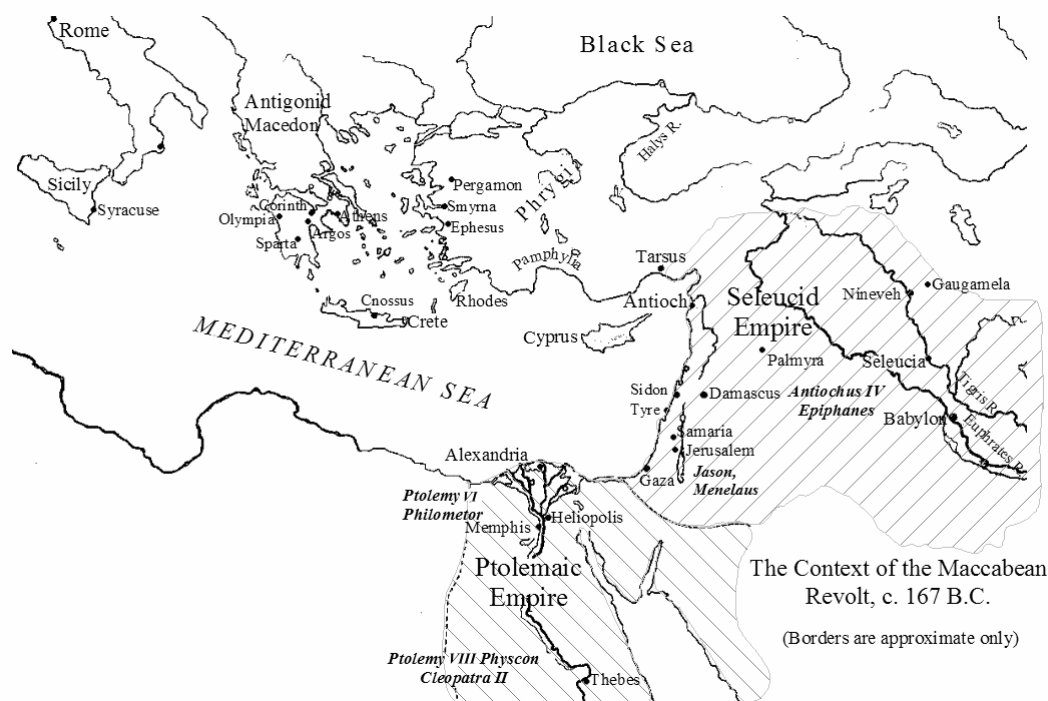


“WALKING IN THE SHADOW OF THE ANTICHRIST”

“The Rise of the Greek Little Horn” (Daniel 8:9-27)

At the death of Alexander his great Empire was split between the four generals. Two of these kingdoms have particular application to the Jewish people as their borders cover the land of Israel. The northern empire was ruled by Seleucus and became known as the Seleucid Dynasty. He was headquartered in the city that is today Damascus. He ruled over Syria, Turkey and Greece itself. The southern empire over Africa was ruled by Ptolemy Lagus and was headquartered in the city of Alexandria in Egypt. These two Empires intersected over the land of Israel. They would rule the Mediterranean world until the rise of the Romans. The Jews in Israel were, therefore, part of a disputed border between the two Greek rivals, Seleucus and Ptolemy. For nearly two centuries they would fight over the Promised Land.



And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. (v9)

We are now introduced to another part of the vision with the introduction of the “*little horn*.” This “*little horn*” ruler emerges from the four leaders that replaced Alexander the Great in the Greek Empire, “*And out of one of them came forth.*” This ruler we are told has a direct influence on the land of Israel, “*and toward the pleasant land,*” as this is the land flowing with milk and honey and spiritual beauty. History reveals that this king that “*waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land*” was a Selucid king called Antiochus IV Epiphanes (c. 215 – 164 BC). He was the eighth ruler of the Seleucid dynasty and the son of Antiochus III, who had conquered the land of Israel around 195 BC and taken it from the Ptolemys. Antiochus Epiphanes was based in Syria and attacked Egypt to the South and Persia, Parthia and Armenia toward the East. He also carried out a reign of terror in the land of Israel.

