


The Book of Daniel

Chapter Eight



The Lord is always faithful to His people. I believe that a broad perspective of Chapter 8 will reinforce this concept in our hearts. God's people, at the time of this writing, were the nation of Israel. They were under Babylonian captivity because of their sins as a nation, but the Lord also promised to set them free. What would happen to them as a nation after they were set free? In this chapter, God tells Israel about a time of trial they would someday undergo. He also promises deliverance at a specified time. While in the midst of difficulty, they could look back at this writing and know that they were not outside the providence of God and the reigns of His control. What a comfort!

8:1-2 – Another Vision

"In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.."

Its all in the Translation

Chapter 8 is again written in the Hebrew language. That wouldn't be a big deal, except for the fact that Daniel is written in Aramaic from Chapter 2, verse 4 through the end of Chapter 7. Aramaic was an international trade language used by most Gentile nations, while Hebrew was the native tongue of the Jews.¹ All of the other books of the Old Testament are written exclusively in Hebrew. It appears that the Lord used the change in languages to direct the last portion of Daniel to a wider audience than just the Jews. It was intended for the whole Gentile world, as the subject of much of Daniel 2-7 is the successive Gentile world empires.

Why would Chapter 8 switch back to Hebrew? As mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this passage is to provide direction and comfort to Israel during a time of great distress that would come upon them. The events prophesied in this chapter all take place prior to the birth of Jesus Christ. They are not directed specifically toward the Church, but to the Israelites.

A Little More Info

The timing of this vision is tied to the previous vision that Daniel received. What is the timing and why is the significant prophetically?

This vision is given two years after the vision we studied in Chapter 7. This is significant prophetically because we always see a building upon previous foundations in each successive prophecy. Chapter 8 is no different. We will learn more about two of the three beasts that Daniel saw in his previous vision.

The vision was given to Daniel in the third year of Belshazzar's reign, approximately 12 years prior to the capture of Babylon by the Medo-Persians. The vision was received in Shushan (or Susa in other translations), a capital of Elam, in what is today western Iran, about 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf. The city of Shushan / Susa, or more specifically, the royal palace there, is known to Bible History as the location where Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel lived. Thus it may have been the location where many of the Jewish captives were kept. Remember from Chapter 5 that Daniel was not utilized as a counselor by Belshazzar during his reign and therefore may not have remained in Babylonia. It could also be that Daniel was "transported" to Shushan in his vision. This would be appropriate as Shushan eventually became the winter residence of the Persian kings, with which this vision begins. History also records that Daniel died in Shushan and his grave can be found there today.

Daniel was beside the Ulai, or Euleus, a river which ran by the city Shushan, in Persia. It was the Choaspes of the Greeks, and is now called the Kerkhah; but appears to have had in ancient times a second channel, still traceable, nine hundred feet wide and twenty feet deep, and flowing along the east side of Shushan. The two channels emptied their waters through the river now called the Karun into the Shat-el-Arab, the united stream of the Euphrates and Tigris, twenty miles below their junction at Korna.²

¹ Notice also that the New Testament was written in Greek, an international language that would ease the communication of the gospel to all nations, not just the Israelites.

² Information taken from Crossmap.com

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8:3-4, 20 – The Ram

“Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.”

“The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.”

Remember that this vision builds upon the knowledge we gained from the prophecies of the Statue and Four Beasts of Chapters 2 and 7. According to Daniel 8:20, the identity of this ram is the Medo-Persian empire. Read the following excerpt from Daniel 7 and describe the harmony of the prophecies.

Daniel 7:5 – *“And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.”*



Figure 1: Expansion of the Medo-Persian Empire

The second beast that came from the great sea is a bear raised up on one side. Remember that the second empire is the result of an alliance between the Medes and the Persians. As time went on, the Persians became the dominant force in the empire, thus the bear was raised up (stronger) on one side. Thus, we see two horns on the ram, the second coming up later (like the Persian Empire), but eventually becoming the more dominant of the alliance. In Daniel 7, we see the command was given to the bear to arise and “devour much flesh”. This harmonizes with the description of Daniel 8, that no beast could stand before the first ram and it did according to its will.

