
DANIEL 8: 1 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, even to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first.

This chapter contains Daniel's vision of the ram and he-goat, Dan 8:1-14; referring, as explained by the angel, to the Persian and Grecian monarchies, Dan 8:15-26. The little horn mentioned in the ninth verse, (or fierce king, as interpreted in the twenty-third), is supposed by some to denote Antiochus Epiphanes; but seems more properly to apply to the Roman power in general, by which the polity and temple of the Jews were destroyed, on account of the great transgressions of these ancient people of God; and particularly because of their very obstinate and unaccountable rejection of the glorious doctrines of Christianity, which had been preached among them by Jesus Christ and his apostles, and the truth of which God had attested "by signs and wonders, and by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost." Daniel is then informed of the two thousand and three hundred prophetic days (that is, years) which must elapse before the sanctuary be cleansed; or, in other words, before righteousness shall prevail over the whole earth. This period is supposed, with considerable probability to have had its commencement when Alexander the Great invaded Asia, in the year before Christ 334. This will bring the close of it to about the end of the Sixth chiliad of the world; when, as already observed, some astonishing changes are expected to take place in the moral condition of the human race; when the power of Antichrist, both Papal and Mohammedan, shall be totally annihilated, and universal dominion given to the saints of the Most High. The chapter concludes with the distress of Daniel on account of the fearful judgments with which his country should be visited in after ages, Dan 8:27.

Verse 1

In the third year of the reign of - Belshazzar - We now come once more to the Hebrew, the Chaldee part of the book being finished. As the Chaldeans had a particular interest both in the history and prophecies from Dan 2:4 to the end of chap. 7, the whole is written in Chaldee, but as the prophecies which remain concern times posterior to the Chaldean monarchy, and principally relate to the Church and people of God generally, they are written in the Hebrew language, this being the tongue in which God chose to reveal all his counsels given under the Old Testament relative to the New.

DANIEL 8: 2 I saw in the vision; now it was so, that when I saw, I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was by the river Ulai.

Verse 2

I saw in a vision - Daniel was at this time in Shushan, which appears to have been a strong place, where the kings of Persia had their summer residence. It was the capital of the province of Elam or the Elymais; which province was most probably added to the Chaldean territories by Nebuchadnezzar; see Jer 49:34, Jer 49:35. Here was Daniel's ordinary residence; and though here at this time, he, in vision, saw himself on the banks of the river Ulai. This is the same as the river Euleus, which divided Shushan or Susiana from Elymais.

DANIEL 8: 3 Then I lifted up my 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.

Verse 3

A ram which had two horns - In the former vision there were four beasts, pointing out four empires; in this we have but two, as only two empires are concerned here, viz., the Grecian and the Persian. The Babylonish empire is not mentioned; its fate was before decided, and it was now at its close.

By the ram, the empire of the Medes and Persians was pointed out, as explained by the angel Gabriel, Dan 8:20; and particularly Cyrus, who was the founder of that empire. Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, king of Persia; and grandson of Astyages, king of Media, by his daughter Mandane, who had been given in marriage to Cambyses. Cyrus marrying Roxana, the daughter and only child of his uncle Cyaxares, called in Scripture Ahasuerus, succeeded to both crowns, and thus united Media and Persia. A ram was the symbol of the Persians; and a ram's head with two horns, one higher than the other, appears as such in different parts of the ruins of Persepolis. See the plates of these ruins in the supplement to the seventh volume of the ancient part of the Universal History.

This ram had two horns; that is, two kingdoms, viz., Media and Persia; but one was higher than the other; and the higher came up last. Media, signified by the shorter horn, was the more ancient of the two kingdoms. Persia, the higher horn, had come up but lately, and was of little historic or political consequence till the time of Cyrus; but in the reigns of this prince and his immediate successors, Persia attained a political consequence greatly superior to that possessed at any time by the kingdom of Media; therefore, it is said to have been the higher, and to have come up last.

DANIEL 8: 4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; and no animals could stand before him, neither was there any who could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and magnified himself.

Verse 4

I saw the ram pushing westward - The Persians, who are signified by the ram, as well as their founder Cyrus, pushed their conquests west, north and south. The principal theater of their wars, says Calmet, was against the Scythians, northward; against the Greeks, westward; and against the Egyptians, southward.

He did according to his will - There was no other nation at that time that could stay the progress of the Persian arms.

DANIEL 8: 5 As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west over the surface of the whole earth, and didn't touch the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.

Verse 5

Behold, a he-goat - This was Alexander the Great; and a goat was a very proper symbol of the Grecian or Macedonian people. Bp. Newton very properly observes that, two hundred years before the time of Daniel, they were called Aegeadae, the goats' people; the origin of which name is said to be as follows: Caranus, their first king, going with a multitude of Greeks to seek a new habitation in Macedonia, was advised by an oracle to take the goats for his guides; and afterwards, seeing a herd of goats flying from a violent storm, he followed them to Edessa, and there fixed the seat of his empire, and made the goats his ensigns or standards; and called the place Aege or Aegea, the goats' town; and the people Aegeadae, the goats' people; names which are derived from αἴξ, αἴγος, a goat. The city Aege or Aegea, was the usual burying-place of the Macedonian kings; and, in reference to this origin, Alexander called his son by Roxana, Alexander Aegus, Alexander the goat. All this shows the very great propriety of the symbol here used.

