

# Lesson 19

## Daniel 7:28

28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Daniel was greatly troubled by what he had seen. Why? Because Daniel had been given a glimpse of a great persecution that awaited the people of God - and that disturbed him.

Daniel loved God and God's people - so Daniel was troubled by the persecutions that lay ahead for them. Also, Daniel bore the burden of this knowledge alone because he was either unwilling or unable to make the vision known when he first received it. Instead he kept the matter in his heart for a time.

Are we concerned about future Christians? Are we concerned about the state of the church 500 years from now? Are we concerned about the persecution God's people 500 years from now? Daniel was concerned about these things.

But some might ask, what can we do about it? First, we can pray about it. And second, we can realize that our own faithfulness today will strengthen future generations of Christians. And third, we can understand the converse - if we fail to live and teach as we should today, then perhaps Jesus will ask again, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

We can learn much from the example of Daniel!

And with the end of verse 28, we switch from Aramaic back to the Hebrew language for the remainder of the book. As for why that switch occurred, we discussed that question back in Chapter 2, verse 4, where the switch from Hebrew to Aramaic occurred.

## Chapter 8

### Daniel 8:1-2

1 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. 2 And I saw in a vision; and it came to

pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.

Daniel received this vision in the third year of Belshazzar's reign. If that is the third year of his coregency with his father Nabonidus, then Daniel received this vision around 550 BC. By now Daniel was about seventy, and he was still faithfully serving God.

Although we have moved forward in time two years from when Daniel received the vision in Chapter 7, the subject of the vision has moved backward in time from what we were seeing in Chapter 7. While the primary subject of Chapter 7 was the *fourth* kingdom (Rome), I think we will see that the primary subject of Chapter 8 is the *third* kingdom (Greece).

About the time that Daniel received this vision, Cyrus was establishing the Medo-Persian Empire, which would bring an end to the period of Babylonian supremacy within twelve years (as we saw in Chapter 5).

Nabonidus, observing this union, became apprehensive about Cyrus's intentions and attempted to forge an alliance with Lydia and Egypt to protect himself against a possible Medo-Persian threat. The whole world was anxiously watching to see what Cyrus would do.

God may have given the vision at this particular time to assure Daniel and his fellow exiles that the Jews would survive as a people long after Cyrus and Belshazzar had passed from the scene. God had plans for them!

The city of Susa or Shushan in verse 2 has been identified, and the palace of Xerxes (the king from Esther) was discovered there in the late 1800's.

It is not clear whether Daniel was in Susa when he received the vision or if the setting of the vision was Susa. Verse 16 seems to support the former view because it occurs after the vision and shows Daniel on the banks of the Ulai river, which was near Susa (but verse 16 could also be a second vision, so we can't say for sure).

Also, verse 27 says that after the vision Daniel rose up and did the king's business - but the king there could be either Belshazzar (in Babylon) or Nabonidus (possibly in Susa). Most commentaries think that Daniel was in Babylon and saw Susa only in a vision, but I'm not so sure. Josephus said that Daniel was in Susa, and it does seem to fit well with the evidence.

This "river" in verse 2 was actually a wide artificial canal (about 900 feet across) that connected the Choaspes River and the Coprates River.

If Daniel was in Susa, then what was he doing there?

There is evidence that Nabonidus was in Susa, and Daniel may have accompanied him there. As we said, Nabonidus was likely negotiating with Lydia and Egypt, hoping to form a triple alliance against the Medes and the Persians. Perhaps Daniel was acting as an ambassador in those negotiations, which may explain what he was doing in Susa. It would also explain why Daniel was still serving as an official during at least part of the reign of Belshazzar, but seems to have been unknown to Beleshazzar in Chapter 5.

If you travel to Susa today (it is in Iran, so not recommended!) you can see the supposed tomb of Daniel. Both Jewish and Arab traditions say that Daniel was buried in Susa.

In 1901 archaeologists discovered the famous Code of Hammurabi in Susa, where it had been taken as plunder in the twelfth century BC. That famous code had been in Susa 700 years by the time the events in Daniel occurred!

## Daniel 8:3

3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.

