

Daniel 8



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 8.*

Memory Text: “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (*Daniel 8:14*).

Daniel 8, as we'll soon see, covers much of the same ground as Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. It shows a flow of history, beginning in antiquity and going up through the “time of the end” (*Dan. 8:17*), the first time the phrase appears in the book of Daniel (but not the last). Along with the overwhelming evidence from previous chapters that Daniel deals with end-time events, Daniel 8 comes right out and says it, a problem for those who want to limit the events of Daniel 8 to a historical period in Israelite history that ended in the second century *before* Christ—a view that for this reason (and others) is untenable.

Also, like Daniel 2 and 7, Daniel 8 is divided into two sections: a dream/vision and then an explanation of that dream/vision. In Daniel 8, the first 14 verses deal with his vision, in which Daniel sees a ram, a goat, and a little horn, followed by the cleansing of the sanctuary. The rest of the chapter is the explanation given him regarding the ram, the goat, and the little horn. Interestingly enough, the part about the sanctuary being cleansed is not explained here. And, as we'll see—though specifically told that the vision of the sanctuary being cleansed “is true” (*vs. 26*)—Daniel says that he doesn't understand it (*vs. 27*). That's because it wasn't explained, as were the other elements in the vision. This point becomes important later, when we study the next chapter, in which an explanation is finally given.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 29.*

Animals, Again

Read Daniel 8:1-14. On the lines below, give a summary of the vision. Concentrate especially on the sequence of events as presented to Daniel.

After Daniel is given this vision of the ram, the goat, the little horn, and the sanctuary being cleansed, notice what happens in verses 15 through 18. Daniel says that he sought for the meaning of what passed before him in vision. A “man’s voice” then calls out and tells the angel Gabriel to “make this man understand the vision.” Gabriel then approaches Daniel. Notice, too, how the angel prefaces his words. Twice (*vss. 17, 19*) he tells Daniel that the vision deals with “the end.”

Read the rest of the chapter. What interpretation does Gabriel give Daniel?

In reference to both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, we said that Media-Persia and Greece were depicted as some of the great powers that would arise in world history. Here, now, there’s no guess: Gabriel comes right out and names them. (Unlike the other two visions, Babylon is not depicted here in Daniel 8; in a later week we will look at one reason why.)

After naming Media-Persia and Greece (*vss. 20, 21*), he gives an explanation of the little-horn power that arises next. Though we will look at it in more detail tomorrow, notice how this little-horn power is destroyed (*vs. 25*)—language very similar to how Daniel 2 described God’s supernatural intervention that brings the end of the world (*vs. 34*).

Thus, the events of Daniel 8 could be summarized like this:

Media-Persia
Greece
Little horn
Sanctuary cleansed

Daniel 8 is another place in the Bible that shows us that God ultimately is in control. How does this reality give you some hope amid whatever trials you are now facing?

Key Text: *Daniel 8:14*

Teachers Aims:

1. To verify the link between the chapters of Daniel 2, 7, and 8.
2. To help class participants understand the tie between the pre-Advent judgment and the cleansing of the sanctuary.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Vision as Daniel Saw It (*Dan. 8:1-14*)

- A. Daniel 8 presents the vision of the ram, the goat, the little horn, and the cleansing of the sanctuary.
- B. The little horn represents the Roman Empire, as seen in Daniel 2 and 7.
- C. Daniel 8 affirms that God is in ultimate control of the entire cosmos.

II. “Help This Man Understand the Vision” (*Dan. 8:15-19*)

- A. The little horn is both religious and political in nature.
- B. The pre-Advent judgment in Daniel 2 and 7 is the same as the cleansing of the sanctuary in chapter 8.
- C. The cleansing of the sanctuary precedes the supernatural destruction of the little-horn power.
- D. The pre-Advent judgment heralds Christ’s second coming.

Summary: Daniel 8 must be interpreted in light of the previous chapters in the book of Daniel and their interpretations. As in chapters 2 and 7, the worldly kingdoms are followed by the establishment of God’s judgment upon the world.

COMMENTARY

Daniel 8 parallels Daniel 2 and 7, except that Daniel 8 skips Babylon. Another difference is that Daniel 7 speaks of a heavenly judgment while Daniel 8 speaks of the cleansing of a sanctuary. These three chapters employ different imagery, but all point to the triumph of God’s purposes. This week’s lesson deals with Daniel 8: the vision of the ram and goat, the little horn, and its central message.

