just like Antiochus Epiphanes rose to power with force, 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. He seemed to be a complete success, and so will the Antichrist. In Antiochus, we see a general pattern of what the Antichrist will do to them in the future.

Verse 20 reveals the specific identification of the ram and the male goat in Daniel's vision. "The ram which you saw, having the two horns—*they are* the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat *is* the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that *is* between its eyes *is* the first king. As for the broken *horn* and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power." (Daniel 8:20-22 NKJV)

The large horn is the first king, fulfilled in history by Alexander the Great. The four kingdoms that arose from that nation were fulfilled in history by the four generals who divided Alexander's Empire between them.

In verse 23, we see the rise and fall of the strong little horn. "And in the latter time of their kingdom, When the transgressors have reached their fullness, A king shall arise, Having fierce features, Who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; He shall destroy fearfully, And shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the mighty, and *also* the holy people. "Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; And he shall exalt *himself* in his heart. He shall destroy many in *their* prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; But he shall be broken without *human* means. "And the vision of the evenings and mornings Which was told is true; Therefore seal up the vision, For *it refers* to many days *in the future*." (Daniel 8:23-26 NKJV)

The prophecy in this passage is equally true of Antiochus and the Antichrist. It is a prophetic passage that has both a now and later fulfillment. Antiochus Epiphanes was known for his cruel brutality; this will also become the legacy of the coming Antichrist. Antiochus was known for his flattery and smooth tongue. The coming Antichrist will also use his sinister and cunning schemes to strike a covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27). Antiochus Epiphanes was inspired and empowered by Satan and allowed by God to persecute Israel. The same will be true of the coming Antichrist.

The Apostle Paul says in 2 Thessalonians, "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. And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 NKJV)

Antiochus Epiphanes hated the people of God and fought against them, but the truth is he really hated God. The coming Antichrist will also hate the Jews and Christians because he hates God, but the hand of Christ will strike him down (Revelation 19:20).

Daniel is told to seal up the vision because it referred future time. But for us, the time is near. In Revelation 22:10, John is told, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand." (Revelation 22:10 NKJV)

In verse 27, Daniel reacts to the vision with physical shock and astonishment. "And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward, I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it." ([Daniel 8:27 NKJV](#))

Daniel struggled to understand why God would allow such a mighty persecutor of His people to rise up. But it didn't cause him to quit his job. (There's probably some lesson there for us!)

So what application can we make from this vision? Let me give you three. First, God knows everything.

## **I. God Knows Everything**

Omniscience means all-knowing. When we say that God is all-knowing, we mean He is aware of the past, present, and future. Nothing takes Him by surprise. His knowledge is total and complete. He knows all there is to know, and all that can be known. In Psalm 139, David says, "O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For *there is* not a word on my tongue, *But* behold, O LORD, You know it altogether." ([Psalms 139:1-4 NKJV](#))

To know God secures His protection. Knowing that God has your back and is watching over you is comforting. God knows and provides all you need to be a faithful follower and disciple. As we faithfully follow God, Paul says in Philippians 4, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." ([Philippians 4:19 NKJV](#))

God knows that we need fellowship with other believers and draws us towards those who are righteous. God doesn't want us to practice sinful ways. He calls us out of the world and encourages us to confess our sins so He can forgive us and help us.

Sinful behavior was one of Israel's major problem areas. They allowed their sinful ways to corrupt their relationship with God. But God knows how to deliver us from even the temptations of sin. We can be joyfully content when we put our trust in God. God knows everything about you and can help you overcome your weaknesses, shortcomings, sinful habits, and every temptation Satan puts in your path. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." ([Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV](#))

## **II. You Have A Choice**

You can't live a day in this life without having to make choices. Even if you choose not to choose, you have chosen!

When your alarm goes off in the morning, you have to make a choice. If you're running late and you're not going to make it to work on time, you have to make a choice. Life is all about choices. You can't always control the circumstances, but you can control how you respond to them.

That is one of the major life lessons we learn from Daniel. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. (1 Peter 2:15-16 NKJV)

God gave us free will so that we could choose to love Him. God wants us to choose to do good and care for others. You alone are responsible for your choices in life. You cannot underestimate the importance of that responsibility. Your choice will either lead you to God or away from Him. True freedom is understanding that even though we are sinners, we will experience God's grace and love when we choose to receive God's forgiveness and extend forgiveness to others.

Israel had become so incredibly selfish that God' had to expose them to bitter cruelty and suffering to get their attention and teach them humility and love for one another. God gives us the freedom to choose between good and evil. Joshua told the people, "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:14-15 NKJV)

The choice is yours!

### **III. Eternity Is A Reality**

And finally, your choices are important because eternity is a reality. "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end." (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NKJV)

Jesus said in John 5:24, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." (John 5:24 NKJV)

The resurrection of Jesus is the most apparent evidence that eternity is real. The resurrection is the basis of our faith and God's reward for our repentance and changed life. Eternal life is what the resurrection accomplishes for us. Because of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, death is not the end for us. Through Christ's resurrection, we know that beyond physical death, there is a place more wonderful than we can imagine in the presence of God.

Hebrews 5:8 says, "Though He was a Son, *yet* He (Jesus) learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." ([Hebrews 5:8-9 NKJV](#))

Eternity awaits everyone, but heaven is for those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. At the judgment, we will hear Christ say, '[Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:](#)' ([Matthew 25:34 NKJV](#))

## **Conclusion**

God is not bound by time; He is eternal. He sees the past, the present, and the future as one. God in eternity past determined the length of time and has given us prophetic markers along the way.

God is all-knowing, but that does not negate our free will. The New Testament truth is that all the prophetic events of scripture will come true. That's why making the right choices about doing good and honoring God now is extremely important!

The best and worst of this life will soon come to an end, but the eternal life offered by Christ will never end. We are living in the last of the last days and at the appointed time, the end will come, and God will triumph over it all.