

GOD'S LOVE IN ACTION**Daniel's Vision of a Ram and a Goat****Daniel 8**

"I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding." Daniel 8:27

Day 1: Read Daniel 8:1–27.

1. In the 6th century B.C. (and two years after the dreams of chapter 7), Daniel is given a vision of events to take place centuries into the future. Jot down a list of characters.
2. The vision contains a lot of bad news for the people of God (see hints in verses 9–14). Why do you think God is telling them of suffering ahead of time? (John 13:19) Do you like to be told when you are going to go through something hard? Explain.
3. Why do you suppose God uses symbols in books like Daniel and Revelation to communicate certain historical events? What advantage might this have over a straight newspaper account with dates and times? What does it demand of your imagination, your powers of observation, your daily vigilance?
4. Whenever Daniel receives a word from God, he spends time thinking about it (see vss. 5, 15; 9:2). What role does meditation play in your own reading of God's Word?

Day 2: Read Daniel 8:1–4.

5. Daniel is first shown a ram, which in verse 20 is identified as the Medo-Persian Empire (5th century B.C.) that conquered Babylon, Syria, Asia Minor, Armenia, and parts of Africa. What words in verse 4 indicate this vast spread?
6. The Persian part of the empire soon swallowed up the Median part. What imagery alludes to that? (vs. 3)
7. Chronologically, the receiving of this vision precedes the incident of the handwriting on the wall. How does this shed light on the boldness and insight of Daniel's words to Belshazzar in 5:17–28?

Day 3: Read Daniel 8:5–8.

8. The goat of verse 5 is later (vs. 21) identified as the king of Greece (Alexander the Great), who virtually conquered the world by the age of 26 (330 B.C.). What words in verse 5 indicate this quick expansion?
9. As you see in this encapsulated history how kingdoms rise and fall so quickly, what does it do for your perspective on life?

10. Alexander's kingdom was eventually carved up among four powerful generals, known as the Diadochi. What language alludes to this partitioning? (vs. 8)
11. The stories of the ram and goat are simply a prelude to the story that most interests the narrator—that of the “little horn” that grows out of one of the four. Why do you suppose this historically less powerful personage receives most of the attention in Daniel's vision? (Scan verses 9–14.) What piece of real estate do you think is meant by “the Beautiful Land” in verse 9? (Jer. 3:19) According to what standard of conduct does God judge the nations? (Ps. 79:10b; Gen. 15:13–14)

Day 4: Read Daniel 8:9–17.

12. The “little horn” of chapter 8 is evidently the ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, who arose in the Seleucid dynasty, one of the four parts of the fragmented house of Alexander. He chose his own blasphemous name, which means “The Illustrious God.” How is that alluded to in verse 11?
13. In his power lust, Antiochus sought to extend his reign to Palestine, replacing the high priest, sacking Jerusalem and massacring thousands of Jews, entering the Holy of Holies, setting up a statue of Zeus in the temple, sacrificing a pig on the altar and even performing human sacrifice (168 B.C.). How are these events alluded to in verses 10–14? (See also Psalm 79:1–4.)
14. The “2,300 evenings and mornings” (vs. 14) may refer to the period starting with the removal of the high priest in 171 and the reconsecration of the high priesthood in 164. In any case, why do you think the number is given? What is the encouragement in it?
15. Commentators suggest that this vision of “the end” (vs. 17) refers to the end of this particular 2nd century persecution and not the end of all history. Nevertheless, how does it foreshadow the end of all things?

Day 5: Read Daniel 8:18–27.

16. Think about the characteristics of these empires arrayed against God. What happens to truth when wicked men and systems are in control? (vs. 12)
17. What is the ultimate end of every evil and powerful “master of intrigue” (vs. 23)? (vs. 25) How does Daniel's knowing the end make this otherwise terrifying vision bearable?
18. An angel asks about the duration of God's people's suffering: “How long?” (vs. 13). Christian martyrs from all times ask: “How long?” (Rev.6:10). What are the martyrs told in reply? (Rev.6:11) What does this suffering call for on the part of the saints? (Rev. 1:9; 13:10; 14:12)
19. What sustains our faith when we see wickedness appear to prosper and have its own way with God's people? (2 Thes.1:6–7)
20. Evil rulers of every age will be destroyed, “but not by human hands” (vs. 25). The God who loves you is in control. How do you feel about that?