**Adam Clarke Commentary**

**Daniel 8**

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Introduction

This chapter contains Daniel‘s vision of the ram and he-goat, [Daniel 8:1-14](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+8:1-14&t=en_nas&sr=1); referring, as explained by the angel, to the Persian and Grecian monarchies, [Daniel 8:15-26](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+8:15-26&t=en_nas&sr=1). The little horn mentioned in the ninth verse, (or fierce king, as interpreted in the twenty-third), is supposed by some to denote Antiochus Epiphanes; but seems more properly to apply to the Roman power in general, by which the polity and temple of the Jews were destroyed, on account of the great transgressions of these ancient people of God; and particularly because of their very obstinate and unaccountable rejection of the glorious doctrines of Christianity, which had been preached among them by Jesus Christ and his apostles, and the truth of which God had attested “by signs and wonders, and by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.” Daniel is then informed of the two thousand and three hundred prophetic days (that is, years) which must elapse before the sanctuary be cleansed; or, in other words, before righteousness shall prevail over the whole earth. This period is supposed, with considerable probability to have had its commencement when Alexander the Great invaded Asia, in the year before Christ 334. This will bring the close of it to about the end of the Sixth chiliad of the world; when, as already observed, some astonishing changes are expected to take place in the moral condition of the human race; when the power of Antichrist, both Papal and Mohammedan, shall be totally annihilated, and universal dominion given to the saints of the Most High. The chapter concludes with the distress of Daniel on account of the fearful judgments with which his country should be visited in after ages, [Daniel 8:27](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+8:27&t=en_nas&sr=1).

Verse 1

In the third year of the reign of - Belshazzar - We now come once more to the Hebrew, the Chaldee part of the book being finished. As the Chaldeans had a particular interest both in the history and prophecies from [Daniel 2:4](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+2:4&t=en_nas&sr=1) to the end of chap. 7, the whole is written in Chaldee, but as the prophecies which remain concern times posterior to the Chaldean monarchy, and principally relate to the Church and people of God generally, they are written in the Hebrew language, this being the tongue in which God chose to reveal all his counsels given under the Old Testament relative to the New.

Verse 2

I saw in a vision - Daniel was at this time in Shushan, which appears to have been a strong place, where the kings of Persia had their summer residence. It was the capital of the province of Elam or the Elymais; which province was most probably added to the Chaldean territories by Nebuchadnezzar; see [Jeremiah 49:34](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=jer+49:34&t=en_nas&sr=1), [Jeremiah 49:35](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=jer+49:35&t=en_nas&sr=1). Here was Daniel‘s ordinary residence; and though here at this time, he, in vision, saw himself on the banks of the river Ulai. This is the same as the river Euleus, which divided Shushan or Susiana from Elymais.

Verse 3

A ram which had two horns - In the former vision there were four beasts, pointing out four empires; in this we have but two, as only two empires are concerned here, viz., the Grecian and the Persian. The Babylonish empire is not mentioned; its fate was before decided, and it was now at its close.  
By the ram, the empire of the Medes and Persians was pointed out, as explained by the angel Gabriel, [Daniel 8:20](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+8:20&t=en_nas&sr=1); and particularly Cyrus, who was the founder of that empire. Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, king of Persia; and grandson of Astyages, king of Media, by his daughter Mandane, who had been given in marriage to Cambyses. Cyrus marrying Roxana, the daughter and only child of his uncle Cyaxares, called in Scripture Ahasuerus, succeeded to both crowns, and thus united Media and Persia. A ram was the symbol of the Persians; and a ram‘s head with two horns, one higher than the other, appears as such in different parts of the ruins of Persepolis. See the plates of these ruins in the supplement to the seventh volume of the ancient part of the Universal History.  
This ram had two horns; that is, two kingdoms, viz., Media and Persia; but one was higher than the other; and the higher came up last. Media, signified by the shorter horn, was the more ancient of the two kingdoms. Persia, the higher horn, had come up but lately, and was of little historic or political consequence till the time of Cyrus; but in the reigns of this prince and his immediate successors, Persia attained a political consequence greatly superior to that possessed at any time by the kingdom of Media; therefore, it is said to have been the higher, and to have come up last.

Verse 4

I saw the ram pushing westward - The Persians, who are signified by the ram, as well as their founder Cyrus, pushed their conquests west, north and south. The principal theater of their wars, says Calmet, was against the Scythians, northward; against the Greeks, westward; and against the Egyptians, southward.

He did according to his will - There was no other nation at that time that could stay the progress of the Persian arms.