Came from the west - Europe lies westward of Asia.

On the face of the whole earth - Carrying every thing before him.

Touched not the ground - Seemed to fly from conquest to conquest. By the time Alexander was thirty years of age he had conquered all Asia: and, because of the rapidity of his conquests, he is represented as a leopard with four wings, in the preceding vision.

A notable horn between his eyes - This, says the angel, is the first king, Dan 8:21, that is, the first kingdom of the Greeks in Asia, which was erected by Alexander; and continued some years in his brother Philip Aridaeus, and in his two young sons, Alexander Aegus and Hercules. See Newton.

DANIEL 8: 6 He came to the ram that had the two horns, which I saw standing before the river, and ran on him in the fury of his power.

Verse 6

And he came to the ram - This and the following verse give an account of the overthrow of the Persian empire by Alexander.

And ran unto him in the fury of his power - The conflicts between the Greeks and the Persians were excessively severe. Alexander first vanquished the generals of Darius, at the river Granicus, in Phrygia; he next attacked and totally routed Darius, at the straits of Issus, in Cilicia; and afterwards at the plains of Arbela, in Assyria. One can hardly read these words, says Bp. Newton, "the ram - which I had seen standing by the river, ran unto him in the fury of his power," without having the image of Darius' army standing and guarding the river Granicus and of Alexander on the other side, with his forces plunging in swimming across the stream, and rushing on the enemy, with all the fire and fury that can be conceived.

DANIEL 8: 7 I saw him come close to the ram, and he was moved with anger against him, and struck the ram, and broke his two horns; and there was no power in the ram to stand before him; but he cast him down to the ground, and trampled on him; and there was no one who could deliver the ram out of his hand.

Verse 7

And brake his two horns - Subdued Persia and Media; sacked and burnt the royal city of Persepolis, the capital of the Persian empire, and, even in its ruins, one of the wonders of the world to the present day. This he did because "he was moved with choler" against Darius, who had endeavored to draw off his captains with bribes, and had labored to induce some of his friends to assassinate him. Alexander, finding this, would listen to no proposals of peace; and was determined never to rest till he had destroyed Darius and his whole empire. In Media, Darius was seized and made prisoner by some of his own treacherous subjects, and afterwards basely murdered.

There was no power in the ram to stand before him - Alexander's victories over the Persians were as easy as they were rapid and decisive.

He cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him - Totally destroyed the family, and overturned the whole monarchy.

DANIEL 8: 8 The male goat magnified himself exceedingly: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and instead of it there came up four notable horns toward the four winds of the sky.

Verse 8

The he-goat waxed very strong - He had subdued nearly the whole of the then known world.

The great horn was broken - Alexander died in the height of his conquests, when he was but about thirty-three years of age. His natural brother, Philip Aridaeus, and his two sons, Alexander Aegus and Hercules, kept up the show and name of the Macedonian kingdom for a time; but they were all murdered within fifteen years; and thus the great horn, the Macedonian kingdom, was broken, Alexander's family being now cut off.

And for it came up four notable ones - The regal family being all dead, the governors of provinces usurped the title of kings; and Antigonus, one of them, being slain at the battle of Ipsus, they were reduced to four, as we have already seen.

1. Seleucus, who had Syria and Babylon, from whom came the Seleucidae, famous in history.
2. Lysimachus, who had Asia Minor.
3. Ptolemy, son of Lagus, who had Egypt, from whom sprang the Lagidae. And,
4. Cassander, who had Greece and the neighboring countries. These held dominion towards the four winds of heaven.

Cassander had the western parts, Lysimachus had the northern regions, Ptolemy possessed the southern countries, and Seleucus had the eastern provinces.

DANIEL 8: 9 Out of one of them came out a little horn, which grew exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land.

Verse 9

Out of one of them came forth a little horn - Some think that Antiochus Epiphanes is meant; but Bp. Newton contends that it is the Roman government that is intended; and although very great at its zenith, yet very little in its rising.

Waxed - great toward the south - The Romans made Egypt a province of their empire, and it continued such for some centuries.

Toward the east - They conquered Syria, and made it a province.

Toward the pleasant land - Judea, so called Psa 106:24; Jer 3:19; Dan 11:16, Dan 11:41. It is well known that they took Judea, and made it a province; and afterwards burnt the city and the temple, and scattered the Jews over the face of the earth.

DANIEL 8: 10 It grew great, even to the army of the sky; and some of the army and of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled on them.

Verse 10

The host of heaven - The Jewish hierarchy. The stars, the priests and Levites. The powers or host of heaven are probably intended by our Lord, Mat 24:29, to signify the whole Jewish hierarchy.

