

Adult Bible Study Guide

Daniel 8

Beasts, Angels, and the End Times

Introduction

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Open with a brief prayer.
- Provide context: Explain the significance of Hebrew and Aramaic in Daniel. Daniel was written in Aramaic through chapter 7, but changes to Hebrew in chapter 8. This signifies that the major emphasis of these chapters is God's plan for the nation of Israel in the end times.
- Introduce the theme: God's unfolding plan for Israel and the contrasts between historical and future prophecy.

1. Daniel the Prophet (10 minutes)

- **Reading:** Daniel 8:1–2, 15–19
- Daniel 8:1-2, 15-19, 26-27 NKJV - 1 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me--to me, Daniel--after the one that appeared to me the first time. 2 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. ... 15 Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." 17 So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end." 18 Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. 19 And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be.
- **Key Points:**
 - **Setting and Context:** Daniel receives his vision in the third year of King Belshazzar, prior to the fall of Babylon to Cyrus. This timing is significant as God's plans are unfolding for both Israel and the Gentile nations.
 - **Daniel's Vision:** The vision occurs in Susa (Shushan), highlighting its future importance as the capital of the Persian Empire. It underscores God's foreknowledge and His detailed plan for history.
 - **Role of Gabriel:** This is the first time Gabriel is mentioned in the Bible. He is God's messenger who explains the vision to Daniel, emphasizing God's desire for us to understand His plans.
 - **Human Response to the Divine:** Daniel's fear and fainting highlight human frailty in face of God's majesty and complex plans. Gabriel's use of "son of man" emphasizes Daniel's humanity and his role as a prophet.
- **Questions:**
 - Why do you think God uses visions to communicate His plans?
 - How does Daniel's reaction to the vision reflect human responses to divine revelations?

2. Cyrus, King of Persia (5 minutes)

- **Reading:** Daniel 8:3–4, 20
- Daniel 8:3-4, 20 NKJV - 3 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.

4 I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great. ... 20 "The ram which you saw, having the two horns--they are the kings of Media and Persia.

- **Key Points:**

- Cyrus – He was the man who conquered Babylon. God chose Cyrus to defeat the Babylonians and permit the Jews to return to their land
- **God's Prophesied Shepherd:** Isaiah had prophesied Cyrus's role in liberating the Jews, showing God's sovereignty in world events. He even called him by name! [Isaiah 44:28 NKJV - 28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." ' Isaiah 45:1-4 NKJV - 1 "Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held--To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut: 2 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. 4 For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. God's use of Cyrus to allow the Jews to return and rebuild the temple marks a pivotal moment in Israel's history.](#)
- **Divine Sovereignty:** Despite Cyrus being a pagan king, God refers to him as His "anointed," using him to accomplish divine purposes, showcasing that God can use anyone to achieve His will.
- **How does Cyrus's story demonstrate God's sovereignty over nations?**
- **What can we learn from the way God uses unlikely people to accomplish His will?**
- **Symbolism of the Ram:** Persia, represented as a ram with two horns, symbolizes the strength and reach of the Medo-Persian Empire under Cyrus.

3. Alexander the Great of Greece (5 minutes)

- **Reading:** [Daniel 8:5–8, 21–22](#)

- [Daniel 8:5-8, 21-22 NKJV - 5 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. 6 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. 7 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. 8 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. ... 21 "And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. 22 "As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.](#)

- **Key Points:**

- **Swift Conquests:** Represented as a goat whose feet do not touch the ground, Alexander's rapid conquests demonstrate his tactical brilliance and God's orchestration in spreading Greek culture.
- **Legacy and Language:** The widespread adoption of Greek culture and language laid the groundwork for a common language in the Eastern Mediterranean, facilitating the dissemination of the New Testament and early Christian messages.
- **How did the spread of Greek language and culture aid in the spread of Christianity?**
- **The Spread of Christianity** - For one thing, Alexander put an end to the Oriental influence that threatened to take over the Western world. At the same time, he "shook the ancient world to its very

foundations” and “compelled the old world to think afresh.” By extending Greek culture and language, he helped to bring peoples together; and eventually the common (*koine*) Greek became the language of the New Testament. Even though his empire divided four ways after his death, Alexander brought nations together so they could interact with each other. His policy of kindness toward conquered peoples introduced a powerful example of brotherhood into the world. He literally “wedded East to West” when 9,000 of his soldiers and officers (some historians say 10,000) married Eastern women in one mass wedding.

