

Daniel 8

February 9, 2025



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

In Daniel 8, Daniel gets a further look into the rising and falling of future kings, kingdoms, and entities through a prophetic vision.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What do you remember of Daniel's vision and its interpretation from Daniel 7?

Today, we will see more of these visions. What value do these types of visions from centuries ago have for our lives today?

In Daniel 7, Daniel saw the vision of the four beasts and learned that it foretold the rising and falling of human kingdoms, as well as the establishment of a heavenly and eternal one. This week, we will unpack another vision and interpretation that Daniel received during the exile.



UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 8:1-4.

The events in Daniel 8 take place in the third year of King Belshazzar's reign. Daniel saw the vision described in chapter 7 during the first year of King Belshazzar's reign, so this one came about two years later. Since Belshazzar was still reigning, and Daniel 5 records the end of his reign, these events took place between the events of Daniel 4–5. Daniel would have been around the age of seventy.

What figure did Daniel see and what did it do?

We also saw horns in Daniel 7. What insight might this give into the meaning of this symbol?

Daniel first saw a ram with two horns standing by the canal God had transported him to. The horns were long, with one being longer than the other. Daniel saw the ram charging to the west, north, and south. Daniel noted that the ram was running rampant. With no one able to stand against him, "He did whatever he wanted and became great" (v.4).

Scripture sometimes uses horns to symbolize rulers or royal authority, and the ten horns we read about in chapter 7 were interpreted to represent ten kings.

The ram represents the Medo-Persian Empire (v.20). Do you remember the lopsided bear from Daniel's vision in Daniel 7 (v.5)? The bear also represents the Medo-Persian Empire, and his lopsidedness represents the same thing as the different sized horns: the power differential between the Medes and the Persians, with the Persians being more powerful. The cardinal directions mentioned represent conquests Cyrus, King of Persia made in those directions.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 8:5-8.

What is similar in this vision to the vision from Daniel 7?

Who or what might the goat represent?

After the ram, Daniel saw a male goat, with a horn, come from the west running so fast his feet didn't touch the ground. The goat rushed and overtook the ram, defeating him. Daniel noted that no one could rescue the ram. Scripture says the goat was arrogant, but once he became powerful, his horn broke and was replaced by four other horns.



Like the leopard from the vision in Daniel 7, many believe the goat represented the Greek Empire. Alexander the Great's conquest of much of the civilized world was swift (taking only three years), like the goat moving so quickly that it didn't touch the ground.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 8:9-14.

Knowing what we do about Daniel's visions so far, what do you think is meant by, "The horn threw truth to the ground" (v.12)?

What might the "beautiful land" be (v.9)?

In the final part of Daniel's initial vision, he saw a little horn grow large and powerful enough that it trampled the stars, revoked sacrifices, and overthrew the sanctuary. Daniel noted that he "threw truth to the ground" (v.12). He then heard the prophetic timetable of this vision: "2,300 evenings and mornings" (v.14).

Antiochus was one of the worst tyrants in history. He produced coins printed with a god-like image of himself and assumed the name "Epiphanes" claiming to be an epiphany from the gods. In his reign of terror, he attacked Jerusalem, murdered scores of Jews, prohibited the Jews from practicing their faith, and desecrated the temple by using it to worship Zeus.

Antiochus was eventually overtaken, and the temple was restored, by Judas Maccabeu. The Jews now celebrate this victory with the Feast of Lights, or Hanukkah.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 8:15-22.

What happened in these verses?

Where else do you remember seeing Gabriel in Scripture?

What did Gabriel tell Daniel?

While Daniel was grappling with what this vision might mean, a voice (possibly the Lord's) commanded the angel Gabriel to explain the vision to Daniel. In response, Daniel was terrified and fell over.

The "son of man" (v. 17) address from Gabriel is a different than the Messianic title "Son of Man." Here Gabriel's address emphasizes Daniel's human weakness. Gabriel made clear what the animals represented. He also told Daniel that these visions pertained to the end times.

But if Antiochus died before Jesus was born, how could that be true? Antiochus typified the still-to-come antichrist. Many similarity exist between Antiochus and what Scripture records about the antichrist. Like many prophecies in Scripture, Daniel's vision would be



doubly fulfilled: It was fulfilled first by an earthly ruler and will again be fulfilled by the antichrist at the end times.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 8:23-27.

What did Gabriel explain here?

How would Gabriel's explanation give God's people confidence, even when tough times came?

What was Daniel's reaction? Why might this have been the case?

Again, this passage describes a short-term fulfillment and an ultimate fulfillment. Both instances would seem to succeed at first but not forever, terrorize God's people, cause deceit, and exalt themselves with figures that are cunning, influential, and destructive.

Gabriel confirmed the timeline Daniel overheard was true and told Daniel to seal up this vision for safekeeping. In the last verse of chapter 8, we get Daniel's reaction: His concern for the Hebrew people was so great that he lay in bed ill for days. Receiving this vision was not easy, but God could be trusted.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What can we learn about God and His people from this chapter?

How can we be more aware and watchful for deceivers who seek to distract from Christ?

What can we learn from Daniel's response to this vision? What does this tell us about the sober-mindedness we should have in seeking to share the gospel with others?

PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Praise God for being all-knowing and sovereign over all events, even scary ones. Thank God for your time together and ask Him for continued guidance as you continue your study of the prophecy recorded in Daniel.



LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we continue our study of Daniel.

February 16, 2025 --- Daniel 9:1-19

COMMENTARY

Daniel 8

A Ram and Goat (8:1–27). This vision, like that of chapter 7, came during the reign of Belshazzar.

Daniel Reports the Vision (8:1–14). Daniel saw a vision of a ram with two horns of unequal length, the longer of which grew up after the other. The ram charged westward, northward, and southward, conquering all who opposed it. However, a goat with a long horn then came from the west, shattered the ram's two horns, and trampled the ram into the ground. None could stand before the goat, but at the height of his power his horn was broken and replaced by four small horns. From one of these horns grew another horn that became increasingly strong and extended its power southward and eastward. It challenged the hosts of heaven, oppressed God's people, and disrupted the sacrifices in the Lord's temple.

The Interpretation of the Vision (8:15–27). The angel Gabriel revealed the interpretation of the vision to Daniel. The two-horned ram represented the Medo-Persian empire, and the goat, the Greek empire (of Alexander). The four horns reflected the fourfold division of Alexander's empire following his untimely death. The little horn represented Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian ruler (about 175–164 B.C.) who opposed God's people and desecrated the temple.

