

Survey of the Bible Daniel 8:1-27

As we come to chapter 8 Daniel again revisits King Belshazzar, the King who mocked the Lord by drinking wine from golden cups that were taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and whom God judged.

Daniel 5:4-6 ⁴ They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone. ⁵ Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. ⁶ Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.

Daniel 5:25-26 ²⁵ "Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.' ²⁶ "This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE' -- God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.

In chapter 7 Daniel introduces us to his vision that came in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar, but in chapter 8 this vision from God comes in the third year of Belshazzar's reign.

Why do you suppose God waited 2 years to reveal this next vision to Daniel and what does this tell us about God's timing as opposed to ours?

In Daniel's first vision during Belshazzar's reign Daniel lay on his bed as he received this vision from the Lord. In this second vision Daniel actually tells us that he sees this vision from a particular place.

Daniel 8:2 ² I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal.

It appears that Daniel is in two places at once: the citadel of Susa and beside the Ulai Canal. But remember, this is a vision that Daniel sees and so God reveals the place at which Daniel will see things and like dreams we may have the scene can change quickly and dramatically without losing the sense of the main points of this vision.

Susa is the capital city of the Babylonian empire and it may very well be that Daniel was residing in this city at the time of this vision. But the point is not his physical location as much as it is

that God was showing him this vision where he sees Susa and then specifically the Ulai Canal which was located near that city. In other words, he may or may not have been in Susa at the time of the vision.

This particular vision seems a bit bizarre when we look at it and in fact it was bizarre to Daniel as well.

It involves rams and goats and horns of different sizes, each with a specific meaning according to the one showing Daniel this vision.

Daniel 8:3-4 ³ Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns *were* long, but one *was* longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last. ⁴ I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no *other* beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified *himself*.

In this part of the vision Daniel is being shown kingdoms that presently exist being depicted as a ram with two horns which designates a particular part of the world that is divided into two powers and later in this vision the angel makes it clear what powers he is addressing.

Daniel 8:20 ²⁰ "The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia.

Both Media and Persia were powers that ruled the known world and stood firm throughout most of that world where no other beasts could stand before this ram, that is to say, no other countries had the power of the kingdom of Media-Persia, therefore this ram did as he pleased and magnified himself.

But, according to the vision given to Daniel, that was going to change and there would be a power that would come into being that would destroy the Ram, and this would be the goat.

Daniel 8:5-7 ⁵ While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat *had* a conspicuous horn between his eyes. ⁶ He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. ⁷ I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to

the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.

Again, we don't have to guess as to what this goat represents as the angel makes this clear to Daniel later in this vision.

Daniel 8:21 ²¹ "The shaggy goat *represents* the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

We happen to know who this Greek king in history was. It was Alexander the Great who defeated the Medo-Persian Empire in a series of battles in 332 BC, and whose empire lasted from 331 to 146 BC, only to later be defeated by the Romans.

Essentially what Daniel is being shown in this vision is that the God of history is demonstrating how He controls and therefore can reveal the future of history. But the Lord does this not to simply scare Daniel, which it does, but to encourage Daniel that all of history is moving toward that last empire that conspires to come against the elect of God.

It is this empire, the fourth empire that is shown to be Rome, which is depicted as the last part of the great statue in Daniel 2, with legs of iron and feet mixed with iron and clay.

This great statue represents four kingdoms that literally existed in history: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

But keep in mind that Daniel is not being shown this vision with the purpose of being confined to only four kingdoms, the fourth of which, Rome, was defeated toward the end of the 5th Century as Romulus Augustus, the last Roman Emperor, succumbed to Odoacer, the Germanic chieftain, in 476 AD.

If this is the extent of the four kingdoms that Daniel speaks of this leaves us with little more than confusion because this would be the end of the vision at 476 AD. And yet we know that much more history has transpired and much more will transpire.

So, what is the point of the four kingdoms to Daniel and to us?

We know that for Daniel there was a realization that the evil empires of the world would continue to fight against the people of God. But again, this is no surprise.

Genesis 3:15 ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have been at war with each other from the time of the fall according to the curse that God has placed on both Satan and man.

Though the seed of the serpent will fight with the seed of the woman, (that is the people of God through faith in their Messiah), until the very end, what Daniel is being shown in this vision is that this fight will continue to be demonstrated in every worldly empire that manifests itself in the earth, whether it looks like a Babylon, a Medo-Persia, a Greece or a Rome. All of these past empires and all present and future empires can be seen in these four.

The number four here represents many parts of the whole as we see many parts of the earth being described as four corners.

We see this language describing God's people as being gathered from all over the world.

Isaiah 11:12 ¹² And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the *four corners of the earth*.

The number four can also describe a part of the world in its entirety as for example the entire land of Israel, which is a small portion of the world.

Ezekiel 7:2 ² "And you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel, 'An end! The end is coming on *the four corners of the land*.

And so, when Daniel is shown the four kingdoms they represent all kingdoms in all times as those kingdoms come against the kingdom of God. And this too is shown to Daniel in his vision in chapter 2.

