

"Upon this rock I will build my church"

**Matthew 16:18**

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## DANIEL CHAPTER EIGHT

### VISION OF THE RAM AND THE HE-GOAT

#### CHAPTER EIGHT OUTLINED

- I. VISION OF THE RAM WITH TWO HORNS (8:1-4).
- II. VISION OF THE HE-GOAT (8:5-8).
  - A. The great horn.
  - B. Four notable horns.
- III. THE LITTLE HORN (8:9-14).
- IV. INTERPRETATION OF THE LITTLE HORN (8:15-26).
- V. DANIEL'S REACTION TO THESE SCENES (8:27).

Daniel 8 gives us a closer look at the second and third kingdoms seen in chapters 2 and 7, these being the Medo-Persian and Grecian Kingdoms, giving us more detail than the previous chapters.

Chapter 8 describes the defeat of the Medo-Persian Empire by the Grecian armies of Alexander the Great, the subsequent break-up of that kingdom and the oppression of Israel by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), described as "the little horn."

Note that the vision takes place in the third year of Belshazzar. Keep in mind that the book of Daniel is organized by subject matter and not chronologically. If it had been put together chronologically, it would have been chapters 7, 8, and 5. Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years (605-561 B.C.) and was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach who reigned 2 years and was responsible for releasing King Jehoiachin of Judah out of prison as prophesied by Jeremiah.

"And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon, And changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life (Jeremiah 52:31-34; 2 Kings 25:27-30).

Nerglissar (559-556 B.C.) assassinated Evil-Merodach, mentioned in Jeremiah 39:3, usurping the throne for four years; then he, too, was assassinated by conspirators. He was succeeded by his son Labash-Marduk (556 B.C.) who reigned nine months, and he was assassinated.

Nabonidus (a former priest who had married the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar) was made king by the conspirators. He was more interested in restoration work on the temple of the moon-god Sin, located in Harran, than in ruling the great city of Babylon. Thus his son Belshazzar became co-regent king in his father's absence, serving in that capacity for 15 of Nabonidus' 17 years on the throne (Turner, p. 101; see chapter 5 for more on Belshazzar).

#### INTRODUCTION: The Vision at the Palace in Shushan (8:1-2)

Shushan was the capital of the old country of Elam and is located in what is today Southwest Iran (see Nehemiah 1:1; Esther 1:2,5; 2:3,5; [a basalt stele containing the Code of Hammurabi was found here]). Why is this pointed out? Is there some significance to this information? Yes, because this vision regards events connected with the second kingdom, Medo-Persia, and Shushan would be its capital.

Why was Daniel here? Was he here because he was physically, miraculously transported to this location? Was he here only in a vision? Either of these is a possibility, but I offer the following as a consideration: Keep in mind that Daniel had been trained to "stand before the king" and had faithfully served Nebuchadnezzar. The next three kings, Evil-Merodach, Nerglissar and Labash-Marduk, were all assassinated. How did Daniel escape the same fate, he who was so loyal to Nebuchadnezzar and gives no mention of these assassinated kings in his book? Nabonidus is now king and Belshazzar his co-regent, but Belshazzar did not know Daniel. However, the queen mother remembered him (5:10-16). Thus, he is probably in Shushan on official business, perhaps being sent away from the city of Babylon before this turmoil during the transition of kings, has been gone for some time, and almost forgotten. But, nonetheless, by God's grace and providence, he is at this place and at this time is given a vision by Jehovah, the God of the Jews, regarding events that will begin to transpire in just a few short years.

Daniel had this vision in the third year of Belshazzar's co-regency (circa 549 B.C.). The fall of Babylon come in ten more years.

