

## Antiochus and the Antichrist

**Text:** Daniel 8:1-27

### Introduction:

1. It is of interest to note that in Daniel 8, the Author reverts back to Hebrew after recording in Aramaic (Chaldean) from 2:4 to 7:28. This is due to the fact that in Dan 2:4-7:28, the Gentiles are the primary focus but the remaining prophecies from chapter 8 have a direct reference to Israel, Jerusalem and the temple.
2. This chapter focuses on the two middle kingdoms of Persia and Greece. In a similar way to chapter 7, this chapter also focuses on a “little horn”. It is important to understand that this is a different “little horn” to the one spoken of in chapter 7 but it serves as a type of the future antichrist who is still to come.
3. The key to correctly understanding this passage of Scripture is the “Law of Double Reference” which states that “the Bible sometimes refers to a near and a far subject in the same passage.” (Sargent) “The vision has a double fulfilment. It describes Antiochus Epiphanes, Grecian king of Syria, but it also looks beyond him to the Antichrist.” (Cloud)
4. We will study this passage under 4 headings.

### I. The Introduction to the Vision (Vs. 1-2)

This introductory statement provides us with certain data about the vision:

#### A. The Period (Vs. 1)

1. “In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar” = The timing of the vision. This means that chronologically Daniel received this vision between the events recorded in Daniel chapter 4 and 5.
2. Remember that now we look back on Daniel 8 from the vantage point of fulfilled history but when Daniel received this vision, it was all yet to be fulfilled. How breathtaking and accurate is the Word of God!
3. “after that which appeared...at the first” = this was a distinct and separate vision to the one recorded in chapter 7

#### B. The Place (Vs. 2)

1. “Shushan the palace” = this is significant as at the time of the vision, Babylon was the center of world power and Shushan was an insignificant place. But under the coming Persian Empire, Shushan would be the new capital. Shushan was “a city 250 miles east of Babylon, and about 150 miles north of the present head of the Persian Gulf.” (Cloud)
2. Both Esther and Nehemiah would later live here (Esther 1:2; Neh. 1:1)

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### II. The Revelation of the Vision (Vs. 3-14)

Several truths are revealed in the vision. There is...

#### A. A Ram Revealed (Vs. 3-4)

1. The identity of the Ram (Vs. 3)
  - a. The Ram symbolizes the Medo-Persian kingdom (Vs. 20) which is previously revealed as the chest and arms of silver (Daniel 2:32) and the bear (7:5).
  - b. It is significant that the Persian battle standard always carried a Ram. Coins from the Persian Empire have been discovered, bearing a ram's head on one side. There is also a record of "a Persian king riding in front of his army wearing a golden figure of a Ram's Head set with gems instead of a diadem." (Larkin)
  - c. The two horns speak of the two peoples that made up this empire – the Medes and the Persians.
2. The activity of the Ram (Vs. 4).
  - a. It's conquests (4a) The Ram exerts its power in three points of the compass – West, North and South. This corresponds to the 3 ribs in the mouth of the bear in the previous chapter and speaks.
  - b. It's greatness (Vs. 4b) The Persian Empire was one of the greatest in history, spreading from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1) and lasting for approximately 200 years.

#### B. A Goat Revealed (Vs. 5-8)

1. The description of the goat (Vs. 5)
  - a. Its identity – the goat symbolizes Greece (Vs. 21). The first Greek colony was established by an oracle that sent a goat for a guide to build a city. The goat came to the region of Greece, and in gratitude for the goat's leading them in the right direction, they called the city Agae, meaning the "Goat City." It is of interest that the Sea between Greece and Turkey is still called the "Aegean Sea" meaning "the Goat Sea".
  - b. Its location – "from the west" This would be the first Western Empire. Up until now, world power had been concentrated in the East. For the first time, the center of world dominion shifted from the Orient to the Occident.
  - c. Its speed – "touched not the ground" Under the leadership of Alexander the Great, the Grecian conquests were rapid. They defeated the mighty Persian Empire in a brief 2 and a half years (Cloud) and conquered the world in a mere 12 years (M.A. Butler). John Phillips said, "He (Alexander) led his troops through more than twenty thousand miles of war and bloodshed, leaving behind a long trail of burned and ravaged cities, mountains of dead men, and rivers of tears."

