

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible's Trustworthiness

Daniel 8:1-8; 15-21

The vision of Daniel Chapter 8 is of two animals: *a ram* and *a goat*. While Daniel Chapter 7 deals with FOUR kingdoms that come before God setting up the everlasting kingdom, Daniel 8 focuses on the SECOND Kingdom (**Persia, the Ram**) and the THIRD Kingdom (**Greece, the Goat**). The "little horn" in Daniel 8 arises out of the THIRD kingdom (Greece). The visions of Daniel 2, 7, and 8 predicted events for the next 500 years to the coming of the Son of Man and the everlasting Kingdom which is "The Kingdom of God." The Daniel 7 prophecy was received and recorded in **555 BC** (first year of Belshazzar); Daniel 8 in **553 BC**.

I. Daniel's vision of the ram and goat is so precise in its prophecies that liberals deny Daniel wrote it.

Daniel lived from 625 BC to 535 BC and died at the age of 90 in Babylon. The events prophesied in Daniel Chapter 8 encompass the years 555 (the first year of Belshazzar) to the birth of Christ. As we will see in this two-part study of Daniel, the events Daniel describes are so precise, so descriptive of what we call the beginning of Western Civilization, that those who have a hard time believing the Bible can foretell the future, they tried to say that an imposter wrote Daniel AFTER the events occurred. Then in 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Fragments of the Daniel Scroll were found in Caves 1 and 4. These fragments from all 12 chapters of Daniel's scroll were copies that dated from at least the 3rd century BC. This showed that the Hebrews had Daniel in their canon prior to the events of Daniel 8.

II. Daniel's vision (Chapter 8) gives specific details of the rise and fall of the Persian and Grecian empires.

The Persian Empire (the ram) conquers everyone north/south/west; Persia rules the world (v. 4).

The ram had "two horns" representing the Medes and Persians, but "*one was longer*" (Persians, v.3).

"I saw the ram butting westward... and one could stand before him...and he magnified himself" (v. 4).

- Persia (the ram) "*did as he pleased and magnified himself*" (539-499 BC). The army was invincible.
- In 499 BC a group of Greek cities in Ionia (western Turkey) refused to pay taxes to Persia.
- Darius, King of Persia, (nephew to Cyrus) went to Ionia to quell the Ionian revolt (499-495 BC).
- After learning the city-state of Athens had sent support to their Ionian brothers, Darius sent an army led by his son-in-law, Mardonius, in 492 BC to invade Greece. A storm destroyed the fleet.
- Darius sent a second army by ship to invade Greece that landed at **Marathon** in 490 BC. 10,000 Athenians attacked the 200,000-600,000 Persian troops (Herodotus) and won the battle.
- **Pheidippides** (530-490 BC) is said to run from Marathon to Athens to announce victory; "Joy to you, we've won" he said, and then he died after running 25 miles (marathons today are 26 miles).
- 10 years later, **Xerxes**, son of Darius, attempted the third invasion of Greece (480 BC).
- Xerxes led his army around the Aegean on the northern to Thermopylae (Greece). It was here **300 Spartans** and 700 Thespians, under Leonidas, defended the pass of **Thermopylae**. "*Go tell the Spartans, passerby: That here, by Spartan law, we lie.*" The city of Athens was next.
- The Athenian leaders had gone to the **Oracle of Delphi** to ask for wisdom as to what to do. "*A wall of wood alone shall be uncaptured, a boon to you and your children. Await not in quiet the coming of the horses, the marching feet, the armed host upon the land. Slip away. Turn your back. You will meet in battle anyway. O holy Salamis, you will be the death of many...*" The Oracle.
- **Themistocles** convinced the Athenians that "the wall of wood" was to be ships, not a wall.
- **Athens** prepared for battle by evacuating the city, sending everyone south to Sparta and loading all able-bodied men on ships and moving to the Bay of Salamis just south and west of Athens.
- In 480 BC the Battle of Salamis occurred between Greece and Persia. Xerxes sat on his throne

and watched the 300 Greek trireme ships ram his fleet of 1,200 large transport Persian ships.

- Xerxes takes his army back to Persia and for the next 100 years there is relative peace.
- **Alexander the Great** (356 - 323 BC) consolidated Greek forces and attacked Persia *“from the west.”* Alexander is *“the conspicuous horn between the eyes”* (v. 5). “Enraged” the goat (Greece), “struck the ram and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.” Alexander took an army of 50,000 elite Greek soldiers and set out to conquer Greece’s great enemy, Persia.
- According to Josephus, Jerusalem instead opened its gates to Alexander, and he was shown the 8th chapter of Daniel, which described a mighty Greek king who would conquer Persia. He spared Jerusalem and conquered the world, including Persia and King Darius III (332 BC).
- After Alexander died in Babylon in 323 BC, the kingdom was split “to the four winds”- N, S, E, W.

III. The Greek world (Hellenism) was preparation for the coming of the “Son of Man.”

When Alexander died, his kingdom was divided among his four generals for he had no heirs.

Ptolemy gained Egypt. Lysimachus ruled Thrace and Asia Minor. **Seleucus** got Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia, and Cassander took Macedonia and Greece. Eventually, Greece was simply divided into two separate kingdoms or regions: **The North** (the Seleucids) and **the South** (the Ptolemies). It is in Daniel 11 that the language “King of the North” and “King of the South” comes into play (11:40).

IV. Daniel’s vision *“pertains to the time of the end”* (Daniel 8:17, 19).

This time of the end pertains to “the end of the Old Covenant Era” and the soon approaching New Covenant Era or “the everlasting kingdom” established by the Son of Man (see Dan. 7). The END is that time period when the Messiah comes to establish His kingdom “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is AT HAND” John the Baptist told his listeners. The New Testament is the FULFILLMENT of the prophecies of Daniel. Daniel was looking WAY AHEAD (FIVE CENTURIES) to the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

“Go your way Daniel for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time” (Dan. 12:9).

“Blessed is he who reads and hears the words of the prophecy...for the time is NEAR” (Rev. 1:3).

“Do NOT seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is NEAR” (Rev. 22:10).

V. You and I are called to experience “The Kingdom of God” in the here and now, not just the future.

“Now all these things happened to them (Old Covenant Israel) as an example, and they were written for our instruction, *upon whom the end of the ages have come*” (I Corinthians 10:11).

All of the Old Testament prophets were focused on the time of the coming of the Messiah. When Jesus launched His kingdom ministry, he established his headquarters in Capernaum. This city on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee was composed of half Jews, half Gentiles. The reason that Jesus moved to this city by the sea is given for us:

“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned” (Matthew 4:15-16).

From that time on Jesus began saying, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matthew 4:17). You have a King who reigns now. You are His ambassador. Seek first HIS KINGDOM in your life and everything else that people in other kingdoms worry so much about will be added to you.