I. Daniel 8: The Ram and the Goat

Once again, God shows what He revealed in Daniel 2 and 7 from a different perspective. Now there are only two beasts: a ram and a goat. The ram is described as “great” (*Dan. 8:4*). Gabriel tells Daniel that the ram is the kingdom of Media-Persia, which would soon crush Babylon. Victory after victory in Syria; Asia Minor; and parts of Egypt, Armenia, and Ethiopia highlighted this kingdom’s great power. But the “great” ram met its end by the “very great”

The Little Horn

In our survey of Daniel, we've seen that it has dealt with five kingdoms, four of which have been named for us: Babylon (*Dan. 2:38*), Media-Persia (*Dan. 8:20*), Greece (*Dan. 8:21*), God's eternal kingdom (*Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 18, 22, 27*). The only one not specifically named is the one that, in all three visions, arises after Greece and exists until the time of the end. Below is a chart with all the earthly kingdoms depicted, those named and the one not named:

Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Babylon	Babylon	—
Media-Persia	Media-Persia	Media-Persia
Greece	Greece	Greece
Next kingdom	Next kingdom	Next kingdom
Supernatural destruction at end	Supernatural destruction at end	Supernatural destruction at end

From what you have studied so far, what is the identity of that little-horn power in Daniel 8? What reasons can you give for your conclusion?

The obvious answer, of course, is Rome (both pagan and papal). Here are just a few of many reasons why:

Looking at the parallels between the visions, one can see it was Rome in Daniel 2, Rome in Daniel 7; thus, obviously, it's Rome in Daniel 8.

The little-horn power comes up after Greece and extends to the time of the end, when it is supernaturally destroyed. What power, rising after Greece, still exists today?

Notice, too, that Media-Persia is depicted as "great" (*vs. 4*) and that Greece is depicted as "very great" (*vs. 8*). In contrast, the little-horn power is depicted as "exceeding great" (*vs. 9*). Though people can argue over whether "exceeding" great is more than "very" great, "exceeding great" is certainly more than just "great." Thus, this little-horn power is, at least, greater than the Medo-Persian Empire. Again, what power, coming up after Greece, existing until the end, could be depicted as greater than Media-Persia other than Rome?

We saw last week how that little-horn power in Daniel 7 was, clearly, papal Rome. We have here the same symbol in Daniel 8. Both, too, are described as persecuting powers, as well.

Study some of the attributes of the little horn. In what ways can we, as individuals, manifest the same spirit as the little horn?

goat (*vs. 8, NIV*). The angel identifies this goat as Greece, and the large horn that grew in the midst of its head was its first king, Alexander the Great, whose empire stretched all the way to the Indus River in India. After his death, Alexander's kingdom was split among four generals (*vs. 22; compare Dan. 7:6—“four wings”*). From one of these smaller kingdoms rose “a little horn” (*KJV*)—small at first, but it grew in power (*Dan. 8:9*). The angel does not identify this “little horn” but provides a description of its work (*vss. 9-12, 23-25*). Based on the succession of world powers in Daniel 2 and 7, this little-horn power that follows Greece must represent the empire that followed Greece. This would be Rome, both in its pagan and papal spheres, including that of the little horn of Daniel 7:8.

II. Daniel 8: The Work of the Little Horn

Daniel 8:9-12 says that the little horn trampled the starry hosts of heaven, meaning the persecution that destroyed the hosts of God's saints (*see also vs. 24*). It also “set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host” (*vs. 11, NIV*), and it will “take his stand against the Prince of princes” (*vs. 25, NIV*).

The power of the little horn is manifested in a more serious way: “It took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low” (*vs. 11, NIV*).