- **Division of the Empire:** The breakdown into four smaller kingdoms after Alexander’s death represents the shift in power and the frailty of human accomplishments compared to God’s eternal plan.

- **Questions:**

- What similarities do you see between Alexander’s conquests and God’s purposes?

4. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (10 minutes)

- **Reading:** Daniel 8:9–14

- Daniel 8:9-14 NKJV - 9 And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. 10 And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. 11 He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. 12 Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered. 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?" 14 And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

- **Key Points:**

- **Antiochus Background** - Gave himself the name Epiphanes which means “Illustrious, Manifestation” because he claimed to be an epiphany of the gods. He was known as one of the cruelest tyrants in history. He minted coins with his picture on them which looked like the god Zeus. He wanted to turn the Jews into Greeks. He prohibited the Jews from honoring the Sabbath, practicing circumcision, and obeying the levitical dietary laws, and he climaxed his campaign on December 14, 168, by replacing the Jewish altar with an altar to Zeus—and sacrificing a pig on it!
- **Persecution and Desecration:** Antiochus’s brutal reign, his persecution of the Jews, and desecration of the temple prefigure the end-times tribulations and foreshadow the actions of the Antichrist.
- **Cultural and Religious Oppression:** The attempt to enforce Greek customs upon the Jews aimed to eradicate Jewish identity and faith. His actions fulfilled specific prophecies in Daniel and are commemorated through Hanukkah.
- **Abomination of Desolation** - When Antiochus stopped the daily sacrifices in the temple and substituted pagan worship, this was called “the abomination that makes desolate” (“the transgression of desolation,” Dan. 8:13). This is used by Jesus in Matthew 24:15 NKJV - 15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),
- **Dual Fulfillment:** These events not only signify historical fulfillment but also serve as a template for understanding future prophetic events involving the Antichrist. What Antiochus did was a foreshadowing of what the Antichrist will do when he puts his image in the temple and commands the world to worship him.
- **Prophetic Timetable** - Daniel 8:14 NKJV - 14 And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed." There are two ideas here (6 years and 3 years), but they both reach the same conclusion. 2,300 days is approximately 6 years. begin with 171 b.c., when Antiochus deposed the true high priest. Subtract six years and this takes you to 165 when Judas Maccabeus defeated the enemy and reconsecrated the temple. However, the three-year advocates begin with the

establishment of the pagan altar in the temple on 25 Kislev, 168, and this takes us to 165. Either approach meets the requirements of the prophecy.

- **Questions:**

- How does Antiochus's story help us understand biblical prophecy about the end times?
- In what ways do historical events prepare us for what God will do in the future?

5. The Antichrist and Eschatology (5 minutes)

- **Reading:** Daniel 8:23–27

- Daniel 8:23-27 NKJV - 23 "And in the latter time of their kingdom, When the transgressors have reached their fullness, A king shall arise, Having fierce features, Who understands sinister schemes. 24 His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; He shall destroy fearfully, And shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. 25 "Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; And he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; But he shall be broken without human means. 26 "And the vision of the evenings and mornings Which was told is true; Therefore seal up the vision, For it refers to many days in the future." 27 And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

- **Key Points:**

- **The Antichrist:** Known as the "king of fierce countenance," the Antichrist will exhibit power, deceit, and persecution, surpassing even Antiochus's tyranny. His ultimate aim will be to oppose God directly and deceive many.
- **Parallels with Antiochus:** The characteristics shared by Antiochus and the Antichrist offer insights into the nature and methods of future persecution, with the Antichrist symbolizing ultimate rebellion against God.

- Both begin modestly but increase in power and influence
- Both blaspheme God with mouths that speak great things
- Both persecute the Jewish people
- Both claim to be gods and put images in the temple
- Both impose their own religion on the people
- Both are opposed by a believing remnant that knows God
- Both are energized by the devil and are great deceivers
- Both appear to succeed marvelously and seem to be invincible
- Both are finally defeated by the coming of a redeemer (Judas Maccabeus and Jesus Christ)

- **Triumph of Christ:** Ultimately, Jesus Christ, the "Prince of princes," will defeat the Antichrist, establishing eternal justice and His kingdom, fulfilling all prophetic visions given to Daniel.

- **Questions:**

- How should knowing about these future events impact our lives today?

Conclusion and Reflection (5 minutes)

- Encourage the audience to reflect on God's sovereignty and their role in His plan.
- Close with a prayer asking for wisdom and understanding as we live in light of prophetic truths.