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- d. Its horn – “a notable horn” Symbolizes the first king of Grecia (Vs. 21b) whom we now know from history as Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) who was tutored by the famous Aristotle.
2. The conquest of the goat (Vs. 6-7)
  - a. Its fury (6) – ‘fury’ (Vs. 6); “moved with choler” (Vs. 7) ‘choler’ literally means bile and came to describe vicious anger. Sargent notes that “there was much animosity toward Persian from the Greeks because of earlier attacks upon Greece by the Persians under Xerxes I (480 B.C.).”
  - b. Its victory (7) – the goat slams into the ram with such speed and power that its two horns are broken. The Greeks, despite far superior numbers on the Persian side, defeated the Persians in 3 swift battles between 334B.C. and 331B.C.
3. The division of the goat (Vs. 8)
  - a. The breaking of the great horn (See Vs. 21-22) – Alexander the Great died suddenly at the young age of 33. The cause? Drunkenness. The armies of the world could not defeat this powerful conqueror, but he was defeated at last by the curse of liquor.
  - b. The growing of the four horns – after Alexanders death confusion reigned for a period of about 20 years. This ended with a four-fold division of the Empire by Alexander’s four generals corresponding to the four heads of the winged leopard of Daniel 7 and the four horns mentioned here in Daniel 8. The four-fold division was as follows:
    - i. The **Seleucid Empire** (Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia)
    - ii. The **Ptolemaic Empire** (Egypt, Israel, and part of northeastern Africa)
    - iii. The **Antigonid (Cassander) Empire** (Macedonia and Greece)
    - iv. The **Lysimachus Empire** (Thrace and Asia Minor)

### C. A Little Horn Revealed (Vs. 9-14)

1. The origin of the little horn – “out of one of them” This ruler comes out of one of these four kingdoms. Remember! The little horn of chapter 7 arises out of the 10 horns of the Roman Empire which is yet future (7:7-8, 24). The little horn of chapter 8 arises out of the 4 horns of the Geek Empire and is now fulfilled. The little horn of chapter 8 is a type of the future little horn (antichrist). We can identify this little horn from history as Antiochus IV Epiphanes (178-164 BC. He was the eighth ruler of the Seleucid kingdom of the Grecian Empire and came on the scene some 150 years after Alexander’s Empire divided into 4 parts. He gave himself the title ‘Epiphanes’ meaning “glorious one or God manifest.” The events

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described are recorded in the books of the Maccabees and in the histories of Josephus. Antiochus was Syrian and hence from the Seleucid Empire.

2. The focus of the little horn – “the pleasant land” This is a reference to the land of Israel. Antiochus has a Satanic hatred of the Jewish people, as will Antichrist in the future. Notice his attack against three things (Denis Lyle outline):
  - a. He Attacked the Saints (Vs. 10) In the Scriptures the Jews are sometimes symbolized by the stars. Do you recall how God described Abraham’s seed in Genesis 15:5? *“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them and he said unto them. So shall thy seed be.”* (See also Rev 12:1) Some examples:
    - Antiochus tried to conquer the world. After being stopped by the Romans, he turned his fury on Jerusalem, killing some 80,000 Jews and selling another 40,000 into slavery.
    - The Jews were forbidden the practice of circumcision and history records that there were two mothers who because of their deep commitment to their faith, were determined to circumcise their baby boys. When Antiochus heard about it, he took the babies and killed them, hung them about each mother’s neck, and marched the women through the streets of Jerusalem to the highest wall. There the women and their babies were thrown headlong over the precipice. Is it any wonder that the Jews hated this Greek ruler and changed his name to Antiochus Epimanes which means *“Antiochus the Mad-man!”*
  - b. He Attacked the Sanctuary (Vs. 11) He will defy God himself (“the prince of the host”) and sought to force all his subjects to worship the pagan god Zeus. Then on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 168 B.C. he sacrificed a pig in the temple, taking its blood and spraying it all over the inside of the temple. The Jews refer to this as “the abomination of desolation” the very phrase our Lord used to describe the activities of the future Antichrist.
  - c. He Attacked the Scriptures (Vs. 12) He “cast down the truth to the ground” Antiochus forbade the reading and teaching of the Scriptures and burnt every copy of the Jewish Scriptures he could find.
3. The duration of the little horn (Vs. 13-14) Daniel overhears two ‘saints’ discussing the time frame of the little horns reign. From the context, these are angelic beings. The answer is given as 2,300 days. Sargent writes, “The 2,300 days is a period of 6 years, 4 months, and 20 days. This corresponds to the historic period of time beginning with the murder of Onias the High Priest in 171 B.C. and ending with the death of Antiochus Epiphanes in 164 B.C.”