Verse 5

Behold, a he-goat - This was Alexander the Great; and a goat was a very proper symbol of the Grecian or Macedonian people. Bp. Newton very properly observes that, two hundred years before the time of Daniel, they were called Aegeadae, the goats‘ people; the origin of which name is said to be as follows: Caranus, their first king, going with a multitude of Greeks to seek a new habitation in Macedonia, was advised by an oracle to take the goats for his guides; and afterwards, seeing a herd of goats flying from a violent storm, he followed them to Edessa, and there fixed the seat of his empire, and made the goats his ensigns or standards; and called the place Aege or Aegea, the goats‘ town; and the people Aegeadae, the goats‘ people; names which are derived from αιξ, αιγος , a goat. The city Aege or Aegea, was the usual burying-place of the Macedonian kings; and, in reference to this origin, Alexander called his son by Roxana, Alexander Aegus, Alexander the goat. All this shows the very great propriety of the symbol here used.

Came from the west - Europe lies westward of Asia.

On the face of the whole earth - Carrying every thing before him.

Touched not the ground - Seemed to fly from conquest to conquest. By the time Alexander was thirty years of age he had conquered all Asia: and, because of the rapidity of his conquests, he is represented as a leopard with four wings, in the preceding vision.

A notable horn between his eyes - This, says the angel, is the first king, [Daniel 8:21](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+8:21&t=en_nas&sr=1), that is, the first kingdom of the Greeks in Asia, which was erected by Alexander; and continued some years in his brother Philip Aridaeus, and in his two young sons, Alexander Aegus and Hercules. See Newton.

Verse 6

And he came to the ram - This and the following verse give an account of the overthrow of the Persian empire by Alexander.

And ran unto him in the fury of his power - The conflicts between the Greeks and the Persians were excessively severe. Alexander first vanquished the generals of Darius, at the river Granicus, in Phrygia; he next attacked and totally routed Darius, at the straits of Issus, in Cilicia; and afterwards at the plains of Arbela, in Assyria. One can hardly read these words, says Bp. Newton, “the ram - which I had seen standing by the river, ran unto him in the fury of his power,” without having the image of Darius‘ army standing and guarding the river Granicus and of Alexander on the other side, with his forces plunging in swimming across the stream, and rushing on the enemy, with all the fire and fury that can be conceived.

Verse 7

And brake his two horns - Subdued Persia and Media; sacked and burnt the royal city of Persepolis, the capital of the Persian empire, and, even in its ruins, one of the wonders of the world to the present day. This he did because “he was moved with choler” against Darius, who had endeavored to draw off his captains with bribes, and had labored to induce some of his friends to assassinate him. Alexander, finding this, would listen to no proposals of peace; and was determined never to rest till he had destroyed Darius and his whole empire. In Media, Darius was seized and made prisoner by some of his own treacherous subjects, and afterwards basely murdered.

There was no power in the ram to stand before him - Alexander‘s victories over the Persians were as easy as they were rapid and decisive.

He cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him - Totally destroyed the family, and overturned the whole monarchy.

Verse 8

The he-goat waxed very strong - He had subdued nearly the whole of the then known world.

The great horn was broken - Alexander died in the height of his conquests, when he was but about thirty-three years of age. His natural brother, Philip Aridaeus, and his two sons, Alexander Aegus and Hercules, kept up the show and name of the Macedonian kingdom for a time; but they were all murdered within fifteen years; and thus the great horn, the Macedonian kingdom, was broken, Alexander‘s family being now cut off.

And for it came up four notable ones - The regal family being all dead, the governors of provinces usurped the title of kings; and Antigonus, one of them, being slain at the battle of Ipsus, they were reduced to four, as we have already seen.

1.Seleucus, who had Syria and Babylon, from whom came the Seleucidae, famous in history.

2.Lysimachus, who had Asia Minor.  
3.Ptolemy, son of Lagus, who had Egypt, from whom sprang the Lagidae. And,

4.Cassander, who had Greece and the neighboring countries. These held dominion towards the four winds of heaven.

Cassander had the western parts, Lysimachus had the northern regions, Ptolemy possessed the southern countries, and Seleucus had the eastern provinces.

Verse 9

Out of one of them came forth a little horn - Some think that Antiochus Epiphanes is meant; but Bp. Newton contends that it is the Roman government that is intended; and although very great at its zenith, yet very little in its rising.

Waxed - great toward the south - The Romans made Egypt a province of their empire, and it continued such for some centuries.

Toward the east - They conquered Syria, and made it a province.

