

**DANIEL 8**  
**THE MEDO-PERSIAN AND GRECIAN EMPIRES**

**1. Icebreaker**

*Example: Have you ever felt in control of a situation, only to find out the things were actually out of your hands? How did this affect your understanding of “being in control”?*

**2. Opening Prayer**

*Ask if someone wants to volunteer before leading the prayer*

**3. Tell the Story**

*Non-obligatory outline to help prepare for the “storying” of the scripture reviewed during LG*

While chapters 1-6 were organized in a chronological manner, chapter 7 begins a series of visions that Daniel receives. Similar to Chapter 7, Daniel once again has a startling vision. It occurs during the third year of King Belshazzar, and chronologically, it takes place before the handwriting on the wall in chapter 5. He receives a prophecy that is so specific that opponents of the Bible have said that there is no way the text could have been written before the events took place. However, this gives us confidence in God’s word and its authority.

Daniel’s Vision of the Ram and the Goat. Daniel sees a ram with two horns, but one of the horns was larger than the other. The ram was powerful and went westward, southward, and northward. However, a goat with a conspicuous horn comes from the west. This goat defeats the ram, but after trampling on the ram, its horn is broken and replaced with four other horns. A little horn sprouts up out of one of the four horns, and it grows toward heaven. It becomes great and “will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper” (v. 12). This horn will result in the sanctuary being given over for 2,300 evenings and mornings, but after that, “the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state” (v. 14).

The Interpretation of the Vision. Gabriel explains to Daniel what the vision represents, which shows that it is only through God’s revelation that the dream can be interpreted. Previously, when Daniel was interpreting others’ visions, it was evident that he was only able to do so because God has spoken to him. Here, the same concept applies. Daniel can only know what this vision means because God has shown him.

The ram in Daniel’s dream represents the Medo-Persian empire, with the two horns representing the Medes and the Persians. The goat that overtakes the ram is the king of Greece (Alexander the Great). The horn that is broken and replaced with four smaller horns signifies four kingdoms that will arise from this empire, and at the end of these kingdoms, a king of bold face will rise up (wicked king Antiochus IV Epiphanes). This king will “destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints” (v. 24). However, after destroying many, “he shall be broken- but by no human hand” (v. 25). This shows us that even when kings and kingdoms seem indestructible, and when suffering seems to have no end, God will ultimately prevail.

After hearing this interpretation, Daniel is still greatly troubled. He is “overcome and lay sick for some days” (v. 27). After this, though, he “rose and went about the king’s business” (v. 27). He sees that there is still a purpose for him to fulfill while he is under the reign of King Belshazzar, so he gets up and returns to his work. He continues to do what God calls him to do in the midst of

this troubling dream. The Jews suffered under the hand of Antiochus IV (banned circumcision, ended sacrifice in the temple, and deliberately defiling the temple sacrifice v. 13).

#### 4. Read the Story (Daniel 8)

*Read out loud as a group, 4-5 verses per person, let everyone know they can opt out if they want to*

#### 5. Breaking it Down

*Questions to be used (as appropriate based upon meeting dynamics) to facilitate discussion and understanding*

5.1 Why do you think God chose to communicate future events to Daniel in this way? (Why not simply tell him the historical facts?)

5.2 Describe the ram and the goat in Daniel's vision. (3---8)

Ram: mighty and great, with two horns, one higher than the other

Goat: swift, from the west, with a notable horn

The goat tramples the ram, then grew very great

The goat's horn is broken into four, and out of them a little horn

5.3 What were the the actions of the little horn that arises from the four horns. (9---12)

Grew great toward the south, the east, and the Glorious Land

Grew up to the host of heaven and cast some of them and stars down

Exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host

Took away the daily sacrifices, cast down the sanctuary, cast truth to the ground

5.4 How long would the desolation against the sacrifices and sanctuary last? (13---14)

For 2300 days (evening---mornings, v.26); then the sanctuary would be cleansed

5.5 According to Gabriel, when are the visions relevant? (15---19)

The time of the end, the latter time of the indignation, the appointed time

5.6 What did the ram and goat represent? (20---22)

Ram: Media and Persia; Goat: Greece (Alexander and his generals)

5.7 How is the king who shall rise (the little horn) described? (23---25)

Fierce, mighty, cunning, who will destroy the mighty and holy people

Rising even against the Prince of princes, but will be broken without means

5.8 What was Daniel told to do with the vision? Why? (26)

Seal up the vision; it pertained to many days in the future

5.9 If you had been a Jew living under the tyranny of Antiochus IV, how would it have made you feel to read Daniel's prophetic prediction of the very events you were experiencing?

## **6. Application**

Sample questions (as appropriate) to tie to life application

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God?
- 2) What does this passage teach us about mankind?
- 3) What is a command to obey in this passage? What has God revealed in your life that needs changing? What truth can be applied to your life about the gospel?

Personal Reflection/Application:

1. Daniel's closing statement "then I rose and went about the King's business," tells us that Daniel was alarmed but continued to do what God was calling him to do. How does this speak to you in your life? What ways are you having to "press onward" in the midst of difficult circumstances?
2. What perspective does this chapter give us in understanding how a good God can permit evil? How does the end result of this chapter provide us with courage?

## **7. Prayer Requests**

*Have a designated person to capture and share (as appropriate) within the LifeGroup. What happens in LifeGroup, Stays in LifeGroup*

## **8. Closing & Prayer**

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**1. Icebreaker**

**2. Opening Prayer**

*Consider volunteering for prayer.*

**3. Tell the Story**

*Consider volunteering to Read the Story at your next meeting.*

**4. Read the Story (Daniel 8)**

*Read out loud as a group, 4-5 verses per person, let everyone know they can opt out if they want to*

**5. Breaking it Down**

*Review the scripture through question, discussion.*

5.1 Why do you think God chose to communicate future events to Daniel in this way? (Why not simply tell him the historical facts?)

5.2 Describe the ram and the goat in Daniel's vision. (3---8)

5.3 What were the actions of the little horn that arises from the four horns. (9---12)

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**7. Prayer Requests**

*Have a designated person to capture and share (as appropriate) within the LifeGroup.*

*What happens in LifeGroup, Stays in LifeGroup*

**8. Closing & Prayer**

*Don't forget – when are you meeting next? Who is facilitating? Who is Telling the Story?*