The Seleucid rulers were determined to have a forced Hellenization conversion of the Jews. They heavily taxed the Jews, defiled their women, instituted a Greek education for children, and forced them to provide accommodation for the Greek soldiers in their homes. They also sought to destroy the Jewish religion by banning Sabbath observance, circumcision, and Scripture reading. A statue of Zeus was mounted in the courtyard of the Temple. They also demanded that altars to Greek idols like Jupiter be raised up in every Jewish town and regular sacrifices made. Jerusalem became effectively a Greek city. Indeed, Antiochus Epiphanes renamed Jerusalem as Antioch in Judea after himself. Some Hellenist Jews even became priests on behalf of the Greeks. A man called Jason (Greek name) reputedly bought the High Priest office from the Greeks. Apostasy was widespread and growing among the Jews.



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. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. (v10-12)

This proud man, Antiochus Epiphanes was successful in battle, “*And it waxed great.*” Initially he used guile and apostate Jews to persuade many to embrace Hellenization and turn their backs on their faith. The Book of 1 Maccabees records his atrocities against the Jews,

In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow. So this device pleased them well. Then certain of the people were so forward herein, that they went to the king, who gave them licence to do after the ordinances of the heathen: (1 Maccabees 1:11-13)

Antiochus Epiphanes betrayed their trust. He attacked Jerusalem in 167 BC killing 40,000 and selling into slavery another 40,000. This was 384 years after the vision of Daniel recorded in Daniel 8 in 551 BC. The streets of Jerusalem were red with the blood of the slain Jews. He was the Hitler of his day!

And after two years fully expired the king sent his chief collector of tribute unto the cities of Juda, who came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude, And spake peaceable words unto them, but all was deceit: for when they had given him credence, he fell suddenly upon the city, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel. And when he had taken the spoils of the city, he set it on fire, and pulled down the houses and walls thereof on every side. But the women and children took they captive, and possessed the cattle. (1 Maccabees 1:29-32)

He looted the temple of much of its wealth including the golden altar. Antiochus attacked on the Sabbath as he knew the orthodox Jews would not take up arms on that day. This attack seems to be figuratively referred to here by the poetic words, *“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.”* Stars are used in the Book of Daniel to refer to the people of God (cf. Daniel 12:3; Gen. 15:5; 22:17; Rev. 12:1).



Antiochus Epiphanes ordered the burning of the copies of Holy Scripture and if any were found to possess a copy they were put to death, *“it cast down the truth to the ground.”* His ultimate act of desecration was to offer pigs as sacrifices on the altars in the temple to the Greek gods. Fornication and prostitution was also practiced in the sacred temple precincts. Naked Greek games were instituted to entertain the people and corrupt the morals of the nation. This is a fulfillment of this prophecy, *“and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down.”* This led to the end of the daily sacrifices to the Lord,

Insomuch that the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them: whereupon the city was made an habitation of strangers, and became strange to those that were born in her; and her own children left her. Her sanctuary was laid waste like a

wilderness, her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into reproach her honour into contempt. (1 Maccabees 1:38-39)

Antiochus regarded himself as a manifestation of god Zeus. He took names to extol himself like *Theos Epiphanes* (“God Manifest”) and after his defeat of Egypt, *Nikephoros* (“Bearer of Victory”). In so doing he made himself equal with God, “*Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host.*” Antiochus had a significant following among apostate Jews who turned from their faith to embrace this little antichrist, “*And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground.*”

Then many of the people were gathered unto them, to wit every one that forsook the law; and so they committed evils in the land; (1 Maccabees 1:52)

This little horn by a combination of guile and intimidation seduced many to obey him. For a time it seemed that he had succeeded in overthrowing the rule of Jehovah in Israel, “*and it practised, and prospered.*”

Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. (v13-14)

There is much debate over these two verses as to what they mean. Some have taken them to represent 2,300 years that lead from the days of Antiochus Epiphanes until the Antichrist on earth. Most, however, believe that Daniel was given here an insight into the finite rule of Antiochus. The term “*days*” here literally means “2,300 evenings and mornings” which normally indicates literal 24-hour days in the Bible. The 2,300 days (6 years and 20 days under the Jewish calendar year of 360 days) was the time God sovereignly permitted Antiochus Epiphanes to attack the Jewish faith. This ended on the 25th December 165 BC, when Judas Maccabeus came in and cleansed the temple. These 2,300 days is a longer time than the Antichrist is granted, who only has 1,250 days or three and a half years to unleash his reign of terror at the end of the Great Tribulation period. All the great dictators of history are only permitted to go as far as a sovereign God permits. Once they have served God’s purpose, He will simply remove them.