Who is represented by this power? Some commentators suggest Antiochus Epiphanes, who invaded Jerusalem and stopped the temple services for about three years around 168 B.C. Others argue for the Roman destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. But the angel already has pronounced that this prophecy is for the end-time; and in Daniel 8:14 he says that this desolation of the sacrifice will last for 2,300 prophetic years. Hence, this power cannot be Antiochus Epiphanes or the Roman armies. Rather, we must look to the context of the end-time with which Daniel 8 is concerned. With the coming of Jesus also came the proclamation that the “kingdom of God is at hand” (*Mark 1:15*). A new era of hope in the Second Coming marked the life of the church (*Matt. 24:10-14, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Thess. 4:15-18*). Between the time of Christ's ascension and the scattering of the Jews to many other lands, what is Jesus doing? The book of Hebrews tells us that upon His ascension, Jesus has assumed the work of the heavenly priesthood, thus fulfilling what was symbolized by the earthly sanctuary system (*Hebrews 7-9*). Thus, the taking away of the “daily” must mean a human usurpation of the ministry of Christ in heaven. This would be the papal assumption of the functions of the priesthood.

How has the papacy taken away the “daily” and cast down the sanctuary? By introducing various false doctrines that thwarted God's sovereign role in salvation. By displacing Christ's role as our High Priest and Mediator with the confessional and the intercession

The Little Horn (Cont.)

The evidence we've seen so far is overwhelming that the little-horn power arising after Greece in Daniel 8 is the same power that arises after Greece in both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, and that's Rome, beginning as pagan Rome and then changing into papal Rome.

The two phases are seen in the imagery of all three chapters. In Daniel 2, as we saw, the iron that arises after Greece (the brass) extends to the end, though the form changes in the feet, when it becomes mixed with clay. While the emphasis here is political more than religious and the focus is on the various nations themselves, this change in Rome coincided with the rise of the papacy, both in time and location. If nothing else, in Daniel 2 we see the idea of Rome changing form at some point in history.

In Daniel 7, as we saw, the fourth beast came first, followed by the little horn, another phase of the same power.

Review the details of the little horn in Daniel 7. What are the religious elements that are revealed there in this phase of Rome?

In verse 8, after describing the breakup of Greece into various kingdoms, the little horn is depicted as coming from “‘up among them’”; that is, one of “‘the four winds of heaven’” (*vs. 2, NIV*), its immediate antecedent. Right after this, the two phases of the little-horn's activity are revealed, as well.

What is the directional activity of the little horn as depicted in Daniel 8:9? Contrast that directional activity with what the little horn does in verses 10-12. What difference do you see?

In verse 9, the little horn moves horizontally across the face of the earth, depicting military or political expansion (*compare with Dan. 8:4*). In the next few verses, the activity is depicted as vertical, heavenward, in an attack on the “host of heaven,” on the “Prince of the host,” even against the sanctuary itself. Though, obviously, the little horn does not reach literally into heaven itself, what this does depict is the religious nature of its attack. Thus, here in Daniel 8, as well, we are given two phases of the same power: first the pagan phase then the distinctly religious activity of the papal phase.

of human priests. By introducing the Mass, thereby crucifying Christ afresh and setting aside His ministry in heaven. By making forgiveness of sin effectual through confession to a human priest and penance. By these ways, the gospel provision of salvation

Inductive Bible Study

Text for Discovery: *Daniel 8*

- 1 Using symbolic images, the vision of Daniel 8 presents another overview of the rise and fall of nations and the interplay between secular and religious institutions. One of the fundamental themes of these visions in Daniel is, “ [God] changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them’ ” (*Dan. 2:21, NIV*). We must remember, however, that what was foretold in a verse or two took centuries to come to fulfillment. What gives you staying power as you wait for God’s ultimate will to be fulfilled?
- 2 Another theme revealed in the visions of Daniel 7 and 8 is the role of force, violence, and coercion in the struggle between good and evil. What broad categories would you use to describe the principles on which God’s government is founded? What broad categories describe the adversary’s aims? One more question: When have people who claim to represent God used methods that are entirely ungodly? Be specific.
- 3 The little horn of Daniel 8 directs its actions both against God and against His saints. What form does the former take? What form the latter? In what ways might we, if not careful, reflect the actions of the little horn?
- 4 The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary (*Dan. 8:14*) takes place beyond the notice of earth’s inhabitants. But that does not make it any less significant. The cleansing of the sanctuary leads to the ultimate destruction of the little-horn power. What does this say about the influence of heaven on earthly things? How could you better cooperate with heavenly forces?
- 5 Daniel confessed, “I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding” (*Dan. 8:27*). What things about God, His prophecies, or His character leave you baffled? How did Daniel remain faithful? How do you?

