

# Daniel's Vision Of Chapter Eight, Part I

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Last week we finished our study of chapter seven of Daniel, focusing on the judgment scene that is brought to view in that vision. The judgment in Daniel seven means everything! We saw that it represents the turning point, the “hinge” of the prophecy. While it looks like the horn power, the agent of the enemy is succeeding and having its way, “then the judgment.” Five times in chapter seven this transition occurs.

We saw that God’s gracious nature compels His openness, and openness begets confidence. That is why the “books are opened.” Our omniscient God wants His less than omniscient creatures to see what He sees regarding human hearts and minds, where decisions are made.

Jealousy and resentment were cherished in one of God’s most talented creatures, a “covering cherub” named Lucifer, a name which means, “the one who carries the light.” Through his rebellion, he became “the prince of darkness.” Lucifer had challenged God’s government and charged Him with being unfit to rule the universe and His law too restrictive and impossible to obey. Lucifer sneered at the loyal angels and called them slaves. His way would be better; complete freedom and the absence of law. Through this policy true happiness could be achieved, he argued.

These questions must be answered. Rather than eliminate Lucifer immediately, which would have raised the possibility of doubt, God allowed his policies to proceed so that their fruits might be manifest. This earth and the disobedience of our first parents became the centerpiece of this display. Although He intervenes when His wisdom sees fit, for the most part, though it would hurt Him deeply, God would allow the dominoes of sin to fall so that the universe could witness the effects of sin. The connection between cause and effect would be made unmistakably clear.

But this demonstration can not last forever. For the sake of the safety and serenity of His universe, God must deal decisively with sin. Because His love and system

were called into question, there must be a final reckoning, a judgment through which a final decision is rendered. Is God the rightful Ruler of the universe? Is His government which is founded on the principle of selfless love the path to happiness? Did Lucifer's plan have anything of merit to enhance the system God ordained? These are the questions advanced in the judgment.

You and I are also a part of that decision making process. We must choose whom we will serve. Though our first parents chose to disbelieve the word of God and they disobeyed Him, through the Gospel another opportunity to decide is graciously provided to us. One day soon every person will have made his decision, just as a day came when everyone back in Noah's day made his or her decision whether to believe the word of God or the word of man.

*Before Jesus comes back*, every decision will be finalized, just as in Noah's day those who believed went into the ark and the door was shut a short time before the Flood came. Because God is infinite and perfect in wisdom, knowing the end from the beginning, He has the ability to read the heart and know if a person has truly accepted the gift of salvation. It would not be safe to bring unconverted sinners into His kingdom, because that would only perpetuate the problem of sin. He is willing to save all, and the death of His dear Son Jesus covered the sins of the entire world, but only to those who accept the gift and allow Him to change their way of thinking and doing will He grant eternal life.

God knows the hearts of men and women already, but before He returns to the earth, because He is such a generous and gracious Being, He opens the books so that angels can see what He already knows. The angels in heaven are perfect, but they are not omniscient as God. They cannot read the hearts of men and women. So God lets them see what He sees, so that they can be assured that heaven will not be contaminated by unrepentant sinners.

This concept of the purpose and timing of this phase of the judgment is vital. The world needs to know why life as we know it, on this planet exists. The Scriptures reveal to our minds information which answers the questions of life. The Bible message of the goodness of God and His plan of restoration gives us hope for the future and courage for today.

Today we leave chapter seven, but we don't leave the wonderful teaching of the judgment it highlights. As we've mentioned, throughout the entire book of Daniel (whose name means "God is my Judge," or "My judgment is of God") is centered

on the theme of judgment, from the first chapter onward. We will find that the teaching of the judgment is highlighted in chapter eight as well.

The vision of chapter seven was given in what is described as Belshazzar's first year, while the vision of chapter eight came to Daniel in Belshazzar's third year. Although both visions contain animals used as symbols for kingdoms, there are some significant differences.

“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. 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 beast could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great. 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 8:2-8.

We're not left to guess as to the meaning of the symbols used. The angel told Daniel, “The ram which you saw, having the two horns--they are the kings of Media and Persia. The male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king.” Daniel 8:20, 21. But this brings up a question:

### Where's Babylon?

Usually we study and gain lessons from what is in the text. In this case, the lesson comes from what isn't there. When was this vision given? In the first verse, we're told that it was given in the third year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon. Historians tell us the date of his third year would be about 550 B. C. The first animal introduced in this vision is a ram, which according to the angel's explicit explanation, represented the kingdom of Medo-Persia. So, the first difference that we see in this vision of chapter eight, is that while Belshazzar king of Babylon is

still on the throne, and in fact will reign another 10 years or so, *Babylon is not in the picture*. In fact, Daniel in vision is not even in Babylon! He says, “I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam.” He was in Persia! Fascinating!

In chapter two, Babylon was the head of gold. In chapter seven she was the winged lion. In chapter eight, Babylon is absent. Gone. As noted, scholars have identified the third year of Belshazzar at 550/549 B.C. She would fall to the armies of Cyrus in the year 539 B.C. In other words, though she would be physically present for another 10 years or so, in God’s eyes she didn’t exist! That is so sad!