#### DISCUSSION

##### I. VISION OF THE RAM (8:3,4).

While standing by the River Ulai, Daniel saw a ram with two horns. Both horns were high but one was higher than the other, the higher coming up last. Keil points out that rather than a definite article before ram it is rather a numeral; thus it is one ram, with two horns (Daniel, p. 290). The ram was the symbol of Persia. The horns, one higher than the other, represent the alliance of Medes and Persians which formed the nation, with the Persians under Cyrus the Great becoming the dominant people. The ram pushed westward into Babylonia, Syria and Asia

Minor; northward into Armenia and Scythia; and southward into Egypt. Nations were powerless against his might and he “magnified himself”-- acting in a despotic, tyrannical manner.

## II. VISION OF THE HE-GOAT (8:5-8).

While Daniel was contemplating the import of the vision of the ram, he saw another animal, a male goat, coming from the west over the face of the whole earth; and his feet didn't touch the ground. That this he-goat is “from the west” gives us a clue--this is the Grecian Kingdom. Edward Young, quoting from 1 Maccabees 1:3, says of Alexander: “He went through to the ends of the earth and took spoils of a multitude of nations; and the earth was quiet before him” (The Prophecy of Daniel, p. 168). “The face of the whole earth” gives us an indication of the extensive, far-reaching conquests of the Greek Kingdom. The rapidity and swiftness of the conquests is seen in the phrase “his feet not touching the ground.” “And the goat had a notable horn between its eyes.” This conspicuous horn represents the first and most noted king of the Greeks, Alexander the Great. He is noted in history for his military prowess and daring. He is one of the greatest conquerors of all time.

“And he came to the ram that had the two horns, which I saw standing before the river, and ran upon him in the fury of his power” (v. 6).

The ram, representing the Medo-Persian Kingdom, would be the first obstacle in Alexander's path. He came against him with all the fury of his power. Ancient history records the great hatred of the Greeks for the Persians. For three centuries the Persians had mounted military campaigns against the Greek city-states in an effort to conquer them. When the Greeks retaliated it was in fury.

“And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand” (v. 7).

“Choler” (KJV)--anger, wrath--is an indicator of the hatred that had been welling up in the hearts of the Greek people against the kings of Persia. The Persian Kingdom was powerless to stop this onslaught by Greece. He broke the two horns, symbols of the combined power of Media and Persia, totally defeating them. The victory was thorough and complete as “none could deliver the ram out of his hand.”

“Therefore the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven” (v. 8).

“The he-goat magnified himself exceedingly”--In a little more than ten

years Alexander had conquered the world of his time, from Greece to India, including Egypt, Palestine, Syria, the realm of the Scythians, and present day Afghanistan. “When he was strong, the great horn was broken”--At the height of his power, while on his way home from the border of India, he took ill and died at the age of 33 in 323 B.C. Alexander died without an heir. He had married a Bactrian princess named Roxana. She had a son by Alexander, but he was killed at the age of twelve along with Roxana at the instigation of Cassander in order to prevent a foreigner from sitting on the throne of Greece. More likely, he did not want to share the power that he had assumed.

“There came up four notable horns toward the four winds of heaven”-- Upon Alexander’s death a power struggle arose among his generals. Antigonus, who commanded the Asian (Syrian) army, seemed to have the upper hand but was killed in 301 B.C. Alexander’s kingdom then was divided four ways:

1. Cassander took Macedonia.
2. Lysimachus took Greece and Asia Minor.
3. Seleucus took Syria.
4. Ptolemy took Egypt.

“The four winds of heaven” symbolically and literally tell us that the once mighty empire of Alexander is now forever divided to the four winds.

### III. THE LITTLE HORN (8:9-14).

After the death of Alexander, Palestine was under the rule of the Ptolemaic kings. But Palestine and Egypt were coveted by the Seleucid kings of the Greek empire. Thus, after about 100 years under the mostly peaceful rule of the Ptolemies, warfare and political intrigue developed between the Greek kings of Syria and Egypt. This is brought out in great detail in chapter 11.

