

INTRODUCTION

Just as Daniel 7 gave us much more information about the fourth kingdom, the prophecy in chapter 8 gives us much more information about the second and third kingdoms. For Daniel, this was one of his most troubling visions, even after the angel Gabriel explained it to him. Notice Daniel's reaction in verse 27, "I, Daniel was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business (hang onto that phrase). I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding."

However, for us, standing on the other side of this prophecy, it's one of the easiest for us to comprehend. What Daniel prophesied in chapter 8 was future for him, but much of it is history for us and we have ample historical evidence of the exact fulfillment of this vision. One reason I enjoy this section of Daniel is because I love to study history, and this is one of the best places in the Bible to compare history and prophecy.

This message should demonstrate to you the absolute reliability and infallibility of the Word of God. When we see things predicted in the Bible that have already come true, it gives us great assurance that those things *yet* to happen will also come true.

I. THE PROPHETIC MEANING OF THE VISION

Chapter 8 indicates a change. There is a change of language. Once again, the book is written in Hebrew rather than Aramaic. There is also an explanation of the time (Belshazzar and Nabonidus are the Babylonian rulers) and the place. He was in Elam at the fortress of Susa. This is near modern Kuwait, about 150 miles north of the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Later, this became the capitol of the Persian Empire and it would have been where Queen Esther and Nehemiah lived. We aren't sure if Daniel is actually there or if he was simply transported there in his vision, which seems to be more likely.

Rather than reading the content of this dream, let me just tell you the basics of what Daniel dreamed and we will go straight to the interpretation the angel Gabriel gave Daniel. Daniel dreamed of a mighty ram with two massive horns, but one horn was bigger than the other. This Ram was powerful and it charged around beating every other animal. But then Daniel saw a strange looking goat approaching the Ram. It had one horn growing out from its forehead (almost like a unicorn, but probably more like a rhinoceros). Well, this one-horned goat whipped the ram and trampled it down in the dirt. But suddenly its horn was snapped off, and growing in its place were four other horns and growing out of one of those four horns was another little horn and then this little horn did some really mean things to God's people and God's temple.

Daniel 8:13-14. "Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, 'How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled—the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?' He said to me, 'It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be re-consecrated.'"

Daniel himself was troubled and confused, so verse 16 tells us Gabriel comes to give him a clear interpretation. By the way, of all the angels in the bible, only three are named. Obviously, one of them is Gabriel. This is the same angel who spoke to the Virgin Mary and Joseph. Another is the archangel, Michael. We’ll read about him in chapter 10. In his great epic allegory, *Paradise Lost*, John Milton incorrectly identified Gabriel as an archangel but only Michael is given that title, which just means “leader angel.” So who is the third angel identified by name in the Bible? Lucifer, the fallen angel.

Gabriel explains the dream to Daniel, v 20-24. “The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. In the later part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise [that’s the little horn]. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people.”

1. A RAMPAGING RAM: Medo-Persian Empire

When Daniel received this dream, the Babylonian Empire was still in place, but God showed him there was a new empire on the horizon, one God would use to fulfill the prophecy to all the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple that Neb destroyed. This ram had one horn was larger than the other. This symbolizes the Persians were always the more powerful of the two nations in this coalition.

2. A UNI-HORN GOAT: The Greek Empire under Alexander the Great

The goat represents the Greek Empire, and the single horn is Alexander. The Greek Empire grew to world domination under the leadership of Alexander the Great. Alexander was the son of Phillip, King of Macedon. Alexander has always fascinated me. The very first research paper I can ever remember doing in junior high school was on Alexander and I’ve read many books about him since. When Alexander was a boy, his father enlisted Plato’s disciple, Aristotle, to be his personal tutor. Phillip always told Alexander he would be a great leader. From an early age, he was convinced he would rule the world. Alex really didn’t love his father, as much as he did his mother, Olympias. In fact many scholars write that Alex grew up angry with this father for his many indiscretions against Olympias.

As early as age 18, Alexander was already leading armies into battle. When he was only 20, his father was murdered (some say by a plot hatched by Alexander’s mother) and he became the ruler of the Greeks. His decisive battle against the Persians took place near modern Syria at the battle of Issus, which he won in 333 B.C. at age 23. Within the next ten years he would conquer the entire world from Italy to Egypt to modern Pakistan.