Sanctuary Cleansed

In review, what we have studied in Daniel 8, so far, could be summarized like this:

Media-Persia
Greece
Rome
Sanctuary cleansed

As shown earlier, everything in Daniel 8 had been interpreted by Gabriel except for the cleansing of the sanctuary. Though no specific explanation was given, a powerful hint is found in the chapter.

The vision of Daniel 8:14 ends with the sanctuary being cleansed after a depiction of the little-horn's activity in a certain historical period; after the depiction of the little horn (vs. 22-25), the explanation ends with a specific event (vs. 25, final clause). What is that event, and how does it help us come to some understanding about what the cleansing of the sanctuary involves?

If we were to parallel the vision of Daniel 8 with its explanation, it would look like this:

Vision	Explanation
Ram	Media-Persia
Goat	Greece
Little horn	Rome
Sanctuary cleansed	Supernatural demise of little horn

Whatever else the cleansing of the sanctuary involves, it results in the supernatural destruction of this last earthly empire, which is what happened in both Daniel 2 and 7, when God sets up His eternal kingdom. Thus, the idea that limits the cleansing of the sanctuary to some mere human event, such as the removing of enemies from the temple precincts in the second century B.C., falls apart. It's obvious from the context, especially when viewed in parallel to Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, that this cleansing of the sanctuary is an event of major importance. Indeed, the mere fact that it's linked with the rise and fall of three of what the Bible depicts as major world powers in and of itself testifies to the importance of the cleansing of the sanctuary.

What things in your own life need to be cleansed? What's the only way that can happen?

through free grace and direct access to God through Jesus (*Eph. 2:18, Heb. 4:16*) were denied.

How long will this desecration of the heavenly sanctuary system last?

III. Daniel 8: Its Central Message

Such was the question in Daniel's mind. The answer? " 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed' " (*Daniel 8:14, NKJV*). The angel concludes his interpretation with words that brought little comfort to Daniel: " 'The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future' " (vs. 26, *NIV*).

How far in the future? Twenty-three hundred years? As a nationalist, Daniel equated the removal of the "daily" with the desolate condition of the Jerusalem temple. Should God's people wait for the

Witnessing

In the middle of a field in the Lithuanian countryside is the Hill of Crosses, where hundreds of thousands of Christian crosses have been placed by devout pilgrims from all over the world. It's an incredible sight, as I discovered when a friend took me there. While it might not be the way you or I would choose to express our faith, the story of this hill is inspiring on its own.

After a peasant uprising during the mid-nineteenth century, the site first attracted the forest of crosses that would rise there again and again. Following Lithuania's incorporation into the former Soviet Union, the atheistic authorities bulldozed the Hill of Crosses on three separate occasions. Each time, local and foreign pilgrims replaced the crosses. Finally, in 1985, the Communists relented and let the symbols stand.

Those atheists remind me, actually, of some Christians! Daniel 8 is abundantly clear: The heavenly sanctuary must be cleansed and shall be cleansed. There's no option, no compromise, no "menu selection." It's going to happen, and it's a part of God's plan.

And just as the Soviet rulers didn't fully grasp the significance of that Hill of Crosses for the people of Lithuania, some Christians don't understand that this cleansing of the sanctuary is for the good. It's work that has to be done, and in being done illustrates another aspect of God's plan and care for each of us.

If you know Christian friends or neighbors who are in a time of spiritual crisis, let them know the good news that God has a plan and that He is sticking to it. You can point that person to a hopeful outcome.

Judgment in Heaven

Below is a chart summarizing what we have looked at so far in the past few weeks. What does this tell us that the cleansing of the sanctuary is?

Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Babylon	Babylon	_____
Media-Persia	Media-Persia	Media-Persia
Greece	Greece	Greece
Pagan Rome	Pagan Rome	Pagan Rome
Papal Rome	Papal Rome	Papal Rome
_____	Judgment in heaven	Cleansing of sanctuary
Second Coming	Second Coming	_____

As we see all the way through here, there are parallels between the chapters. And not only are the nations depicted in parallel to one another, the judgment scene in Daniel 7—which transpires after a distinct time period regarding Rome (the 1,260 years)—directly parallels the cleansing of the sanctuary, which in Daniel 8 occurs after Rome, as well. In short, this heavenly judgment in Daniel 7—the judgment that leads to the end of the world—is the same thing as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. We are given here two different depictions of the same thing: the judgment, also known as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8.