#### The Wicked and Blasphemous Activity of the Little Horn.

From one of the four horns came “a little horn...” The particular horn is that of the Seleucid kings who controlled the Syrian/Palestinian portion of the Alexandrian Kingdom from which the “little horn” came. Note carefully that the little horn of chapter 8 and the little horn of chapter 7 are kings from two different kingdoms and two different eras. The little horn of chapter 7 is from the Roman kings of the first century A.D. The little horn of chapter 8 is a Grecian king of the second century B.C. Many premillennial interpreters try to blend these two into one and rename him the Antichrist who, they say, is yet to come.

This Grecian king described as “the little horn” would grow to great power (Young, p. 170), casting his ambitious eyes southward (Egypt,

Daniel 11:5; 1 Maccabees 1:16), eastward (Armenia and Elymais, 1 Maccabees 3:31,37; 6:1-4), and toward “the glorious land” (Canaan). The pleasant land (KJV) or glorious land (ASV) is the land of the Jews, the promised land (Genesis 12:1-3), “the land that God had searched out for them flowing with milk and honey, that was the glory of all lands” (Ezekiel 20:6; see Jeremiah 3:19; Daniel 11:16, 41).

“And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them” (v. 10). The host of heaven does not refer to angels and other heavenly personages, nor to literal stars of the sky, but rather to the people of God and the priestly host who served God on the earth. The children of Israel are referred to as God’s hosts in Exodus 7:4 and 12:41. Thus, to fight against God’s people is to fight against God Himself. An attack on the hosts of God on earth is an attack on heaven.

That this is true is seen when one looks at verse 11: “Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.” This evil king removed the prince of the host, the high priest, thus stopping his ministrations of daily sacrifices and desecrating the temple making it unfit for use. The sanctuary was “cast down,” but this does not mean that the temple was destroyed. It was robbed and looted of its treasure, defiled and desecrated (see 1 Maccabees 1:44-47).

Bible commentators are generally agreed that this little horn of the Seleucid kings is the infamous Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) whom Josephus describes in his Book of Antiquities, X:11:7: “And there would arise from their number a certain king who would make war on the Jewish nation and their laws, deprive them of the form of government based on these laws, spoil the temple and prevent the sacrifices from being offered for three years. And these misfortunes our nation did in fact come to experience under Antiochus Epiphanes, just as Daniel many years before saw and wrote that they would happen.”

Verse 12 goes on to say that many of the people of Israel and the priestly worship were lost due to transgression. The result was that truth itself was cast to the ground.

The question is asked: How long was this troublesome period to last? “How long shall be the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, and the transgression that maketh desolate, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?” The answer is given as “2,300 evenings and mornings, then shall the temple be cleansed.” The wording of the sentence seems to indicate the entire period of the rule of Antiochus IV, which would be about 6 ½ years (also the span of time which elapsed from the time Antiochus deposed the legitimate high priest, Onias, until the temple was finally cleansed).

#### IV. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION (8:15-26).

While most of the interpretation of the vision has already been developed, there are some particulars that must be noted.

1. The angel who interprets is identified as Gabriel. This is the first time an angel is identified by name in the Bible.
2. Daniel was afraid that these terrible things were to come in his lifetime but is assured that it belongs “to the time of the end.” This period of time is described as “the latter time of the indignation; for it belongs to the appointed time of the end.” Notice carefully that this “appointed time of the end” is also the same time of “indignation” brought on by the persecution of Antiochus IV. The time of the end is not the end of time! It is the time of the end of the reign of terror by Antiochus.
3. The ram with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. When we have a Divine interpretation there is no room for speculation. This is the first specific statement identifying by name the second and third kingdoms. But it is very important to the proper interpretation of the book of Daniel and to subsequent Bible history that we know without a shadow of doubt the identity of kingdoms represented in the visions of chapters 2, 7, and 8. The second kingdom of chapter 2 is the second kingdom of chapters 7 and 8. They are both the Medes and Persians--one kingdom. Thus the Liberal interpretation of the vision in Daniel 2 is false from the very outset.
4. The rough he-goat is the king of Greece. Again, we must point out that this is the Divine interpretation; Greece is the third kingdom, not the fourth. Alexander is the first king, the great horn. Thus, the corresponding vision in chapter 2 means that the third kingdom is the Grecian kingdom. The four kings coming from it are Greek kings “from out of the nation.”
5. It is in the latter part of the Grecian kingdom that “the king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences shall stand up”—Antiochus Epiphanes, IV. Leupold interprets these words as “bold faced” and “skilled in double dealing” (Daniel p. 366).
6. There is no more dangerous politician than one who is cunning, crafty, and cruel; and who is also bold, arrogant and a master of intrigue. He is further described as becoming very powerful but not by his own power. Since he is sly, crafty, and very bold we surmise that he came to his power by trickery, guile, and subterfuge; not by his own achievement. His cunning political skills allow him to “overthrow and kill and destroy on an unusual scale. He will be one of those monsters that wade through history in a welter of blood” (Leupold, p. 367).