Daniel 2:32-35 ³² "The head of that statue *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. ³⁵ "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The stone cut out without hands that crushes the statue, (the world system and its kingdoms), is the stone the builders rejected.

Luke 20:17-19 ¹⁷ But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*'? ¹⁸ "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." ¹⁹ The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

Acts 4:10-12 ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of *Jesus Christ* the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. ¹¹ "***He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone.*** ¹² "And there is salvation in no one else; for ***there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.***"

This is the stone depicted in the vision given to Daniel and therefore it must be a stone that points much further down the road than only four historical kingdoms as this Stone ultimately destroys all kingdoms as this Stone establishes an everlasting kingdom.

Daniel 2:35 But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled ***the whole earth.***

In other words, in the four corners of the earth, (***the whole earth***), this kingdom will be made manifest as it destroys the four kingdoms, (all kingdoms in the four corners in every age) as it fills the whole earth.

This kingdom of God that fills the whole earth was officially established at the first coming of Christ.

Matthew 12:28 ²⁸ "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

It is this kingdom that is both now and future. We who are in Christ are citizens of this kingdom presently, but we look forward to the final manifestation of this kingdom at the very end when all kingdoms will be destroyed as they bow the knee to Christ on that final day.

2 Peter 3:13 ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

In the last part of this vision Daniel is told this about Greece and its subsequent rulers.

Daniel 8:23-25 ²³ "In the latter period of their rule, When the transgressors have run *their course*, A king will arise, Insolent and skilled in intrigue. ²⁴ "His power will be mighty, but not by his *own* power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform *his will*; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people. ²⁵ "And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify *himself* in his heart, And he will destroy many while *they are* at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency.

Daniel is given no details as to what king is being described here. And though it may be a real king in history past it is really a picture of the last king or kingdom that will come against the Prince of princes. It is this king that will be broken without human agency, which is really another picture of that previous vision of Daniel.

Daniel 2:32-35 ³² "The head of that statue *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ "You continued looking until ***a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.***

The stone cut out without hands is the same stone that breaks the king who opposes the Prince of princes who is broken without human agency.

This is the story of Jesus Christ and His kingdom who came to destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:8 The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

^{NAU} **John 12:31** "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

This is where history is going as God has determined it and He is revealing this to Daniel. Whatever else Daniel is being shown about the redemptive history of God's people as they live in a world that is dominated by evil empires, there is only one empire

that will last forever as the Prince of princes who is the King of kings and Lord of lords leads us home.

Every king in this world magnifies himself in his heart and they will destroy many while they are at ease, but make no mistake about it no mere human being can overcome the seed of the serpent who manifests himself in the kings of this world.

There is only one who can break the kings and their kingdoms and he does it without human agency because He is God.

Daniel 8:26-27 ²⁶ "The vision of the evenings and mornings Which has been told is true; But keep the vision secret, For *it* pertains to many days *in the future*." ²⁷ Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up *again* and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain *it*.

Daniel is told to keep the vision secret, for it pertains to many days in the future.

Why do you suppose Daniel is told to keep the vision secret when John was told to declare his vision?

Revelation 1:1-3 ^{NAU} The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated *it* by His angel to His bond-servant John, ² who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, *even* to all that he saw. ³ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; *for the time is near*.

Revelation 22:10 ¹⁰ And he said to me, "*Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near*."

Daniel's vision was for a time that pertains to many days in the future. It was meant to be clouded in mystery and with symbolism that was a shadow of what was to come.

Romans 16:25-27 ²⁵ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of *the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past*, ²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, *leading to*

obedience of faith; ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

John's vision was a revelation that revealed the mystery whose time was near and at hand.

Jesus Christ is the answer to the mystery and until He came the vision of Daniel was to be kept secret until which time Christ would shine light on that mystery because He is the light of the world.

John 8:12 ¹² Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

The mystery sickened Daniel in a most literal way as the future of the kings of evil seemed to prevail in much of what was shown to Daniel. It is not unlike what we see today as evil as seen as good and good is seen as evil.

Who can deliver us from this evil and the sin that so easily entangles us?

2 Corinthians 1:9-10 ⁹ indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; ¹⁰ who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,

I think part of what sickened Daniel was not just the prospect of evil kingdoms seeming to prevail all throughout history but his desire to know more of the details of this vision.

Daniel 8:27 but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain *it*.

Daniel's head was full of visions of goats and rams and horns and powerful kingdoms that look like great statues. And though the angel gave him much insight he still longed to look into those things in the future.

1 Peter 1:10-12 ¹⁰ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, ¹¹ seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who

preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look.

You and I in Christ have the privilege of being on the other side of the cross. The mystery has been revealed and Christ is the One revealed who has spoken to us of His Kingdom that is now and is to come.

That is a mystery into which we should long to look as we long for His coming again.

Daniel and John speak of the same sequence of events in history but each sees it from different sides of the cross. What was revealed to Daniel was to be kept secret, what was revealed to John is meant to be shouted from rooftops.

Revelation 22:6-7 ⁶ And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. ⁷ "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

Revelation 22:12-14 ¹² "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. ¹³ "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." ¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.