DANIEL 8: 11 Yes, it magnified itself, even to the prince of the army; and it took away from him the continual burnt offering, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.

Verse 11

Even to the prince of the host - They seemed, in this case, to fight against God himself.

The daily sacrifice was taken away - By the destruction of the city and temple; and has never been restored from that day until now.

DANIEL 8: 12 The army was given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through disobedience; and it cast down truth to the ground, and it did its pleasure and prospered.

Verse 12

And a host was given him - That is, power; or perhaps the host of heaven - the priesthood - the whole sacrificial system, by reason of transgression. They had filled up the measure of their iniquities, in rejecting the Lord that bought them; and the daily sacrifice, being no longer of use, was given up with the rest to destruction.

Cast down the truth - Probably the whole Jewish ritual and religion.

Practiced, and prospered - Prosperity or success followed all their acts.

DANIEL 8: 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who spoke, How long shall be the vision about the continual burnt offering, and the disobedience that makes desolate, to give both the sanctuary and the army to be trodden under foot?

Verse 13

One saint speaking, and another saint said - One angel asked another how long the sanctuary was to be trodden down?

DANIEL 8: 14 He said to me, To two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Verse 14

Unto two thousand and three hundred days - 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. This will bring it near to the time mentioned Dan 7:25 (note), where see the note.

DANIEL 8: 15 When I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.

Verse 15

As the appearance of a man - Supposed to be the Messiah.

DANIEL 8: 16 I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.

DANIEL 8: 17 So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened, and fell on my face: but he said to me, Understand, son of man; for the vision belongs to the time of the end.

Verse 17

At the time of the end shall be the vision - Or, as Houbigant, "The vision shall have an end at the proper time."

DANIEL 8: 18 Now as he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face toward the ground; but he touched me, and set me upright.

DANIEL 8: 19 He said, Behold, I will make you know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation; for it belongs to the appointed time of the end.

DANIEL 8: 20 The ram which you saw, that had the two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia.

Verse 20

The ram which thou saigest - See this explained under the vision itself, Dan 8:3 (note), etc.

DANIEL 8: 21 The rough male goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

DANIEL 8: 22 As for that which was broken, in the place where four stood up, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not with his power.

Verse 22

But not in his power - The four kingdoms which shall arise out of the Macedonian empire shall not be of Alexander's power or family, nor have his strength and dignity.

DANIEL 8: 23 In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have come to the full, a king of fierce face, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.

Verse 23

When the transgressors are come to the full - When the utmost degradation has taken place, by the buying and selling of the high priesthood; for Onias was ejected for a sum of money, to make room for wicked Jason; and Jason again was supplanted for a greater sum by a worse man, if possible, than himself, Menelaus; and the golden vessels of the temple were sold to pay for this sacrilegious purchase. Thus transgressions were come to the full, before the Romans had commission to destroy Jerusalem and its temple, etc.

A king of fierce countenance - The Roman government, as before; for king is often taken for kingdom or empire.

Understanding dark sentences - Very learned and skillful in all things relating to government and its intrigues. The learning of Rome is proverbial to the present time.

DANIEL 8: 24 His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper in what he does; and he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people.

Verse 24

But not by his own power - The strength of the other kingdoms consisted in themselves; but the Roman empire, as a horn or kingdom of the goat, was not mighty by its own power - was not strong by virtue of the goat, but drew its nourishment and strength from Rome and Italy. There grew the trunk and body of the tree; though the branches extended over Greece, Asia, Syria, and Egypt. - Bp. Newton.

Shall destroy wonderfully - In the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans ninety-seven thousand Jews were made captives, and eleven hundred thousand were slain. So they destroyed this once mighty and holy people!

DANIEL 8: 25 Through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and he shall destroy many in their security. He shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.

DANIEL 8: 26 The vision of the evenings and mornings which has been told is true: but seal up the vision; for it belongs to many days to come.

Verse 26

He shall cause craft to prosper - They subdued as many by their diplomatic skill and political intrigues as they did by the sword.

He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes - Against Christ, for it was by the Roman authority that he was condemned to death and crucified; and their persecutions had nearly destroyed the Christian religion; but the house was founded on a rock.

But he shall be broken without hand - The tide was turned by the invisible hand of God; and thus heathen Rome was overcome, and converted to Christianity.

The vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true - That mentioned in Dan 8:14.

For it shall be for many days - Not less than two thousand three hundred years!

DANIEL 8: 27 I, Daniel, fainted, and was sick certain days; then I rose up, and did the king's business: and I wondered at the vision, but no one understood it.

Verse 27

Daniel fainted - To foresee the desolations that were coming on the land, the city, the temple, and the people.

Did the king's business - Transacted the affairs of state that belonged to my department, after having been sick for certain days through the effects of this vision. He had a pious and feeling heart; and he was distressed for the desolations that were coming upon his people.