We know from the history of the Jews, such as the apocryphal writings and Josephus, that eventually a group of Jews revolted against Antiochus Epiphanes led by a man called Judah Maccabee (“Maccabaeus” is the Greek word for hammer). He was a brilliant war strategist and inspirer of men. He organised daring raids to attack the Seleucid army. The Greeks underestimated the Jews’ determination and courage. Despite being greatly outnumbered, Judah Maccabee defeated the Greeks over a period of many years. In one of the last great battles, the Jews recaptured the temple in Jerusalem. They broke the statue of Zeus and cleansed the temple from the defilements of the Greeks. Any Hellenist priests were either executed or expelled. This period of Jewish history is celebrated even today in the *Feast of Chanukah* (or *Hanukkah*), also known as the Festival of Lights. The name derives from a Hebrew verb meaning “to dedicate.”

And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called,

and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision. Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. (v15-19)

Daniel besought the angel Gabriel for further clarification of the meaning of this vision. He had done the same in Daniel 7 and was rewarded. He will be so again. There is a clue, however, that this vision has significance for more than the Greek Empire, “*for at the time of the end shall be the vision.....Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.*” This “*last end of the indignation*” is what Jeremiah called, “*Jacob’s trouble*” (Jer. 30:7; cf. Isa. 26:20) and the Lord Jesus Christ declared was, “*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*” (Matt. 24:21)

The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. (v20-22)

The first part of this interpretation is not particularly controversial. The ram with the two horns represents the Medo-Persian Empire and the He-goat with the single horn represents Alexander the Great and the four generals who succeeded him after his death.

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. (v23-25)

The disagreement is over this last prophecy of who exactly is this “*king of fierce countenance.*” Some say it is only Antiochus Epiphanes and some say it is just referring to the future Antichrist. Others, however, argue that it is Antiochus Epiphanes but also a type of the future Antichrist of the end times. I believe the best way to interpret this is to see this as fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes. It has relevance to us in the end times because Antiochus is a type of the future Antichrist. He is the junior version of the real thing to come later!

We are told that this king, “*shall be broken without hand.*” This indicates that he would not die at the hand of another person but would be struck down by God. History reveals that he died in his bed sick with fear and guilt, after he heard of the destruction of his desecrated altar in Jerusalem,

While he was in Persia, a messenger brought him news that the armies sent into the land of Judah had been put to flight.....that they had pulled down the Abomination which he had built upon the altar in Jerusalem; and that they had surrounded with high walls both the sanctuary, as it had been before, and his city of Beth-zur. When the king heard this news, he was struck with fear and very much shaken. Sick with grief because his designs had failed, he took to his bed.

There he remained many days, overwhelmed with sorrow, for he knew he was going to die. So he called in all his Friends and said to them: "Sleep has departed from my eyes, for my heart is sinking with anxiety. I said to myself: 'Into what tribulation have I come, and in what floods of sorrow am I now! Yet I was kindly and beloved in my rule.' But I now recall the evils I did in Jerusalem, when I carried away all the vessels of gold and silver that were in it, and for no cause gave orders that the inhabitants of Judah be destroyed. I know that this is why these evils have overtaken me; and now I am dying, in bitter grief, in a foreign land." Then he summoned Philip, one of his Friends, and put him in charge of his whole kingdom. He gave him his crown, his robe, and his signet ring, so that he might guide the king's son Antiochus and bring him up to be king. King Antiochus died in Persia in the year one hundred and forty-nine. (1 Maccabees 6)

The same fate awaits the Antichrist who will be defeated and destroyed by God, "*And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*" (Rev. 19:20)

ANTIOCHUS – TYPE OF ANTICHRIST

Most commentators accept that Antiochus Epiphanes is a type of the Antichrist. Antiochus is sometimes called the "Antichrist of the Old Testament." There are a number of good biblical reasons for doing so. We receive a number of clues in the text of Daniel 8 that this has a much wider application than simply the times of Antiochus. Gabriel told Daniel that the vision has relevance to the end times, "*for at the time of the end shall be the vision.*" (v17b) He was further told, "*And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.*" (v19) Clearly, Antiochus Epiphanes was not a king of the time of the end, as the last days only began with the First Coming of Christ, which was two centuries after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. The term "*last end of the indignation*" is most likely the Tribulation time when God pours out His indignation on the sins of this world.