After his victory at Issus in 333, Alexander headed south toward Egypt and he planned to capture Jerusalem. The Jewish writer, Josephus, shares a fascinating incident about Alexander. As Alexander and his army approached Jerusalem, he was planning to destroy the city. Remember

the city had just been rebuilt about a hundred years earlier by Ezra and Nehemiah. There was only the basic building of the second Temple constructed by Zerubbabel. Josephus writes that while Alexander was considering destroying the city, the High Priest went out with a scroll of Daniel 8 and explained to him that he and his army (the goat) were destined by the God of the Hebrews to conquer the Ram (the Persians). The account says Alexander was so impressed that instead of destroying the city, he enriched it and then bypassed it on his way to capture and control Egypt.

It must be exciting to read the Bible and realize prophecy is being fulfilled at that moment. We are doing the same thing these days. That's the way I have felt ever since I understood that the resettling of Israel in 1948 and the recapture of Jerusalem in 1967 are both examples of prophecy fulfillment in our time.

So Alexander is this uni-horn on the goat. But at the apex of its power, this single horn was suddenly broken off. Even so, Alexander the Great died suddenly at age 33.

3. THE FOUR HORNS: The four generals who divided Alexander's territory

Alexander made no plans for the continuation of his kingdom. He had children, but he cared little for them and never designated an heir to his empire. So when he died suddenly, there was a conflict between the leading generals and finally they arrived at a tenuous agreement to divide the empire. Cassander would rule Greece; Lysimachus would control Asia Minor; Seleucus would control Syria; and Ptolemy would rule over Egypt.

This is merely history for us, but remember Daniel predicted all of this almost 300 years before it happened.

4. THE LITTLE HORN: Antiochus Epiphanes IV

Those of you who were here last week read about a "little horn" in Daniel 7 and say, "I know who the little horn is, that's the Antichrist" Yes and no. This little horn in chapter 8 is different than the little horn in chapter 7, but as we will see later in this message, he is a forerunner, a type of the antichrist.

Most scholars agree this individual in Daniel 8 is the eighth king in the dynasty of the Seleucids, Antiochus Epiphanes IV. His capital city was Antioch, which was named for him. (Antioch appears in the New Testament as the place where believers were first called Christians, Acts 11:26.) This man, Antiochus Epiphanes (Epiphanes means "great") was a wicked and vicious ruler. He hated the Jews and they hated him. He demanded crowds of people honor him by crying out "Epiphanes" whenever he would pass by. Instead, the Jews had nicknamed him "Antiochus Epimanes," a play on his name. Epimanes means "madman," or "idiot" and so they shouted "Epimanes" when he passed by and that drove him even madder.

During the Persian Gulf War, President Bush used to pronounce Sadaam Hussein as "Sa-dam" which in Arabic can be translated "little man." It was a taunt. The Jews taunted Antiochus and he

got back at them in vicious ways that beg description. Because this is a G-rated audience, I can't go into all the terrible atrocities he committed against the Jews.

Here are just a few of the "low-lights" of his treatment of God's people. He forbade circumcision, he outlawed the Sabbath observance and made it a criminal offense for anyone to possess or read the Jewish scriptures. As you can imagine, the Jews rebelled against him, and his punishment was swift and brutal. On one occasion, Antiochus forced a Jewish mother watch as her seven sons were fried to death on a large hot metal pan, and then her eyes were blinded so that would be her last sight. He was cruel. He was vicious. He was evil. He slaughtered 80,000 Jews on a single occasion.

But the vilest thing he did from a Jewish standpoint was to set up an image of Zeus in the Jewish Temple (the statue had a striking resemblance to...who else? Antiochus). He ordered the Jews to worship that image. And, horror of horrors, he personally sacrificed a hog on the sacred altar and sprinkled the juice and blood of the hog all around the holy place and then it was repeated every month. In doing this, he defiled the temple. It was as verse 13 says, "a rebellion—or abomination—that causes desolation." That means the faithful Jews left, or deserted the Temple, so it was desolate. That's a pretty important term, so hang onto it.