The ram pushed in three different directions: North, West, and South. Figure 1 above demonstrates how the Medo-Persian Empire fulfilled this prophecy. Their Empire, driven by the Eastern Empire Persia, expanded to the West into what is now Turkey, to the North into Media, and to the South into Egypt.

8:5-7, 21-22 – The Goat

“And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.”

“And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.”

The remainder of the prophecy in this chapter revolves around the reign of the goat. The goat is identified in Daniel 8:21 as the Grecian Empire and the large horn as its first king. The first king and the conqueror of the Grecian Empire was Alexander the Great. We recognize the goat as the third beast from Daniel's vision in Chapter 7. Read the excerpt from the previous vision and describe the harmony of the prophecies.

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Daniel 7:6 – “After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.”

We see great speed in the leopard and its four wings indicate especially swift flight. Similarly, we see the goat in this passage described as a very quick animal because it didn't even touch the ground.

We learn that the goat comes from the West. In Figure 2 below, we can see the progression of the Grecian Empire from the West to the East. Alexander the Great is noted as a famous military general because of the speed in which he conquered his empire. He began by defeating the Medo-Persians in 334 at 21 years of age and expanded his territory to include the entirety of the Medo-Persian Empire, Greece, and additional parts of Saudi Arabia. He died at the ripe old age of 33 after reportedly grieving that there were no more worlds to conquer.



Figure 2: Expansion of the Grecian Empire

Plutarch, a Greek historian mentions an irate letter from Alexander to Darius, king of Persia, where Alexander blames Darius and Bagoas, his grand vizier, for his father's murder, stating that it was Darius who had been bragging with the Greek cities of how he managed to assassinate Philip. Whatever the reason, it appears that the Lord included these detail for a reason.

The Jewish historian Josephus records that during Alexander's campaign down into Syrian, he planned to lay siege to the city of Jerusalem. As the victorious armies of the Greeks approached the city, word was brought to the Jews in Jerusalem that the armies were on their way. The high priest at that time, who was a godly old man by the name of Jaddua (mentioned in Nehemiah 12:11, 22) took the sacred writings of Daniel the prophet and, accompanied by a host of other priests dressed in white garments, went forth and met Alexander some distance outside the city.

Josephus states that Alexander left his army and hurried to meet this body of priests. When he met them, he told the high priest that he had had a vision the night before in which God had shown him an old man, robed in a white garment, who would show him something of great significance to himself, according to the account, the high priest then opened the prophecies of Daniel and read them to Alexander. They were written at least 200 years before Alexander's birth.

In the prophecies Alexander was able to see the predictions that he would become that notable goat with the horn in his forehead, who would come from the West and smash the power of Persia and conquer the world.

The Goat's Anger

One concept we see repeated three times in Chapter 8 is the apparent hatred the goat has toward the ram. It mentions that the goat came in fury of power with choler (wrath) and then stamped upon the ram. What does this mean?

History records that the reason Alexander was motivated to destroy Medo-Persia was that he believed they were behind the murder of his father, Philip of Macedon.

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He was so overwhelmed by the accuracy of this prophecy and, of course, by the fact that it spoke about him, that he promised that he would save Jerusalem from siege, and sent the high priest back with honors.

As this story was not recorded in the Bible, we cannot verify that it is totally accurate. We do know that Jerusalem was spared from Alexander's wrath during his reign. We also know that Alexander enjoyed great power and success because the Lord allowed it to happen. As we witnessed with Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4, God is able to humble the prideful. All dominions are under His hand.

8:8 – The Four Horns

"Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven."

On June 10 or 11 of 323 BC, Alexander the Great died of a high fever. The cause of the fever was likely a prevalent disease of the day, like typhoid fever or malaria.