The Book of Revelation makes clear that the Antichrist and his kingdom will bear the characteristics of the past Greek Empires including that of Antiochus Epiphanes,

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. (Rev. 13:2)

The Lord Jesus Christ drew a parallel between the actions of Antiochus Epiphanes in the Olivet Discourse as a prototype for the future Antichrist,

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) (Matt. 24:15)

God used the character and actions of Antiochus Epiphanes to provide a forewarning of the coming ruthless anti-Semitic world dictator, the Antichrist. There are too many points of

similarity between these two enemies of God and Israel for this to be dismissed as coincidental. A simple comparison between the little horn of Daniel 7 that emerges from the 4th beast and the little horn of Daniel 8 that emerges from the Greek Empire would highlight just a few of these. A further study of the little horn of Daniel 8 and other Scriptures that refer to the Antichrist such as 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13 make this parallel even clearer. For instance,

- (1) Both begin modestly and then become successful conquerors and ruthless dictators**
- (2) Both control armies and establish Empires**
- (3) Both will make empty promises and are great deceivers**
- (4) Both will blaspheme God**
- (5) Both will use a mixture of guile and intimidation to take control over the Jews**
- (6) Both will be empowered by an external source**
- (7) Both will force the Jews to change their worship**
- (8) Both will betray and massacre the Jews**
- (9) Both will attack the city of Jerusalem**
- (10) Both will desecrate the temple**
- (11) Both appear to be invincible**
- (12) Both shall be destroyed by God directly**

So the big horn of Alexander the Great in Daniel 8 will lead to the little horn of Antiochus Epiphanes and it all will culminate in the final little horn Antichrist. The only difference is that the Antichrist will be worse than Antiochus and far more efficient and ruthless than the might and intelligence of Alexander the Great. All the attributes of these men will be wrapped up in the person of the Antichrist. He will be the most charismatic human personality to ever walk this earth wholly and totally energized by Satan. John MacArthur points out,

Now, Alexander the Great showed us the power of antichrist to conquer. He didn't get into the persecution and the slaughter of the Jews so much. He shows us the swiftness and the power and the comprehensiveness of his conquering. But Antiochus shows us the personality, the murderous personality of antichrist. And Antiochus executed large numbers of Jews. They had known persecution under the Babylonians. They had known persecution to some degree under the Assyrians before the Babylonians. There were even some tough times under the Medes and the Persians. And it wasn't easy under Alexander. But they never knew anything in their history to rival this man Antiochus. What he did was utterly beyond understanding.

Some commentators point out that the Antichrist is directly linked in Daniel 7 to the Fourth Beast of the Roman Empire and also to the little horn of the Greek Empire in Daniel 8. Hence, they feel that we can deduce that he will emerge from the old Greek Empire, which was incorporated into the Roman Empire that replaced it. Others go further and point out that in Revelation 17 he is identified with Babylon, which they feel implies he will be from the Middle Eastern part of the old Greek Empire. All these deductions are not implausible but not something we can be absolutely definitive about. What we can be definitive about is that the Antichrist is a man that will emerge from a ten-ruler confederacy of nations to establish

worldwide dominion. He will deceive the Jewish people with a peace agreement and then he will betray them and launch an unprecedented reign of terror against them.

And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it. (v26-27)

Daniel is given an instruction “*wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.*” This does not mean that he must be silent but that he is to hold on to the knowledge of this vision. The thought of the terrible future for his people touched Daniel so profoundly that again he was physically ill and astonished at the thought. We forget that Daniel had seen the terrible destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar but that was nothing in comparison to future judgment. His emotional response demonstrated that Daniel not only knew God’s Word and preached it but he loved the people he preached to.

However, Daniel didn’t let this shake him from serving the Lord in the place that providence had appointed for him, “*afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.*” We know some more than Daniel, as we have the benefit of 2,500 years of subsequent history. However, we don’t know all of the details of how this will unfold in the end times. Like Daniel, we need to recognise that knowing the future of this world should make us active to serve the Lord for His glory, not passive or indifferent. These prophecies about Alexander the Great, his four Generals, and the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes were given to Daniel 3 centuries in advance. This reality is another reminder to us that our sovereign and eternal God not only *knows* the future, He also *guides* the future. Just as Antiochus Epiphanes was destroyed at the hand of God so we can be sure He will also do the same with the Antichrist. No opposition can ever prevail against the Lord and His plan.