In this dream, Daniel predicted Antiochus would invade the Holy Land, desecrate the temple and cause the sacrifices to cease for 2,300 sacrifices (morning and evening). Just as today, a morning and evening make one day, so if you divide 2,300 by two, you get 1,150 days. As anyone who has read the Book of the Maccabees (in the Apocrypha) knows, Jewish history records that the offering was taken away for a period of a little over three years. Finally, Judas Maccabees and his sons rose in revolt and led the people of Israel to retake Jerusalem, cleansed the sanctuary and restored the offerings at the end of 1,150 days, exactly as predicted. The rededication of the Temple on December 14, 164 B.C. is the reason our Jewish friends celebrate Hanukkah each December. That is an *amazing* fulfillment of the scriptures!

TIME LINE

Daniel (550 B.C.) → Antiochus (170-163 B.C.) → Jesus Came (4 B.C.) → Today

We stand on the other side looking back at this prophecy, and still we must be amazed at the reliability of the Word of God. But this is all history. What does it mean to us?

II. THE PERSONAL MESSAGE OF THE VISION

There are some important lessons we can learn from this prophecy. Kingdoms of this world (and presidents) come and go but the Kingdom of God is forever. Because we find God to be trustworthy in the details of prophecy we can trust Him with the details of our lives right now.

There are three specific lessons we can gather from this chapter:

1. Alexander is a picture of worldly greatness marked by personal failure

Historians know Alexander the Great went on to Babylon after subduing Egypt and at the age of 33, indulged himself in a great drunken feast with his generals and died of a combination of malaria and acute alcoholism. Though conqueror of the world, he was unable to conquer his own passions. Proverbs 16:32 says, "Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city."

History tells us once Alexander was drunk at a wild party and was criticized by a lifelong friend who had saved his life, Cleitus. In a drunken fit, Alexander grabbed the nearest spear and killed his friend. When he realized what he had done, he collapsed in bitter remorse for many days.

Some of you have conquered the kingdoms of your career. You have fought and won battles but there's one battle you haven't won—the sin battle. You can't conquer your own sinful appetites and urges. Alexander is a picture of plenty of people today who have gained success by the world's standards yet their personal and spiritual lives are running on empty.

Only Jesus can win the sin battle for you. 2,000 years ago, He carried our sins to the cross with Him and our sins were nailed to the cross and covered by His blood. Jesus said, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" (Mark 8:36) What does it profit a man or woman if they are known as Alexander the Great or John the great businessman or Mary the great salesperson or Tom the great community leader and they never conquer their sin problem? It is simply a tragic picture of a sad, wasted life.

2. Antiochus (past) is a prototype of the Antichrist (future)

Remember what I said about the little horn in Daniel 8 being the same as the little horn in Daniel 7, the antichrist? I said it was—yet it wasn't. A clear characteristic of prophetic literature in the Bible is it often has a dual fulfillment. That is, it may have a fulfillment in the near future, and then it may have another fulfillment in the distant future. I believe that is the case here in Daniel 8. Without a doubt, the little horn in Daniel 8 was fulfilled in Antiochus but he is also a preview, a prototype, of the future antichrist. A prototype is "the first model of a future product." There are some indications in Daniel 8 Antiochus is a forerunner, a preview of the antichrist who will come in the future. There are many comparisons. For instance, let's review the time line of the future:

TIME LINE

Today → Antichrist* (?? A.D.) → Jesus Returns (? A.D.)

*** Rapture**

Did you notice how long Antiochus' reign of terror was? He murdered the Jewish high priest Onias III in 170 B.C. and he died in 163 B.C.—seven years. The future antichrist will rule for seven years. Antiochus had an intense hatred for the Jews and so will the Antichrist. Antiochus set up an image in the Temple and created "the abomination that causes desolation." When he sacrificed that hog, it was so horrible (abominable) that the Jewish people deserted the Temple (desolation); the only people at the Temple were Antiochus' men. These are remarkable parallels with what the Antichrist will do in the future. Here's your link, Revelation 13:15. "He [the false

prophet, the chief of staff of the antichrist] was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast [antichrist], so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name."