According to this chart, where is this judgment, time wise, in relationship to the Second Coming?

The crucial point is the parallel between this massive judgment scene in Daniel 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. The judgment scene in Daniel 7 is simply another way of expressing the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8, just as the depiction of the bear in Daniel 7 is another way of expressing the ram in Daniel 8. Each depiction adds to the other, elaborating on each other, together giving us a lot of information about the specific event. What’s undeniably clear is that it is a pre-Advent event; that is, this is a judgment that occurs before the Second Coming. Indeed, it’s this judgment itself that leads directly to the Second Coming.

What things in your life can be solved only by the second coming of Jesus; what things can be solved here and now? Why is it so important to know the difference between the two?

restoration of their captivity for so long? Did not Jeremiah prophesy that the captivity would be for only 70 years (*2 Chron. 36:21*)? The questions troubled and exhausted Daniel (*Dan. 8:27*). But God would not leave the prophet without understanding.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Movie director Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980) told a parable in *Guideposts* (1959) about the unknown. “There once was a king who was granted two wishes. His first was to see the future. But when he saw all that lay ahead—the beauty and the pain—he immediately asked for his second wish; that the future be hidden. ‘I thank Heaven,’ the master of suspense proclaimed, ‘that tomorrow does not belong to any man. It belongs to God.’ ”—“The King and His Wish,” Sermons.org (Illustrations), <http://www.sermons.org/sovereighty.html> (accessed February 22, 2005).

Thought Questions:

❶ Imagine playing a game that you know you will win. In a sense, that’s how it is with us and the plan of salvation. Through the book of Daniel, we know the end—we know that God’s kingdom and His people are victorious. Why should this knowledge help give you courage through your daily struggles in life?

❷ Media capitalizes on our curiosity of the future. Movies and books on the subject of traveling into the future and back have been constant bestsellers. What are the natural needs of humanity that create this curiosity? Does this in some way reflect an immature spirituality? Explain.

Application Question:

Take a look at a day in your life. From the time you brush your teeth in the morning to when you put on your pajamas at night, you are directly involved in every decision you make. You have control. Or do you? Do you not encounter strange happenings, unexplainable coincidences, things that you have no control over? What are the things in your daily life that you can control? What are the things that you can’t control? Why is it important to know the difference between them? Study the lives of Daniel, Joseph, Esther, Ruth, and Paul. In what ways did they also face things that they could and could not control? What lessons can you learn from them?

Further Study: Look at the parallels here between Daniel 7 and 8, this time with the approximate dates for the events depicted in the two chapters:

<u>Daniel 7</u>	<u>Daniel 8</u>
Babylon (Ends early mid-sixth century B.C.)	_____
Media-Persia (From early mid-sixth century to early mid-fourth century B.C.)	Media-Persia (From early mid-sixth century to early mid-fourth century B.C.)
Greece (From early mid-fourth century to mid-second century B.C.)	Greece (From early mid-fourth century to mid-second century B.C.)
Pagan Rome (From mid-second century B.C. to fifth–sixth century A.D.)	Pagan Rome (From mid-second century B.C. to fifth–sixth century A.D.)
Papal Rome (Phase of depicted persecution: From sixth century A.D. to eighteenth–nineteenth century A.D.)	Papal Rome (Phase of depicted persecution: From sixth century A.D. to eighteenth–nineteenth century A.D.)
Judgment in heaven	Cleansing of sanctuary
Second Coming	Destroyed without hands

What’s clear from the chart is that because the judgment in Daniel 7, which occurred after the 1,260 years, is the same as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8, then the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 occurred after the 1,260 years, as well. This fact, then, puts the cleansing of the sanctuary sometime *after* the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, yet *before* the second coming of Christ. Though these points help narrow down the time of the pre-Advent judgment, they still don’t give us an exact date. More information is needed; that’s why, as we’ll see, more information is given.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** As a class, go over the main points of this week’s lesson. Be sure everyone understands the parallels between the chapters. Try to answer whatever questions that arise as best as you are able.
- 2** The last verse of Daniel 8 teaches that certain aspects of the vision were unknown to Daniel. What lesson is there for us regarding the need to press on ahead in faith despite there being things we don’t yet understand?