His last words were, "I foresee a great funeral contest over me". With these words, Alexander foretold the next forty years of his Empire's history. He meant that his generals would wage a great war amongst themselves to determine who would rule over his empire. Ultimately, the conflict was settled after the Battle of Ipsus in

Phrygia in 301 BC. Alexander's empire was divided at first into four major portions: Cassander ruled in Macedon, Lysimachus in Thrace, Seleucus in Mesopotamia and Iran, and Ptolemy in the Levant and Egypt.³ Thus, we see the prophecy of God fulfilled.



Figure 3: Division of the Greek Empire

In verse 22 of this chapter we read, "Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power". From this, we learn that the resulting four kingdoms which arise from the Grecian nation will not be as powerful as the first king (Alexander). History also verifies this prophecy. Within a few years of Alexander's death, the portion of his empire in India, governed by Seleucus, was taken back by Mauryan Empire (the first real empire in India). The resulting kingdoms were never as united, as large, or as successful as the empire under Alexander. The Western portions were gradually conquered by the Romans and the Eastern portions eroded as the Parthian Empire expanded.

8:15-19 – The Interpreter and the Time of the End

"And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision. Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward

³ Information taken from www.wikipedia.org

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the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be."

Didn't we just skip something? Yes, but we will come back. The best way for us to study verses 9 to 14 is to look at them in conjunction with the interpretation of the vision that is given in verses 20 through 26.

Who is this being in the appearance of a man standing before Daniel? (see Daniel 9:21-22, Luke 1:19 & 26)
It is Gabriel, an angel of God, used by the Lord as a messenger, specifically one that brings clarity and announces the fulfillment of God's prophetic word.

Whose voice spoke from between the banks of the Ulai? (see Revelation 22:16)
It was most likely the voice of the Lord Jesus. Who else would be giving orders to Gabriel? It appears that Gabriel is a very important angel because we learn in Luke 1:19 that he stands in the presence of God.

Why did Daniel fall upon his face? (see Genesis 17:1-3, Ezekiel 1:28, Matthew 17:5-7)
I don't believe this is a cultural thing, but rather it is the natural human response to presence of God. He is a thrice Holy God with all power and majesty. We are abased in His presence and have no strength to stand before Him unless He grants it to us. I believe this was Gabriel, not Jesus in front of Daniel. Still, Gabriel was a holy being and somewhat radiated God's glory. Even this was enough to bring Daniel to his knees.

The Time of the End

Gabriel gives Daniel some insight as to the timing of this vision (when it would occur) when he says, "the time of the end" in verse 17. In fact, in the King James Version, verse 19 appears to be an awkward translation of this same concept. Another literal translation reads, "He said, 'Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end'."⁴

We will see this phrase, "time of the end" again in Daniel 11:35 and 12:4. We know that the prophecies of this chapter pertain primarily to the time of the Grecian kingdom. As we will soon see, the events described in verses 9-14 and 23-26 occurred from approximately 175-163 BC. What could the "time of the end" mean? (see Matthew 26:28, Hebrews 8:8-13, 9:15-22)

There is a clear delineation made in Scriptures between the Old Covenant/Testament, which was made with Israel in the time of Abraham and the New Covenant which was made by the blood of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The events of Daniel 8 occur near the end of Old Covenant, while Israel as a nation was still God's people. Thus, the coming of Christ was a significant historical demarcation and a turning point for Israel.

It should be noted that many futurists interpret the "time of the end" as a reference to the end of the Gentile reign and the advent of Christ's kingdom. Accordingly, they will interpret this passage in a dual sense: the first fulfillment being during the time of the Grecian Empire and the second fulfillment occurring some day in the future during the time of Antichrist. I have difficulty with this interpretation because I have not found any indication from the text that it is to be interpreted in this manner.

8:9 & 23 – A Growing Horn

"And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land."

"And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up."