Lest you think I am reading something into this that isn't there; notice what Jesus Christ, Himself, said about this future "desecration" of the Temple in Matthew 24:15: "So when you see standing in the Holy Place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand..." Jesus was referring to an event in the past, but He was also pointing to an event in the future.

Just as Antiochus set up an image of Zeus in the Temple, and commanded the Jews worship it, the Bible tells us in the book of Revelation the Antichrist will do the same thing in the future.

Glance back at Daniel 8. Gabriel lets Daniel know part of this prophecy is for the distant future and I think he is talking not so much about Antiochus here as the Antichrist, in verse 25. "He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of Princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power."

I think this is a prediction of the Antichrist instead of Antiochus, because Antiochus never made the Jews feel secure. He didn't use deceit as much as he used brutal force from the very beginning. The Antichrist is going to be much subtler. He is going to be a great deceiver. He is the little horn in chapter 7.

By the way, during my in-depth research into the rock star Marilyn Manson last year; I learned some interesting things, some scary things. Of course, he has publicly proclaimed in "Rolling Stone Magazine" that he is the antichrist. But do you know what the members of his "inner circle" call him? His closest friends call him "Little Horn." Marilyn Manson is intelligent. In fact, he knows more about the Bible than many of you, because even though he is reading it for a totally different reason, he picked up that the Little Horn in Daniel is the Antichrist.

Don't be afraid though. Marilyn is *not* the Little Horn. He is just a little guy, the next in a long series of shock rockers who are getting rich off of gullible teenagers who think they are into something new and he is laughing all the way to the bank. Trust me, if he doesn't die of a drug overdose, like many rock stars, in a few years he will be like Alice Cooper, old, rich, and playing golf everyday.

The real Antichrist is going to appear to be a man of peace. In fact, he will be a smooth-talking negotiator. He will produce a peace covenant for Israel. He will do what Jimmy Carter couldn't do with the Camp David accords, what Bill Clinton has been unable to do with the Wye River accords. This man will broker a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians but after three years, he will reveal his true nature and he will exalt himself against God Himself. This man will be so intoxicated on the wine of world power he will finally stand up against the Prince of Princes. Who do you think that is? It's the same as the King of Kings: Jesus. The Antichrist will

be shrewd, but how dumb can you get? He will even deceive himself into thinking he can conquer Jesus. If you resist Jesus you will lose BAD every time. When the Antichrist finally enters into battle with Jesus, it's going to be the world's shortest fight—BOOM! It's over. Notice it says in verse 25, "he will be destroyed, but not by human power." Revelation 19 says Jesus will slay him with the "a sharp sword that comes out of His mouth." That means all Jesus will have to do is speak and the battle will be won. I don't know what Jesus will say. It may just be "Down boy!" or "You are finished!" or something like that. Paul describes it in II Thessalonians 2:4, 8. "He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God...And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming."

How can Lucifer be dumb enough to rebel against God and try to exalt himself? And in the same light, how can the Antichrist in the future be stupid enough to think he can oppose Jesus and win? When it comes down to it, both of them are brave, but neither is very smart. The Antichrist trying to take on Jesus reminds me of a bull I heard about from an old farmer I knew in Alabama. This was a mean, cantankerous old bull named Big Red. If the farmer wanted Big Red to go a certain direction, you could be sure he would go in directly the opposite direction. The farmer said he never turned his back on Big Red, because he was mean and aggressive. One day, the Big Red got out of the pasture and wandered onto a railroad track where he found some tasty weeds growing between the cross ties. While he was eating, a train came down the same track toward the bull. The engineer in the locomotive reported he saw the bull and blew his horn repeatedly and tried to slow the train but he said the bull didn't budge. Moments before impact, Big Red squared his shoulders and lowered his head as if he was saying to that train, "Come on, give me your best shot." Who do you think won that little contest? Later the farmer told me while he was burying what was left of his bull, one of his farm hands observed, "You know, Old Red had a lot more courage than he did sense!"

