

DAY 7 - JANUARY 14, 2026

A Vision and a Mighty Prayer (Daniel 8:1-9:19)



We're combining into a single lesson both Daniel's vision of a ram and a goat in chapter 8 with Daniel's great prayer of intercession in 9:1-19.

A. Daniel's Dream of a Ram and Goat (Daniel 8)

Though Daniel is physically in the city of Babylon, in the vision he is in the ancient fortress city of Susa. It was one of the royal cities of the Medes and Persians that had been the home of both Esther and Nehemiah in their exile.

“The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia.” (8:20)

“The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king.” (8:21)

Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in 330 BC, and died a few years later at the age of 32. His kingdom was split into four parts (“four prominent horns”), each led by one of Alexander’s generals.

1. Ptolemaic Dynasty (Egypt, 323-30 BC), begun by Ptolemy I Soter.
2. Seleucid Dynasty (Palestine, Mesopotamia and Central Asia, 312-63 BC), begun by Seleucus I Nicator. Antiochus IV Epiphanes was king of the Seleucid Empire 175-163 BC.
3. Attalid Dynasty ruled Pergamon in Asia Minor (281-133 BC). Thrace, Asia Minor, and Macedon were originally ruled by Lysimachus (306-281 BC), one of Alexander’s generals.
4. Antigonid Dynasty (Macedonia, 306-168 BC) was founded by Antigonus I Monophthalmus (the “one-eyed”), who also ruled over part of Asia Minor, and northern Syria for a time.

The “small horn” is Antiochus Epiphanes. The “Beautiful/Glorious/Pleasant Land,” of course, is the Promised Land.

When a rumor spread that Antiochus had been killed in Egypt, a deposed high priest, Jason, made a surprise attack on Jerusalem with 1,000 soldiers and took the city. When Antiochus heard of this revolt, he returned enraged to Jerusalem in 167 BC, took back the city, restored Menelaus as high priest, and massacred tens of thousands of Jews (2 Maccabees 5:12-14)

Then he plundered the temple. Antiochus forcibly converted the temple into a temple to the Greek god Zeus and erected an altar to Jupiter, and defiled the temple by offering a pig on the altar. Remaining Jews were forced to eat of these sacrifices. Death was the penalty for Jews who circumcised their sons. Antiochus destroyed any copies of the Scriptures that he could find.

Antiochus Epiphanes's outrages brought about the Maccabean rebellion, which is described in an inspiring account in 1 Maccabees 1-3. The Maccabees were successful in their rebellion. Faithful priests cleansed the temple and it was rededicated in 165 BC, commemorated by Jews to this day with the Feast of Hanukkah (from a Hebrew word meaning "dedication"). Antiochus died suddenly of disease in 164 BC.

Antiochus Epiphanes set up a desolating sacrifice (8:13), mentioned also in 9:27b; 11:31; and 12:11;. Jesus refers to the abomination of desolation as a future event (Matthew 24:15), probably seeing the fulfillment by Antiochus as a foreshadowing of a later desolation that took place in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the temple and burned Jerusalem.

Lessons for Disciples:

From Daniel 8

1. God sees the end from the beginning, and is in charge of the affairs of men, even though we may not see it at the time.
2. God sometimes reveals events to his prophets to encourage his people who may go through terrible persecution, so that they might take courage that the persecution will not last forever. In this case, Daniel is given the period of three and half years.
3. Visions can greatly telescope the time between events. Here, the time from the rise of the Medo-Persian empire under Cyrus the Great to its rapid end is a bit more than 200 years. From the rise of Alexander the Great to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes is just under 200 years.
4. Seeing the future is not without cost. Daniel is overwhelmed and devastated by what he sees. Sometimes we idly wish to know the future, but such a vision is costly.

B. Daniel's Prayer of Intercession (9:1-19)

In 539 BC, Daniel realizes that Jeremiah's prophecy of a 70 year exile about to be fulfilled (Jeremiah 25:11-12).

Q1. (Daniel 9:1-2) What encourages Daniel to seek God for the forgiveness and restoration of Israel to its homeland? What practice on Daniel's part leads him to pray? Several words describe Daniel's prayer of intercession. (1) pleading, (2) prayer, (3) petition, (4) abject humility, and confession.

Q2. (Daniel 9:3-4a) What is Daniel's demeanor as he prays? How does he prepare? Why is this so important in this case? In what ways might you and I prepare for intercession? Daniel confesses the nations sins as his own (9:5). He identified with his people's sins as did Jesus later (Isaiah 53:12; Galatians 3:13; 4:4-5; 1 Peter 3:18a; Philippians 2:6-8). See 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Q3. (Daniel 9:5) Since Daniel is such a righteous man in his generation, why does he identify himself with the sins of his people? He didn't commit these sins. How does this compare to how Jesus sought forgiveness for his people?

Daniel appeals to God on the basis of:

1. God's precedent. God delivering Israel from Egypt provides a precedent for delivering them from Babylon (verse 15a). Neither time were they delivered for their own righteousness (Deuteronomy 9:4-5).
2. God's glory. Just as God's glory was known through the deliverance from Egypt, so the deliverance from Babylon will bring him glory (verse 15b).
3. God's righteousness. Deliverance of God's people shows God's righteousness as an act of mercy (verse 16a).
4. God's personal identification with Jerusalem. God has identified himself with Jerusalem, the City of God ("your city") and the temple mount ("your holy hill"). While Israel's sins have brought scorn to Jerusalem and Israel - and to God, by association - deliverance will erase that scorn (verse 16b).
5. Worship in God's temple ("your desolate sanctuary") will be filled with worshippers again. Notice that Daniel points out that this is "for your sake" (verse 17).
6. God's personal identification with Jerusalem (again). Daniel reminds God that the desolate city "bears your Name" (verse 18a).
7. God's mercy. Daniel's appeal is not on the basis of Israel's righteousness, which has been destroyed by sin and rebellion. He appeals solely on the basis of God's known character of mercy (verse 18b).

Q4. (Daniel 9:15-19) What was Daniel's essential prayer? What are the various grounds of Daniel's appeal? How did God answer the prayer (see Daniel 9:20-23)?

Lessons for Disciples:

About Intercession

There are many lessons in this passage. Humility, repentance, asking for mercy, appealing to God's own interests, reputation, and glory. But the one that strikes me especially from this passage is that, as an intercessor, I cannot just pray for another. When praying for my own nation, people, or church, I must identify with their sins and confess them as mine. Taking on the sins of another as a mediator - that is the role of an intercessor, and of Christ our Lord.