

Greek Empire Study Notes

Dan 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.

Dan 7:2 Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

Dan 7:3 And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.

Dan 7:4 The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it.

Dan 7:5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'

Dan 7:6 After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

Dan 7:7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

Dan 7:8 I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

- Lion: Babylon (Chaldeans)
- Bear: raised up on one side (unequal power of Persians versus Medes) holding three ribs (possibly the three directions of conquest)
- Leopard: Greece (speed of Leopard plus wings of eagle – swiftness and far reaching empire). Four heads represent the four generals who divided Alexander's empire.
- Terrifying fourth beast: Rome (will discuss in later study on Roman empire, but note this "little horn" in 7:8 differs from the one in 8:9)

Dan 8:1 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first.

Dan 8:2 And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the citadel, which is in the province of Elam. And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai canal.

Dan 8:3 I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal. It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.

Dan 8:4 I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

Dan 8:5 As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

Dan 8:6 He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath.

Dan 8:7 I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him. And there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power.

Dan 8:8 Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

Dan 8:9 Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land.

Dan 8:10 It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them.

Dan 8:11 It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown.

- Ram with two horns (one higher than the other): Medes/Persians (Cyrus the Persian greater than Darius the Mede)
- Goat: from the west (Greece) with great speed and a great horn (Alexander) broken without outward force (Alexander's unexpected death at 32 years old, without an heir)

- Four horns rise after the great horn is broken (Alexander's generals dividing the empire after his death) and one of those rises above the rest (Seleucus) and expands toward the "glorious land" (Judea).
- The prophecy foretells his "regular burnt offerings" are taken from him (Antiochus Epiphanes would be the Seleucid ruler that would invade Judea and set himself up in the temple to be worshipped as a deity)

I. Prophetic References to the Greek Empire

1. Book of Daniel 2:31–45

Nebuchadnezzar's Statue

- The third kingdom (the "belly and thighs of bronze") is traditionally understood as the Greek Empire following Medo-Persia.
- Daniel 2:39 — "another third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth."

2. Book of Daniel 7:6

Four Beasts Vision

- The third beast is "like a leopard" with four wings and four heads.
- Commonly interpreted as Greece:
 - Swiftmess = rapid conquests.
 - Four heads = division after Alexander.

3. Book of Daniel 8:5–8, 21–22

Ram and Goat Vision (Explicit Identification)

This is the clearest prophetic identification.

- 8:21 — "The male goat is the kingdom of Greece."
- The "great horn" = **Alexander the Great**
- The horn broken and replaced by four = division of his empire among four generals.

4. Book of Daniel 10:20

- Mentions the "prince of Greece," indicating the coming Greek world power after Persia.

5. Book of Daniel 11:2–4

- 11:3 — "A mighty king shall arise" (understood as Alexander).

- 11:4 — His kingdom divided “toward the four winds of heaven.”

6. Book of Zechariah 9:13

- Mentions Greece (Hebrew: *Yavan*).
- Prophetic tension between Zion and Greece.

II. Historical References During the Greek Period

Although the Old Testament historical narrative ends before Alexander, the New Testament world is deeply shaped by Hellenism.

1. Gospel of John 12:20

- “Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.”

2. Acts of the Apostles 6:1

- “Hellenists” (Greek-speaking Jews).

3. Acts of the Apostles 16–18

Paul ministers in Greek cities such as:

- Philippi
- Thessalonica
- Athens
- Corinth

All part of the former Greek cultural world.

4. Acts of the Apostles 20:2

- References “Greece” directly.

III. Intertestamental Fulfillment (Not in Protestant Canon)

The events of:

- Alexander’s conquests
- Division of the empire
- Rise of the Seleucids and Ptolemies

- Persecution under Antiochus IV

are detailed historically in:

- 1 & 2 Maccabees (Apocrypha)

The Greek Empire Under Alexander

The Greek Empire is most associated with **Alexander the Great**, who ruled from 336–323 BC.

Though Greek city-states like Athens and Sparta had long histories, it was Alexander who transformed Greece into a vast international empire.

Origins

- Alexander inherited the throne of Macedon from his father, **Philip II of Macedon**.
- Philip had unified most of Greece under Macedonian dominance after the Battle of Chaeronea (338 BC).

Rapid Conquest (334–323 BC)

Alexander conquered:

- Asia Minor
- Syria and Phoenicia
- Egypt
- Mesopotamia
- Persia
- As far east as India

He defeated the Persian king **Darius III**, effectively ending the Persian Empire.

Characteristics of the Empire

1. **Speed** – Conquered in about 10 years.
2. **Hellenization** – Spread Greek language, culture, architecture, and philosophy across the Near East.
3. **Urbanization** – Founded many cities named Alexandria (notably in Egypt).
4. **Cultural Blending** – Encouraged intermarriage and administrative integration.

Greek became the dominant trade language, setting the stage for the New Testament era.

The Division After Alexander's Death (323 BC)

Alexander died unexpectedly in Babylon at age 32 without a clear adult heir. His half-brother and infant son were nominal kings, but real power went to his generals, known as the **Diadochi** ("successors").

After years of civil war, the empire fractured into four major Hellenistic kingdoms — corresponding to the "four horns" in ****Book of Daniel 8:8, 22.**

The Four Major Divisions

1. Cassander – Macedonia & Greece

- Controlled mainland Greece and Macedonia.
- Short-lived dynasty.
- Eventually absorbed into Roman control (2nd century BC).

2. Lysimachus – Thrace & Western Asia Minor

- Controlled modern-day Turkey's western regions.
- Eventually defeated and absorbed by the Seleucids.

3. Ptolemy – Egypt (Ptolemaic Kingdom)

- Founded the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt.
- Capital: Alexandria.
- Famous ruler: **Cleopatra VII Philopator**
- Controlled Palestine at times (important for Jewish history).

4. Seleucus – Syria & Mesopotamia (Seleucid Empire)

- Controlled the largest territory.
- Capital: Antioch.
- Key ruler: **Antiochus IV Epiphanes**
 - Persecuted the Jews (2nd century BC).
 - Triggered the Maccabean Revolt.