I feel that way about the Antichrist. He will be brave. He will be boastful and bold but he will be too dumb to realize he can't beat Jesus. He will be broken when he meets the Prince of Princes! Jesus will win the final victory with just the word of His mouth.

3. Daniel is a portrait of steadfast service in tough times

Did you notice what Daniel did when he received this vision? In verse 27 he reports he was "exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the King's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding." What are you going to do now that you have gained a little clearer understanding of the future? Like Daniel, you may be disturbed and confused. This message may have created more questions for you than answers, so what are you going to do? You and I need to do exactly what Daniel did. We need to **GET UP, GO OUT AND DO THE KING'S BUSINESS.**

The study of prophecy should never turn you into what I call a "prophecy junkie" who retreats into the safety of your charts and books while there are people around you who don't know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Every time God reveals a little more of His plan to you, you are under a solemn obligation to get up and go out and do His work. You ought to have an increased sense of

urgency and fervency about telling your friends about Jesus. Why? Because Jesus could come tomorrow. We have seen enough of the future to warn people to prepare to meet God.

CONCLUSION

Years ago, I saw a strange episode of the TV show "The Twilight Zone." I don't remember all the details, I just remember someone had a Polaroid camera and when you took a picture, what developed was *not* that moment but 24 hours into the future. It was like having a prophetic camera that revealed the future. I seem to recall nobody used the camera to help anyone else: they only used it for private gain and greed. One man took a picture of the huge sign at the horse track that reported the winners of a race, tomorrow, and then he bet on the outcome of the race and cashed in big bucks. How many of you would like to see the stock market report 24 hours in advance? In this episode, it seems everyone who possessed the camera died a tragic death. No one was willing to use their ability to forecast the future for good. Some of you may make the same tragic mistake. We know Jesus is going to return. We don't know when. We know those left behind after the Rapture will face a terrible time of tribulation. We have this information but are we doing anything about it? We need to get up, get out and do the King's business. What is the King's business? Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

A message like this shouldn't turn you into a stargazer; it should turn you into a soul winner. A message on prophecy shouldn't make you smug in your salvation; it should make you a servant of Jesus.

The King's business is to tell a lost and dying world the only hope is Jesus! I pray God; you will let Jesus speak to you with these words from Mark 13:32-34: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, *each with his assigned task*, and tells the one at the door to keep watch."

Our job is to keep watching, keep witnessing, and keep working until Jesus comes. That beautiful old Hymn by Elizabeth Mills says: "O land of rest, for thee I sigh! / When will the moment come / When I shall lay my armor by, / And dwell in peace at home? / We'll work 'till Jesus comes, / We'll work 'till Jesus comes, / We'll work 'till Jesus comes, / And we'll be gathered home!"

There are two kinds of people reading this. Some of you are born-again believers. Are you willing to work in the King's business until Jesus comes to get you or until death takes you to Him? Get busy in His work so when He returns He will find you watching and working.

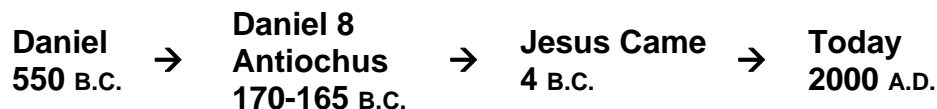
On the other hand, some of you don't know Jesus; you have never trusted Him as your personal Lord and Savior. Don't make the same mistake the Antichrist will make. You can't resist Him, don't try. Right now, Jesus is reaching out to you with His nail-pierced hands of forgiveness. The study of prophecy should be a strong proof the Bible is no ordinary book. Listen, if you can trust God with the details of prophecy –1,150 days that the Temple would be desolate until it was rededicated, you can trust Him with the details of your life—and your eternity. Will you trust Him today?

If you want to know more about how to be saved, please visit our website: www.gabc.org or write me personally at david@mail.gabc.org

OUTLINE

I. THE PROPHETIC MEANING

1. A rampaging ram – Medo-Persians
2. A uni-horn goat – Greek Empire under Alexander
3. Four horns – Four generals who divided Greek Empire
4. The little horn – Antiochus Epiphanes IV



II. THE PERSONAL MESSAGE

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Proverbs 16:32
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