The first thing we learn about the little horn is that it came up from among the four horns atop the goat's (Greece's) head. We know that the four horns represent the four divisions of the Grecian Empire. The little horn which came up was a ruler of one of the four territories. How do we know which one? It was not uncommon for there to be fighting amongst the various Grecian domains as they wrestled for territory and supremacy in the Empire. Remember, this chapter and the rest of Daniel are written in Hebrew, therefore, only events that have some direct relevance to Israel are related. This king would greatly affect Israel.

⁴ Taken from the New American Standard Bible

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This king must have come from the West because it grew towards the East and the South. Looking at Figure 3 above, what is the only region that can match this description?

The Seleucid region is the only one of the four kingdoms that can fit this description.

What kingdoms would have been conquered in this move to the East, the South, and the “Pleasant Land”?

The kingdom of Egypt and Syria would be conquered if the Seleucid kingdom moved to the East and to the South. The “Pleasant Land” is a reference to Israel, to the West. Remember that Israel was the land flowing with milk and honey that God promised to His people. It is located on the Fertile Crescent. For a historical account of these movements, read the apocryphal passages: 1 Maccabees 1:16-19, 20-28, and 3:27-37.

Verse 23 gives us some information about the timing of this king’s rise from a spiritual perspective. It first says, “in the latter time of their kingdom”. To whom does this refer?

This is a reference to the end of the Grecian period. The Romans gradually conquered these regions from 168 b.c. - the battle of Pydna, when Perseus was defeated, and Macedonia was reduced to a Roman province, to 30 b.c., when Egypt was subjected - the last of these kingdoms that submitted to the Roman arms.

We also get another timing clue. It says, “when the transgressors are come to the full...”. Who are the transgressors and what does it mean for them to “come to the full”? (see *Genesis 15:16, Romans 2:5*)

We know that the transgressors are the one who will be punished by the coming of this king. We also know from the context surrounding this verse that the Israelites would undergo another time of great trial and loss during his reign. Therefore, the transgressors must again be the Israelites. At the time Daniel received this vision, the Israelites were already under chastisement because many of them were in Babylonian captivity. This surely must have grieved Daniel’s heart to know that Israel wouldn’t learn from its lessons in Babylon and would again be under the Lord’s hand of wrath for a time. The Lord will only endure sin for so long and will ultimately determine that the cup of wrath is full and it will be poured out upon those who reject Him.

A Fierce King

The king that arose from the Seleucid kingdom is described as being of a fierce countenance and having understanding of dark sentences. What does this mean?

Fierce countenance – One who is powerful and greedy and harsh.

Understanding of Dark Sentences – The word, “understanding” means “intelligent” or “eloquent”. Dark sentences refers to puzzles or trickery. Therefore, the one that will rise up will appear very eloquent and intelligent but will use it to deceive others for his own personal gain.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, translated as “The Shining One”, was the ruler of the Seleucid kingdom from 175-163 BC. His name was originally Mithradates, but he was renamed either upon his ascension to the throne or at the death of his elder brother, Antiochus. He was a son of Antiochus III the Great and brother of Seleucus IV Philopator.

Antiochus took power after the death of Seleucus Philopator. He had been hostage in Rome following the peace of Apamea in 188 BC, but had recently been exchanged for the son and rightful heir of Seleucus IV, the later Demetrius I Soter. Antiochus took advantage of this situation, and proclaimed himself co-regent with another of Seleucus’ sons, the infant Antiochus, whose murder he orchestrated a few years later.

Notable events during his reign include the near-conquest of Egypt (the land to the South), which was halted by the threat of Roman intervention. He also he organized an expedition against Jerusalem, which he conquered. Shortly thereafter, the Jews began the war of independence, defeating the armies that Antiochus sent against them. The Israelite rebellion caused Antiochus to need additional funds to continue his resistance of the Jews. History records that Antiochus marched to the West into Syria, oppressing the

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communities through which he traveled and demanding money.⁵ Thus, we see the prophecy of Scripture fulfilled of the horn moving to the West, South, and towards the Pleasant Land.