Daniel sees a ram with two horns, with one horn higher than the other and the higher one coming up last. What does the ram denote?

We saw something similar with the bear in Daniel 7:5. It also was higher on one side, and you'll recall that the bear was the second kingdom - Medo-Persia, with the higher side denoting the dominant Persians.

But, similarity of symbols does not denote similarity of subject, and so we need more than just that similarity to conclude that this ram is also Medo-Persia.

Fortunately, we have much more. We have verse 20 later in this same chapter: "The ram which thou

sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia." So there is no doubt at all about the identity of this ram. (We will discuss those kings when we get to verse 20.)

Again, one must wonder where the liberal critics get their idea that Daniel thought the Medes and the Persians were separate kingdoms. How could the text be any more clear? We have one ram, and that one ram represents the Medes and the Persians. In the previous chapter, one bear represented the Medes and the Persians. The ram and the bear each act as a single unified entity. And what about Daniel 5:28? "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." And what about Daniel 6:8? "And sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians." How does the phrase "the law of the Medes and Persians" make any sense if they were separate kingdoms?

This ram has two horns, which denote the Medes and the Persians. One horn is higher than the other. This higher horn denotes the supremacy of the Persians after their merger with the Medes (just as we saw with the higher side on the bear in Chapter 7). This higher horn comes up last. This temporal order is in perfect accord with history. The Medes were the dominant power until Cyrus the Great came along and brought prominence to the Persians. There is something here in verse 3 that tells us without any doubt that this vision was not written in the second century BC, as the liberal critics would have us believe. What is it?

After Alexander the Great visited Egypt, he was forever thereafter depicted on coins with his head adorned with the ram's horns of Amen-Ra. A thousand years later, Mohammed called him "Alexander, the lord of the two horns." One commentator has written:

It is impossible to believe that the writer of Daniel could, in the face of universal attribution of the two ram's horns to Alexander, represent Persia, the power he overthrew, as a two-horned ram (Daniel 8:3, 20) unless he had written before the expedition into Egypt.

Now, of course, we know that the reason Daniel used a ram for Medo-Persia and a goat for Greece is because those were what he saw in the vision he received from God. But, if, as the liberal critics tell us, the book of Daniel was just made up by some unknown Jew writing from Palestine in the second century BC - such a person would NEVER have depicted Medo-Persia as a ram.

It would be as if someone today wrote a book about the Eisenhower administration and the Kennedy administration and referred to the Eisenhower era as the days of Camelot. It would be as if someone today wrote a book about Reagan's defeat of Carter, and referred to Carter as the Gipper. Ridiculous, right? Yes, it is.

And referring to Medo-Persia as a ram in the second century is just as ridiculous! And yet that is what we would be seeing here if Daniel was written in the second century as the liberals argue.

But why did God use a ram to denote Medo-Persia when God knew that Alexander would be so closely associated with a ram? Of course we don't know for sure, but maybe we are not the only ones who enjoy poking holes in the liberal critics' theories!

## Daniel 8:4

4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

Verse 4 gives us a completely accurate picture of the military conquests of the Medo-Persians. The three areas of the Medo-Persian expansion were:

- Westward to Lydia, Ionia, Thrace, and Macedon.
- Northward to the Caspians and the Scythians.
- Southward to Babylon and Egypt.

In these campaigns, the Medo-Persians were invincible and, as pictured here, their targets were helpless against them. Medo-Persia and its king, Cyrus, became arrogant, and Cyrus "did according to his will, and became great" (verse 4).

Cyrus has a fascinating history in the Bible.

First, he was mentioned in Isaiah by name long before he was even born (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

Second, Cyrus was the king who allowed the exiles to return and rebuild Jerusalem, and Ezra 1:1 tells us that Cyrus did that because God stirred up his spirit to do so. Why? Again, Ezra 1:1 tells us why - so that the word of God by the mouth of Jeremiah would be fulfilled.

## Daniel 8:5-7

5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. 6 And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

Who is this goat from the west? If we had to guess, it would not be difficult. History tells us that Greece was the great power that conquered the Medo-Persians, but, once again, we are left with no doubt. Verse 21 will soon tell us explicitly that this goat denotes Greece. "And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king."