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### III. The Interpretation of the Vision (Vs. 15-25)

#### A. The Seeking for an Interpretation (Vs. 15-19)

1. Daniel had a hunger to know and understand more of what God had revealed. That is a good attitude to have!
2. The angel Gabriel was the messenger who would reveal the interpretation to Daniel. Gabriel is one of two angels who are named in Scripture and was the same angel who came to Mary in Nazareth to inform her that she would give birth to Jesus (Lk. 1:26-38).
3. It is here that it becomes clear that the prophecy reaches beyond Antiochus to Antichrist
  - a. “at the time of the end shall be the vision” (Vs. 17)
  - b. “in the last end of the indignation” (Vs. 19) ‘indignation’ refers to judgment
  - c. “for at the time appointed the end shall be” (Vs. 19)

#### B. The Specifics of the Interpretation (Vs. 20-25)

1. The Ram explained (Vs. 20)
2. The Rough goat explained (Vs. 21)
3. The Ruler explained (Vs. 22-25) There are at least 9 characteristics of this evil ruler outlined in these verses:
  - a. He will be a man of a “fierce countenance” – He will have a hard, frightening yet somewhat awe-inspiring demeanor (Vs. 23a)
  - b. He will be a man with Satanic wisdom – “understanding dark sentences” (Vs. 23b)
  - c. He will be a man of great power – “And his power shall be mighty but not by his own power...” (Vs. 24a)
  - d. He will attack God’s people, the Jews – “and shall destroy the mighty and holy people” (Vs. 24b)
  - e. He will prosper through deceitful policy making – “And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand” (Vs. 25a) The word ‘craft’ means “deception, fraud, deceit.” It means “skill employed to effect purposes by deceit.” (Webster)
  - f. He will be full of pride and self-exaltation – “He shall magnify himself in his heart” (Vs. 25b)
  - g. He will disguise his true, malicious intentions with promises of peace – “By peace shall destroy many” (Vs. 25c) Antiochus entered Jerusalem by promises of peace
  - h. He will set himself up against the Messiah – “he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes” (Vs. 25d)
  - i. He will be destroyed by God – “but he shall be broken without hand” (Vs. 25e)

#### IV. The Conclusion of the Vision (Vs. 26-27)

##### A. The Integrity of the Vision (Vs. 26)

1. “the vision...is true” = God’s Word is sure and the prophecies of this chapter were fulfilled in Antiochus with razor sharp accuracy. And its forecast of the yet future antichrist will be fulfilled in exact detail also.
2. “shut thou up the vision” = refers more to care than concealment
3. “for it shall be for many days” = it would be many days before it was fulfilled. It would be about 200 years before many of these events were fulfilled.

##### B. The Impact of the Vision (Vs. 27)

1. Daniel’s heart was powerfully impacted by this vision. Take note of these words – ‘fainted’; “sick certain days”; ‘astonished’
2. When it came to prophetic truths, Daniel was more than just fascinated. He understood that what God was revealing was as good as history and he was sobered and stirred by it. Would to God we would have that response to the truth!

#### Conclusion:

1. Where will you spend eternity? Are you saved?
2. What is our response to the truths of Bible prophecy? Does it affect the way we live?
3. Are we witnessing to others and giving them the Gospel while there is still time?