As we continue our study of Chapter 8 and subsequent chapters of Daniel, we will learn much more about Antiochus' reign of terror. He was truly a blight on the Jewish nation and a blasphemous enemy of God.

8:10 & 24 – The Wrath of the Horn

“And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.”

“And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.”

Who are the stars of heaven?

Look at the following passages and write down how the word “stars” is used allegorically.

Job 38:7 – Stars are used as an allegory of angels.

Gen. 15:5 – Stars are used as an allegory of Abraham's true seed

Dan. 12:3 – Stars are used as an allegory of the righteous

What do the stars in Daniel 8:10 represent? (Consider Daniel 8:24, 12:3, and Genesis 15:5)

Based on the passages above, it seems that these stars refer to the righteous people of God. This makes sense because that is the only way that Daniel used the term, “stars” in the book of Daniel (Daniel 8:10, 12:3)

How did he cause the stars of heaven to fall?

Read the following passages from the Book of Maccabees for a historical account of Antiochus' reign of terror against the righteous Jews.

1 Maccabees 1:20-24 – “After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. ²¹He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. ²²He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. ²³He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found. ²⁴Taking them all, he went into his own land.”

1 Maccabees 1:37-38 – “On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood; they even defiled the sanctuary. ³⁸Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled; she became a dwelling of strangers; she became strange to her offspring, and her children forsook her.”

1 Maccabees 1:44-63 – “And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, ⁴⁵to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals, ⁴⁶to defile the sanctuary and the priests, ⁴⁷to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, ⁴⁸and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, ⁴⁹so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. ⁵⁰He added, “And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.”

⁵¹In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom. He appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the towns of Judah to offer sacrifice, town by town. ⁵²Many of the people, everyone who forsook the law, joined them, and they did evil in the land; ⁵³they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had.

⁵⁴ Now on the fifteenth day of Chisleu, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege

⁵ 1 Maccabees 3:27-37

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on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah, ⁵⁵and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. ⁵⁶The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. ⁵⁷Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king. ⁵⁸They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns. ⁵⁹On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering. ⁶⁰According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, ⁶¹and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks.

⁶²But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. ⁶³They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. ⁶⁴Very great wrath came upon Israel."

Remember that these were God's holy people at this time. An individual who truly wanted to follow God would still find salvation the same way that we do, and would then be obedient to the spirit of the law, carrying out the sacrifices and remaining faithful to the commands of the Lord, even if it meant death.

8:11a & 25a – A Fool at Heart

"Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host..."

"And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes;..."

v25 in NASB – *"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."*

Who is the Prince of the Host and the Prince of Princes?

The word, "prince" in both verses 11 and 25, comes from a Hebrew word that can take on different meanings depending on context. It can mean, "a head person (of any rank or class):--captain, chief, general, governor, keeper, lord, master, prince, ruler, steward.

Read the following passages and discuss the similarity of the titles. Who is referred to in Daniel?

Joshua 5:14-15 – **Captain (prince) of the host – this is the same exact Hebrew word used in Daniel 8:11, 25. I believe this is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ because Joshua worshipped Him and the ground he stood upon was called holy.**

Rev. 17:14, 19:16 – **Jesus is called Lord of Lords and King of Kings**

The Prince of the Host and the Prince of Princes is none other that Jesus Christ.

In what way did Antiochus stand up against the Captain of the Host and the Lord of Lords?

See Daniel 5:23 – **By abusing the implements from the temple, Belshazzar dishonored God. By seeking to override the Jewish laws and worship practices, set in place by God, Antiochus exalted himself above God. The goal of the sacrifices was to point to Jesus. By discontinuing the sacrifices, he did something that was only to be done by the death of Jesus Christ. He stood up against our Lord.**

How did he destroy many while they were at ease?

1 Maccabees 1:29-32 – "Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. ³⁰Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. ³¹He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. ³²They took captive the women and children, and seized the livestock."