This goat with one conspicuous horn comes from the west and charges the ram with the two horns. Again, this description is in perfect agreement with history.

Alexander the Great and the Greeks came against Persia in 334 BC from Macedonia and Greece, which were in the west. Like this goat, Alexander moved fast. The hooves of this goat did not even touch the ground. (Alexander died when he was 33, but by that time he had virtually conquered the world!)

So, who was this conspicuous horn? As we just said, it must be Alexander the Great. Verse 21 tells us that this horn was the "first king." Alexander was the first king of the consolidated Greek empire. In fact, Alexander was the one who consolidated it.

This attack by the goat against the ram appears to be unprovoked. History tells us that the Greeks launched just such an attack in 334 BC, and Alexander emerged victorious just three years later. One commentator wrote:

Alexander's conquest of the entire Near and Middle East within three years stands unique in military history and is appropriately portrayed by the lightning speed of this one-horned goat. Despite the immense numerical superiority of the Persian imperial forces and their possession of military equipment like war elephants, the tactical genius of young Alexander ... proved decisive.

But Daniel is telling us here that Alexander had help! Alexander was just acting out his part in a plan that God had put into place hundreds of years earlier.

Let's pause for a moment and look at the life of Alexander the Great.

For a long time in world history, Greece was a side-show - a small, divided country at the extreme western end of the known world. They were a seemingly insignificant player in global events that saw the Babylonians and Persians rise and become world powers.

How did Greece come to take center stage and supplant major, world-crushing empires? And how could Daniel possibly have known about that centuries before it happened? How else but from God?

Unable to ever successfully put up a united force or government, the Greek tribes developed as city-states. The most famous were Athens, Sparta, Thebes, and Macedonia.

For 500 years, Greek history was characterized largely by a series of internal conflicts, although they had also been battling Persia off and on for quite a while.

Xerxes is the Persian king in the book of Esther, and Herodotus describes his Greek expedition in 480-479 BC, which included the Battle of Thermopylae depicted in the movie, 300, which showed the famous three day suicidal stand in a narrow pass. Although the 300 Spartans arrayed against 100,000 Persians lost that battle, that Persian invasion eventually ended in their defeat.

In 470 BC, the Persian army was defeated by the Greeks, which ended their fifty year struggle with Greece. Persia maintained control over Egypt and Cyprus, but lost control over the Greek colonies of Asia Minor. Xerxes was killed in a conspiracy in 465 BC and was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes I, who is the king who later allowed Ezra and Nehemiah to return.

In the last Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, which happened around 420 BC, Sparta made an agreement with Persia to use part of the Persian navy to bottle up the Athenian fleet. The Spartans won the war, but their victory came at a price - the Persians were now back in Greece.

In 370 BC, a Greek king arose in Macedonia known as Philip II of Macedon. In seven years he was able to subdue all the Greek city-states and unite them, something that had not happened in almost five centuries.

But Philip wanted more than just a unified Greece. He also wanted Persia. In 336 BC, when his invasion of Persia was in its very early stage, Philip was assassinated, and he was succeeded on the throne by his son Alexander III (Alexander the Great).

Alexander had been educated as a child by a very famous tutor - Aristotle! Alexander came to power when he was just a teenager, and he would be dead by the time he was 30. In that short period he conquered the entire civilized world.

One of his campaigns brought him to Jerusalem. He arrived most likely around 329 BC. (He was dead by 323 BC.) The Jews were terrified of the now victorious Greeks because the Jews had backed Persia in the war. The High Priest had earlier refused Alexander's demand for provisions and men to help him conquer Tyre claiming that a treaty with Persia prevented Israel from helping the Greeks.

The Talmud describes what happened. The High Priest came out with other members of the priesthood, as well as the Sanhedrin, to greet Alexander at the gates of Jerusalem as he sat on his famous white horse. When Alexander saw the High Priest he dismounted and bowed to him. Instead of destroying and subjugating them, Alexander made an arrangement with the Jews. As long as they would be his loyal vassals and pay their taxes, they could remain autonomous.

Out of gratitude to Alexander, the Jews did several things. First, they agreed to name every child born the next year "Alexander," which must have caused some confusion on the first day of school a few years later!