Toward the pleasant land - Judea, so called [Psalm 106:24](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=ps+106:24&t=en_nas&sr=1); [Jeremiah 3:19](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=jer+3:19&t=en_nas&sr=1); [Daniel 11:16](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+11:16&t=en_nas&sr=1), [Daniel 11:41](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+11:41&t=en_nas&sr=1). It is well known that they took Judea, and made it a province; and afterwards burnt the city and the temple, and scattered the Jews over the face of the earth.

Verse 10

The host of heaven - The Jewish hierarchy. The stars, the priests and Levites. The powers or host of heaven are probably intended by our Lord, [Matthew 24:29](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=mt+24:29&t=en_nas&sr=1), to signify the whole Jewish hierarchy.

Verse 11

Even to the prince of the host - They seemed, in this case, to fight against God himself.

The daily sacrifice was taken away - By the destruction of the city and temple; and has never been restored from that day until now.

Verse 12

And a host was given him - That is, power; or perhaps the host of heaven - the priesthood - the whole sacrificial system, by reason of transgression. They had filled up the measure of their iniquities, in rejecting the Lord that bought them; and the daily sacrifice, being no longer of use, was given up with the rest to destruction.

Cast down the truth - Probably the whole Jewish ritual and religion.

Practiced, and prospered - Prosperity or success followed all their acts.

Verse 13

One saint speaking, and another saint said - One angel asked another how long the sanctuary was to be trodden down?

Verse 14

Unto two thousand and three hundred days - Though literally it be two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings. Yet I think the prophetic day should be understood here, as in other parts of this prophet, and must signify so many years. If we date these years from the vision of the he-goat, (Alexander‘s invading Asia), this was A.M. 3670, b.c. 334; and two thousand three hundred years from that time will reach to a.d. 1966, or one hundred and forty-one years from the present a.d. 1825. This will bring it near to the time mentioned [Daniel 7:25](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+7:25&t=en_nas&sr=1) (note), where see the note.

Verse 15

As the appearance of a man - Supposed to be the Messiah.

Verse 17

At the time of the end shall be the vision - Or, as Houbigant, “The vision shall have an end at the proper time.”

Verse 20

The ram which thou sagest - See this explained under the vision itself, [Daniel 8:3](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+8:3&t=en_nas&sr=1) (note), etc.

Verse 22

But not in his power - The four kingdoms which shall arise out of the Macedonian empire shall not be of Alexander‘s power or family, nor have his strength and dignity.

Verse 23

When the transgressors are come to the full - When the utmost degradation has taken place, by the buying and selling of the high priesthood; for Onias was ejected for a sum of money, to make room for wicked Jason; and Jason again was supplanted for a greater sum by a worse man, if possible, than himself, Menelaus; and the golden vessels of the temple were sold to pay for this sacrilegious purchase. Thus transgressions were come to the full, before the Romans had commission to destroy Jerusalem and its temple, etc.

A king of fierce countenance - The Roman government, as before; for king is often taken for kingdom or empire.

Understanding dark sentences - Very learned and skillful in all things relating to government and its intrigues. The learning of Rome is proverbial to the present time.

Verse 24

But not by his own power - The strength of the other kingdoms consisted in themselves; but the Roman empire, as a horn or kingdom of the goat, was not mighty by its own power - was not strong by virtue of the goat, but drew its nourishment and strength from Rome and Italy. There grew the trunk and body of the tree; though the branches extended over Greece, Asia, Syria, and Egypt. - Bp. Newton.

Shall destroy wonderfully - In the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans ninety-seven thousand Jews were made captives, and eleven hundred thousand were slain. So they destroyed this once mighty and holy people!

Verse 26

He shall cause craft to prosper - They subdued as many by their diplomatic skill and political intrigues as they did by the sword.

He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes - Against Christ, for it was by the Roman authority that he was condemned to death and crucified; and their persecutions had nearly destroyed the Christian religion; but the house was founded on a rock.

But he shall be broken without hand - The tide was turned by the invisible hand of God; and thus heathen Rome was overcome, and converted to Christianity.

Verse 26

The vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true - That mentioned in [Daniel 8:14](http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=da+8:14&t=en_nas&sr=1).

For it shall be for many days - Not less than two thousand three hundred years!

Verse 27

Daniel fainted - To foresee the desolations that were coming on the land, the city, the temple, and the people.

Did the king‘s business - Transacted the affairs of state that belonged to my department, after having been sick for certain days through the effects of this vision. He had a pious and feeling heart; and he was distressed for the desolations that were coming upon his people.