They fooled many and then destroyed the city.

How did deceit succeed by his influence?

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1 Maccabees 1:33-35 – “Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. ³⁴They stationed there a sinful people, men who were renegades. These strengthened their position; ³⁵they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great menace,”

Traiterous Jews were brought in to man the fort next to the Temple

8:11b-12 – An Abundance of Error

“... and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.”

The Daily (Regular) Sacrifice

Let's begin by learning a bit about the daily sacrifice.

Read Exodus 29:38-42 and describe the daily sacrifice

The daily sacrifice consisted of both a morning and an evening offering. The offerings were burnt offerings and were identical in all ways. Both consisted of a slaughtered lamb that had a mixture of flour, oil, and wine poured upon it.

The daily sacrifice was taken away by Antiochus and the sanctuary itself was stripped by him. Read again 1 Maccabees 1:20-24, shown previously in this lesson. The host given to Antiochus was the righteous Jews slain by him. The transgression was the sin of the Jews who gave themselves over to Gentile practices. One may ask why the punishment of the wicked would include the removal of the righteous. Read Isaiah 57:1 and Hebrews 11:38 and discuss this.

The righteous were the “salt of the earth”, the preservative of the people. By removing them, the rest were forced to make a clear choice and face the consequences of that choice. To die is gain for the righteous. The Lord removed them from this horrible time and brought them to the eternal sanctuary.

How did Antiochus cast truth to the ground? (See 1 Maccabees 1:56-57)

He outlawed all copies of Scripture and hand the ones he found destroyed.

Truly, evil was practiced and prospered during the time Antiochus reigned of Jerusalem.

8:13-14 & 25b-26 – 2,300 “Days”

“Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”

“And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.

Perhaps a better translation of the latter part of verse 13 is, “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?”⁶

The specific question asked is, “how long will the regular sacrifice be suspended”? The other items mentioned are a reminder of what is going on during this time: a transgression that causes horror is erected in the temple, the holy place is trampled, and the host (righteous Jews) were being persecuted and slaughtered.

⁶ Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995, by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

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The suspension of the daily sacrifice implies that the temple remains corrupt and that the righteous Jews are not able to worship freely. Therefore, the reinstatement of daily sacrifice indicates a restoration of righteousness and worship.

The answer given is 2,300 “days”. It is important here to stop and look at the Hebrew words translated into “days” in the King James Version.

There are two words used: ereb, meaning “evening” and boquer, meaning “morning”. The literal translation is, “2,300 evenings and mornings”. We see this verified in verse 26, shown above, which states that the vision of the “evening and morning” is true. How might this translation impact our interpretation?

We know that there are both evening and morning daily sacrifices. The focal point of the prophecy is how long the evening and morning sacrifices would be suspended. The answer was 2,300 evening and morning (sacrifices implied). This results in 1,150 days. Calculating the number of days based on the number of morning and evening sacrifices missed is roughly consistent with the interpretation of Josephus, a Jewish historian.⁷

Let’s now look at history to see when the daily offering ceased and when it was restored.

The End of the Daily Sacrifices

1 Maccabees 1:41-50 – “Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people,⁴² and that all should give up their particular customs.⁴³ All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath.⁴⁴ And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land,⁴⁵ to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals,⁴⁶ to defile the sanctuary and the priests,⁴⁷ to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals,⁴⁸ and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane,⁴⁹ so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances.⁵⁰ He added, “And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.”

1 Maccabees 1:54-59 – “Now on the fifteenth day of Chisleu, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah,⁵⁵ and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets.⁵⁶ The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire.⁵⁷ Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king.⁵⁸ They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns.⁵⁹ On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering.”

The Restoration of the Daily Sacrifices

1 Maccabees 4:36-58 - “Then Judas and his brothers said, “See, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it.”³⁷ So all the army assembled and went up to Mount Zion.³⁸ There they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, and the gates burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as on one of the mountains. They saw also the chambers of the priests in ruins.³⁹ Then they tore their clothes and mourned with great lamentation; they sprinkled themselves with ashes⁴⁰ and fell face down on the ground. And when the signal was given with the trumpets, they cried out to Heaven.

