

Daniel's four visions

- Daniel 7 – the first – a preview of Babylon to Rome – a broad sweep

- Daniel 8 – further detail on the Persian and Greek empires

In Daniel 7–12 there are four visions (Daniel 7, 8, 9, 10–12). The first of them (Daniel 7) gives a preview of the future of God's kingdom from the Babylonian empire until the far distant future when a fourth empire will come into being – the Roman empire and its successors. Daniel has been an employee of the Babylonian empire. He is specially concerned about what has happened to Israel and Jerusalem since the day when he himself was exiled (604 BC) and the time when the temple was destroyed (586 BC). He has been told that many centuries will go by before the kingdom of God is set up in the way he wishes. In the far distant future an enemy of God will arise. Obvious he is intensely eager to know what is going to happen along the way, during these running centuries before the kingdom of God appears. About two years after the previous vision Daniel sees another vision. It will give him further understanding concerning the Persian and the Greek empires. It is now 550/549 BC, Belshazzar's third year¹. Daniel is living in the days of the Babylonian empire but in vision he sees himself in Susa the capital of Persia¹, by the Ulai canal. The water supply would be important in time of military conflict.

¹ 8:1
¹ 8:2

The Medo-Persian empire

- A double empire

- Rapid conquest

Daniel sees a vision of the Persian empire. He sees a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal¹. It represents the Medo-Persian empire. ³*One of the horns was longer than the other and the longer one arose later than the other.* Historically the Medes were the stronger of the two partners in the double-empire. Later the Persians became the most powerful. ⁴*I saw the ram pushing towards the west and towards the south. No animal could stand before him, and none could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.* The Persians made rapid conquests of all the surrounding lands.

¹ 8:3a

The Greek empire

- Fast moving – Alexander the Great

- Conquers Persia

- Died young

- Greek empire divided into four Greek kingdoms

Daniel sees a vision of the Greek empire. As he is looking at the symbol of Persian power, something else appears in the vision. ⁵*I was considering this when suddenly a goat with a large horn between his eyes came from the west. He was crossing the whole earth without touching the ground.* The fast-moving goat is (as it turned out) Alexander the Great, the founder of the Greek empire. Daniel sees – in visionary symbol – how Alexander will conquer the Persians. From the beginning of his reign Alexander had his mind on the thought of conquering Persia. ⁶*He came toward the two-horned ram that I had seen standing beside the canal and ran at him in great anger.* This refers to the Greek campaigns in which the Persians were utterly defeated. ⁷*I saw him draw near to the ram, and he attacked it furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him. The goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him. There was no one that could rescue the ram from his power.* Under Alexander's onslaught the Persian empire collapsed. Alexander's military skill was irresistible. ⁸*The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven.* Alexander met his first Persian

army in 334 BC, and within a few years Persian power had come to an end. Alexander lived the life of a triumphant military general for nearly thirteen years, from 336 to 323 BC, but he died when he was still in his thirties. No heir to the throne had been appointed in his lifetime. Soon four Greek kingdoms – ‘four prominent horns’ – arose in (i) Macedonia, (ii) Thrace and Asia Minor, (iii) Syria and (iv) Egypt.

The rise of Antiochus Epiphanes

- As he extended his power he persecuted believers

- Acted as if he was divine

- Abolished daily sacrifices

- Pagan altar

- God's people forewarned and reassured

Daniel sees the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes. As Daniel was looking at the symbol of Persian power, he suddenly sees something else. ⁹*Out of one of them [that is, out of the Syrian section of the Greek empire] came another horn, a little one.* The reference is to Antiochus Epiphanes who reigned over Syria from 175 to 164 BC. *It grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land.* Antiochus extended his power towards Egypt, towards territories to the east of Syria, and towards Israel in the south. ¹⁰*This little horn grew so as to reach even the stars of the heavens. It threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them.* Here the people of God – believing Israelites – are being regarded as like stars in the sky. Antiochus started viciously persecuting the believers. He tried to enforce Greek ways in Israel. When these were resisted he conquered Jerusalem in 167 BC and enforced his will on the city. *This little horn set itself up arrogantly so as to be as great as the Commander of heaven's armies.* Antiochus started acting as if he were divine. ¹¹*It took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low.* Jewish ceremonies and the sacrifices were forbidden under threat of death. In the temple a pagan altar was built. Translating Daniel 8:12 is difficult. It seems to say, *In an act of rebellion, an army will be set over the daily burnt offering. The little horn throws down truth to the ground, and was successful in what it did.*

The point of the vision is that when Daniel's later readers go through these events, they will know that these persecuting days were all foretold and the kingdom of God is still coming!



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