That Babylon had no representative among the visionary animals of chapter eight is a statement of judgment. It was a prophecy that would be later confirmed by a bloodless hand writing on a palace wall during a blasphemous party given by a defiant king. Oh, how solemn a testimony! A decade before that banquet, *Babylon’s absence from the vision of chapter eight was itself the “handwriting on the wall!”*

How vital it is to understand how God works! God graciously gives to individuals and kingdoms opportunities to respond to His wondrous offer of salvation. Though our parents rebelled, He provided another chance to choose. The facts are made available. The Spirit encourages. But in the end, we all must decide. Nebuchadnezzar the proud sinner became Nebuchadnezzar the submissive saint. His grandson Belshazzar, though he “knew all this,” chose differently.

In these two kings we see the grace of God and the story of mankind demonstrated. In each case, *there was careful scrutiny before the sentence was proclaimed*. There was investigation before action. Finally, Babylon and her king had crossed the invisible line of God’s tolerance and became hardened in self-will. Though it would “exist” another decade from the time this vision was pressed on the prophet’s mind, in God’s view she was no longer involved in the divine plan. How terribly, terribly sad!

Centuries later, Jesus would say of His beloved city, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate.” Matthew 23:37, 38. Just one day before that, Christ had referred to the temple as “My house,” as He cleansed the temple the second time, “My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.” Matthew 21:13. From

“My house” to “your house.” What a difference! And what is the distinctive characteristic of it becoming “your” house? Desolate; empty; devoid of God’s presence. No longer a part of the divine plan. Tragic!

Observing the steeled opposition to God’s providence, the Savior reluctantly recognized the decision cast by the Jewish nation. Jerusalem would “exist” another forty years or so before the crush of the Roman boot, but in God’s eyes the die was cast, the decision final. By putting the Messiah on a cross, by saying, “We have no king but Caesar,” she would forfeit her place of favor. Her “house” was desolate. Without the presence of God, the temple and city were a lifeless form, a mere shadow. What was already a reality in the spiritual sense when Jesus spoke those words of indictment would become real in the physical sense a little later.

This same principle applies to each one of us! Friends, let it not be that through continued rebellion, through continued obstinacy, we find ourselves beyond the reach of God’s call and written out of the divine plan! His plan will go forward to be successful, and He generously invites us to come on board and be a part of it. If we don’t, His plan will still succeed; we’ll just not be a part of it! May it not be that in the vision of God’s future there is no place found for us! The absent Babylon of chapter eight stands for all those who choose to rebel against the divine plan. As His creatures, it is our privilege to submit to His will, to inquire into His policy and cooperate with His endeavors. Babylon at last demonstrated that she emulated the character and destiny of her forefather Lucifer, of whom the word of prophecy has said, “You have become a horror, and shall *be no more* forever.” Ezekiel 28:19.

### The Centrality Of The Sanctuary

The second thing we notice about the vision of chapter eight is the difference between the class of animals that appear. In chapter seven we saw a lion, bear, leopard and a fourth one which defied description. What kind of animals are in chapter seven? Wild, untamed animals. In chapter eight, we see a ram and a goat. What is the outstanding difference between these sets of animals, from the point of view of Daniel the Jew? It is that the animals of chapter seven were “unclean” animals and were off-limits for eating and would never be seen within the temple, much less offered as sacrifice. The ram and the goat of chapter eight, on the other hand, were “clean” animals and suitable for being offered on the altar.

“What difference does that make?” you ask. We are going to see that the vision of chapter eight, and the explanation that follows in chapter nine are conspicuously

set in the context of the sanctuary. The vision breathes the temple atmosphere. This will come up often in the discussion of the activities of the participants. Keep in mind that for Daniel, the temple was foremost in his thinking. The temple was the center of religious life, and the visible token of the divine presence. For the devout believer, the temple was what life was about. It spoke of God and His plan of redemption. It foretold the culmination of His objective to restore. The temple and what it stood for was central to his existence; it was what life was about.

Daniel was a devout believer. He grieved at the destruction brought upon the temple through the disobedience of his nation. His heart was set on the temple. We saw that in chapter six when he prayed with his “window open toward Jerusalem.” We’ll see that also in his prayer of chapter nine as he addressed the ruined state of the temple. To understand the message of the vision of chapter eight, we must see that it is embedded in the symbols and representations of the sanctuary.

### Complementary and added Features

We find that many things in chapter eight are in parallel with previous prophecies. The ram, Medo-Persia, with its two horns is complementary to the bear of chapter seven which was raised up on one side. But, notice that an additional feature is added in chapter eight. We are now told that the “higher came up later.” History confirms that while the kingdom began as a coalition between the Medes and Persians, it would be the Persian faction which would eventually win out and predominate.