Second, the Jews agreed to install a system of tax collection, which would later lead to terrible corruption (as it would again later under the Romans). It was so corrupt that the Talmud held that anybody who was a tax collector was presumed to be a thief.

Ironically, by showing Alexander their gratitude by naming their children after him they unwittingly opened the door to the Greek language. And with the Greek language came the Greek culture, which would create many problems down the road.

Why did Alexander spare Jerusalem? Josephus tells us that the High Priest brought out the scroll of Daniel written 200 years earlier and pointed to Daniel's vision of a one-horned goat defeating a ram in Chapter 8 and explained that it shows a king from Greece defeating the Persians, the very same verses we are now studying!

## Daniel 8:8

8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken;



and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

This goat "waxed very great" or "magnified himself." What does that mean?

It could mean that Alexander magnified his empire, in which case it would likely refer to Alexander's advances into Afghanistan and India, which occurred in 327 BC.

It may also refer to Alexander's pretensions of divinity, which distressed his troops to the point that they mutinied and refused to advance further into India. Egyptian priests had told Alexander that he had descended from Zeus, and Alexander took that very seriously, even requiring his comrades to prostrate themselves before him.

Perhaps we have yet another leader who put himself in the place of God. We saw that with Nebuchadnezzar, and we saw how he was humbled. In Chapter 7, we saw that with Domitian, and we saw what happened to him. In Acts 12, Herod was eaten by worms because he gave not God the glory. Here in verse 8, Alexander the Great turns out to not be that great after all!

This horn is broken at the height of its power, and in its place arise four other horns. (The High Priest likely did not show Alexander this part!) Here again we see that four is used both literally and figuratively - Alexander was followed by a literal four rulers (called four notable ones in verse 8), but the number four figuratively stresses that they were earthly man-made kingdoms.

Alexander died in Babylon in 323 BC at the age of 33 due to a sudden fever brought on by dissipation. The rumor was that he had in fact been poisoned by Cassander, the son of Antipater, viceroy of Macedonia.

After Alexander's death, attempts were made to hold his empire together, but they failed. By 311 BC, four of his generals had claimed independence and by 301 BC they had it. At one point thirteen men were trying to carve out a piece of the Greek empire, but when the smoke cleared only four were left standing.

- Ptolemy in Egypt (including Palestine).
- Seleucus in Babylonia.
- Lysimachus in Thrace and Asia Minor.

- Cassander in Macedonia and Greece.

History tells us that Alexander's kingdom was divided into four parts and that is what Daniel tells us as well. The difference is that Daniel told us that many years before Alexander was even born!

The "four winds of heaven" in verse 8 reminds us that God is behind this. These four winds denote the activity of God as he works his will on the earth.

## Daniel 8:9-12

9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. 10 And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12 And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.

In verse 9 we meet another little horn.

We saw a little horn in Chapter 7, and we identified him with Domitian, the eleventh emperor of Rome. Should we expect this little horn to be the same person? No. The little horn in Chapter 7 came up from the fourth kingdom (Rome). The little horn here in Chapter 8 comes up from the third kingdom (Greece). This little horn in verse 9 is a perfect example of our guideline that similarity of language does not prove identity of subject.

Should we be surprised at seeing two little horns? No. The world has always had plenty of little horns shaking their little fists at God. Domitian was a little horn in the Roman Empire, and we will soon see that the Greeks also had a little horn.

Who then is this little horn that arises out of the Greek empire? We are given a few clues here and a few more clues later in the chapter. Let's summarize those clues:

- (#1) He arose from one of the four pieces of the Greek kingdom that came about after Alexander's death (verses 8-9).

- (#2) He grew great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land (verse 9).
- (#3) He was able to cast down some of the host of the stars and the host of heaven (verse 10).
- (#4) He greatly magnified himself (verse 11).
- (#5) He took away the burnt offerings (verse 11).
- (#6) He overthrew the sanctuary (verse 11).
- (#7) He was a king of bold countenance (verse 23).
- (#8) He understood riddles or dark sentences (verse 23).
- (#9) He had great power (verse 24).
- (#10) He caused great destruction (verse 24).

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