⁴¹ Then Judas detailed men to fight against those in the citadel until he had cleansed the sanctuary.⁴² He chose blameless priests devoted to the law,⁴³ and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place.⁴⁴ They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned.⁴⁵ And they thought it best to tear it down, so that it would not be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar,⁴⁶ and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them.⁴⁷ Then they took unhewn stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like the former one.⁴⁸ They also rebuilt the sanctuary and the interior of the

⁷ Josephus, Flavius, “The Antiquities of the Jews”, Book Ten, Chapter 11, Paragraph 7; and “The Wars of the Jews”, Book One, Paragraph 1

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temple, and consecrated the courts. ⁴⁹They made new holy vessels, and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple. ⁵⁰Then they offered incense on the altar and lit the lamps on the lampstand, and these gave light in the temple. ⁵¹They placed the bread on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken.

⁵² Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-eighth year, ⁵³they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering that they had built. ⁵⁴At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. ⁵⁵All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. ⁵⁶So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and joyfully offered burnt offerings; they offered a sacrifice of well-being and a thanksgiving offering. ⁵⁷They decorated the front of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the chambers for the priests, and fitted them with doors. ⁵⁸There was very great joy among the people, and the disgrace brought by the Gentiles was removed.”

Reconciling the Prophecy with History

The period of time between the 15th of Chislev (Kislev) in 145 (168 B.C.) and the 25th of Chislev (Kislev) in 148 (165 B.C.) is 1,076 days. This includes the calculation of the Jewish leap year and the months with variable days. This isn't exactly 1,150 days. Remember that there are no mistakes with God. Let's look at the prophecy again.

What were the 1,150 days supposed to signify?

It was to delineate the period of time when there would not be daily sacrifices upon the altar. Although they erected the desolating sacrilege on the altar on the 15th of Kislev and sacrificed to it on the 25th of Kislev, the sacrifices ceased with the edict of Antiochus, which forbid any sacrifices to be offered to our God. This came just prior to the building of the desolating sacrilege and corresponds to the Biblical prophecy.

History doesn't tell us the exact date the sacrifices ceased. However, we can be certain that it was 1,150 days prior to the rededication of the altar and reinstatement of the daily sacrifice on the 25th of Kislev. This corresponds with the history recorded in the Maccabees. It is also interesting to note that the rededication of the temple on the 25th of Kislev and the following eight days of worship is the origin of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. The word, "Hanukkah" means, "dedication".

8:25b – An End to Terror

“... but he shall be broken without hand.”

The successful rededication of the temple and the further success of the Jewish Maccabean revolt against the armies of the Seleucian kingdom enraged Antiochus. He became so angry, in fact, that it is said that he marched against them in person, threatening to exterminate the nation. However, on the way, he was suddenly arrested by the hand of death in 164 B.C. According to some historical sources, he died a very painful death, being plagued by both worms and ulcers (reminiscent of Herod's death in Acts 12:21-23).

8:26b-27 – Shut up the Vision

“... wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

The vision revealed to Daniel was not to occur for another 300 years from that time. Why did the Lord want the vision to remain hidden at that time?

Remember, that when the vision was given, the Jews were still in captivity. They had not yet been allowed to return and rebuild the temple. To know that they would not only return, but again fall into sin and go through a period of tribulation would be too much for most of them to handle. It is a great blessing to us that we cannot see the future. The sight of all our failures and difficulties might make the present too hard to bear.

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Why did Daniel react to the vision by becoming sick?

Probably the same reason that the Lord didn't reveal it to all the Jews. Daniel was mature and righteous and therefore took it better than many would. Others that were not as mature and faithful may have become too discouraged or even gave up trying to serve God. Still, the thought of all these events made Daniel sick.