In chapter seven we saw Greece as a winged leopard with four heads. This is in keeping with the goat of chapter eight which traveled so fast it didn’t touch the ground. It was like it had wings. It is described as coming “suddenly.” But again, in chapter eight a little more detail is added. We see the “notable horn” which we are told is its first king. But then, when that horn is broken, four emerge in its place. We are told nothing in chapter seven about the first king and his dominance.

### The Feature of “Direction”

Another feature in this prophecy that is worthy of consideration is its *emphasis on geographical direction*. We see this in the second verse in the fact that Daniel is positioned in Persia to receive this vision. His being located in Persia and not in Babylon is significant.

We see it in the expressions of verse four, in that the ram, Persia, is pushing *westward, northward and southward*. Just for fun, I went on the internet putting in

the search engine the phrase, “Persia conquest map.” Up came a number of sites that featured maps showing the growth and influence of ancient Persia. To say that it stretched “west, north and south” can be demonstrated historically with accuracy. And, if you were to choose one of those three directions as being the predominate one according to the depictions on the maps I saw, it would be west, which is listed first in Daniel’s vision.

Concerning the goat, again the feature of direction comes into play. We are informed that the goat “came from the west,” certainly an accurate description of the nation of Greece in relation to Persia. When the “great horn,” representing the first king Alexander the Great was broken, we are told that the succeeding four horns “came up toward the four winds of heaven,” that is, toward the four directions of the compass.

This also can be shown by history. On his deathbed Alexander bequeathed to his four generals his vast empire. Ptolemy took the south, including Egypt. Seleucus took the east, including parts of what we would call Asia Minor, Syria, Babylon (Iraq) and Persia (Iran). Lysimachus received part of Asia Minor and west of the Black Sea. Cassander, the son of Antigonas, governed Greece.

Verse 9 has interesting components in it which again must be seen from the perspective of “directional emphasis.” The verse begins by saying, “And out of one of them came a little horn.” You wouldn’t think that such a phrase would generate so much discussion, but it has! The point of debate has to do with the word “them.” In grammar, “them” is a pronoun, which requires an “antecedent” to identify it. To what does the word “them” point? When it says “out of one of them” is it talking about “one of the four horns, that is a branch of the Greek Empire? Or, when it says “out of one of them” is it referring to the “four winds,” meaning “out of one of the directions of the compass,” and not tying it to something that grew out of the Greek Empire. Those are the two choices, but it does make a big difference in how the horn of chapter eight is viewed.

Without going into a great deal of the technical discussion, suffice it to say that the Hebrew is somewhat ambiguous, but all in all, “wind” makes a better antecedent than “horns.”

Having said that, some look to one of the four horns as being the source, and interpret the horn of chapter eight as being an entity, a person, who came from Grecian stock. Antiochus IV Epiphanies, a Greek ruler of the Seleucid empire who was born in 215 B.C. and died in 164 B.C., at the time of the Roman take-over is

heralded by some as being the horn of Daniel 8. His reign “grew out” of one of the Greek horns that replaced Alexander.

It is true that he gave the Jews a lot of trouble. He gave himself the name “Epiphanies,” which means “the manifestation of God.” He did all he could to exterminate the Jewish religion. He banned circumcision on pain of death, destroyed the Scriptures, sacrificed pigs on the altar of Jerusalem, defiled the temple and sold Jews into slavery. It was because of his practices that the victorious Maccabean revolt took place, the celebration of which is still observed by Jews today in Hanukkah.

When the Protestant Reformation came along and identified the horn power of Daniel and the other Scriptural pictures we’ve looked at as being the historical papacy, Jesuit theologians led by Alcazar, Ribera and Bellarmine sought an alternative interpretation. Ribera and Bellarmine looked for a future Antichrist. Alcazar planted the seeds of *preterism*, that is, looking to the past for those fulfillments. Later, this concept of preterism would focus on the role and activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanies as being the subject of the horn power of Daniel.

However, there are some problems with this view. And remember, the Hebrew is at the least optional if not favorable to the interpretation of “winds” being the antecedent of “them,” which means we’re not required to see the horn of chapter eight as being something that grew out of the Greek Empire. While we in no way discount the vile workings of Antiochus IV as being under the inspiration of Satan, and while he may have, in some limited way, produced a partial fulfillment of the visions of Daniel, he is not the main focus of Daniel eight’s horn power.

The reason is clear: the horn of Daniel eight, when comparing its activities and its placement in the timing of the vision, must be seen in parallel with the horn power of Daniel seven, which we’ve seen is Rome.

Next week we’ll explore further the message of chapter eight. One thing is certain; though given to Daniel 25 centuries ago, these prophecies speak to us today. They address our world conditions and identify them as being the very conditions Bible prophecy describes pertaining to the last days. You and I have the advantage of seeing history confirming the details of Bible prophecy. The real question is What effect will this information have on our daily living? Will it cause us to ask God’s Spirit to come into our lives and prepare us for His coming? Will it drive us to the Word to make sure we understand what He expects of us? Will it affect our choices so that we will have no regrets as to how we spent our time, energy and means

when that day comes? Will His great gift of salvation occupy our fondest thoughts?  
I pray so! “Even so, come Lord Jesus!”