“Another matter that shall cause men to wonder at his career will be the fact that, no matter what he undertakes, whether it is great or small, for the time at least ‘he shall have success in his undertakings,’ Hebrew: ‘he shall cause to prosper, and he shall do’” (Leupold, p. 367).

7. The angel told Daniel that Antiochus would stand up against the “prince of princes,” setting himself in opposition to God Himself, but he would be broken “without hand,” meaning that his death would not come by the hand of man. After suffering several reverses in battle against both Jews and Persians, Antiochus died of grief and insanity (Montgomery, p. 44). How totally futile are the attempts of men to fight against God!

8. “The vision of the evenings and mornings is true: but shut thou up the vision: for it belongeth to many days to come.” The vision is true, these things will surely come to pass (see 2:47). “Shut up the vision...” for it is to be fulfilled at a future time, some 400 years after the time of this prophecy (175-163 B.C.).

9. Please note that Daniel said he “fainted and was sick certain days” from worry over the import of this prophecy on his people. If Daniel was written “after the fact” as history, why would he feign sickness and grief at something already past? Daniel’s condition only makes sense if it is something he saw that had not taken place.

**CONCLUSION:** A Brief Look At Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), The Little Horn of Daniel 8.

Antiochus means “withstander, or one who withstands”; Epiphanes means “illustrious, or enlightened one.” The Jews nicknamed him “Epimanes” which means “madman”; he is described as the “vile person” of 11:21. He was the fourth of the Seleucian kings to call himself Antiochus and reigned from 175-163 B.C. Antiochus was born in Athens but as a boy lived in Rome for twelve years as a hostage. He took upon himself to use the title “Epiphanes” or more fully, “Theos Epiphanes,” for he looked upon himself as an incarnated manifestation of Olympian Zeus.

Antiochus IV is known as one of the cruelest tyrants of all time. He used methods that stirred up opposition, particularly among the Jews, e.g., declaring his own divinity. Antiochus had to pay heavy tribute to the Emperor of Rome. In order to raise the money, he sold the office of High Priest to the highest bidder, to a man who ignored Jewish laws and who built a gymnasium in Jerusalem where naked athletes met for Greek sporting events. He prohibited Jewish worship in Jerusalem and introduced the worship of Zeus. He slaughtered thousands of Jews (it is said he massacred over 100,000 men, women and children of the Jews). Josephus says that he killed circumcised babies and hung them around their mother’s necks. In his attempt to Hellenize the Jews he had a sow

(hog) sacrificed on the altar of the Temple, desecrating it; he forbade circumcision, and destroyed all the Old Testament books he could find. These outrages brought on the Maccabean war in which the Syrian armies were repeatedly defeated by Judas Maccabeus and his brothers. Antiochus confiscated the property of Jerusalem's citizens and ransacked the temple of its treasures to fill his own coffers. The persecutions of Antiochus threatened the very existence of God's people.

Emanuel Daugherty

Return to [Table](#)of Contents.