



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

WORLD POWERS IN A GREAT, MIGHTY CONFLICT

Daniel 8:1-14

Two years after the dream of chapter 7, Daniel had another vision which is recorded here in chapter 8. The revelation of chapter 7 gives us a broad outline or sketch of four great world empires, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman empires. The vision of this chapter concentrates on the Medo-Persian and the Grecian empires. Nothing is here said about Babylon because that empire was about to end. In the original, the previous chapters (chapters 2 to 7) were written in the chaldean language but this chapter and the rest of the book of Daniel were written in Hebrew. God gave the vision to Daniel for the instruction and enlightenment of the Jews. They must have been wondering what would happen to them at the end of the Babylonian captivity. Would the Jews now have universal peace and prosperity? Would they now be free from domination from any world power? This vision is revealed that they might know what trials and tribulation were still before them. Knowing the facts of events which were soon to come would prepare them to seek the Lord and should draw us close to God as our only hope. The message of divinely inspired prophets in the Scripture is to strengthen us and prepare us for coming world events so that the day does not come upon us unawares. In the vision, Daniel found himself in Shushan, a chief city of the Medo-Persian empire, about 250 miles east of Babylon. As the vision passed before him he saw two great world empires represented by a ram with two horns and a male goat. The ram pictures the Medo-Persian empire while the goat represents Greece with its great horn standing for Alexander the Great. The ram at first was so powerful that nothing could oppose him. The he-goat became so strong that he conquered the ram. The interpretation of the vision has not been left to the wisdom of any natural or spiritual man. Angel Gabriel was sent to explain the vision to the prophet (Daniel 8:15-21).

THE UNDERESTIMATED POWER OF A SELF-WILLED KING

Daniel 8:1-4; 7:1,15,28; Isaiah 21:2-4; Jeremiah 49:34-39; Daniel 8:15,16,20; Isaiah 13:17-19; 45:1-5; Daniel 11:3,16,36.

This vision appeared to Daniel after that which appeared to him **“at the first”**. The first vision was recorded in chapter 7. In this vision which he received before the reign of Cyrus, the Persian king, he saw himself **“at Shushan in the palace”**. Shushan later became the capital of Persia after the time of Cyrus, in which the kings of Persia had their principal residence. God gave Daniel a foresight of the destruction of Babylon and the establishment of the Medo-Persia. Knowing the changes that were to come his heart could rest on the unchanging God. Could we foresee the changes that shall be hereafter, when we are gone, we should less admire, and be less affected by the events of the present time. In the vision, Daniel saw **“a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high”**. There can be no mistake in interpreting this picture or imagery of the ram, for in verse 20 it is expressly revealed that it represents the two kings of Media and Persia. The united power of the Medo-Persian kingdom was denoted by the ram itself. The two horns on the ram symbolize the fact that there were two powers or kingdoms combined in the empire. **“But one was higher than the other and the higher came up last”**. The higher horn springing up last denotes Persia which became the mightier power of the two. He saw the Medo-Persian kings **“pushing westward, and northward, and southward”**. On the west, the Medo-Persian army, coming from the east, conquered Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Asia Minor. On the north, they conquered Armenia, Iberia and the regions around the Caspian Sea. On the south, they overcame Palestine, Ethiopia, Egypt and Lybia. The ram became so powerful **“that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand.”** The ram, though often grouped with weak animals became so formidable to seemingly more powerful beasts. Assuming himself to be so great **“he did according to his will”**. Assuming uncontrollable power he thought himself unconquerable but he soon came to his end (Daniel 8:5-7).

THE UNDISPUTABLE PROWESS OF A SAVAGE KING

Daniel 8:5-8,21; 10:20; 11:2-4; Deuteronomy 28:49,50; Isaiah 5:26-30; Ezekiel 28:7-10; Amos 2:14-16.

This prophetic vision was still future for the Medo-Persian empire was not yet established **“in the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar.”** Now it is all history because the vision has been fulfilled in all its details. The ram that appeared unconquerable was eventually conquered. The Medo-Persian empire, represented by the two-horned ram, continued through many years until they were conquered by Alexander, the Grecian king. Alexander

the Great was the son of Philip, the king of Macedonia. Alexander was a great warrior and he was known for his swiftness. Represented by the he-goat or the rough goat (Daniel 8:5,21), he came, he ran as if he **"touched not the ground"**. Indeed Alexander was **"an he goat, a king against whom there is no rising up"** (Proverbs 30:31). Though this prophecy of Daniel was unknown to Alexander, the goat was used as the emblem of the Grecian power. This he-goat had **"a notable horn between his eyes"**. Alexander had a great notable strength. He pushed his conquests on so fast and with so much fury, that no kingdom had the courage to resist him. In six years he made himself master of the greatest part of the then known world. **"The he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken."** **"His kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven"** (Daniel 11:4). History shows us that this prophecy was fulfilled exactly as it had been written. Alexander was about twenty years old when he began his wars. When he was twenty-six he conquered Darius and became the ruler of the whole Persian empire; but when he was about thirty-three years of age, when he became strong and in his full strength, he died. He was not killed in war but he died suddenly as it was predicted. He left no child behind him to enjoy the benefits of what he had endlessly laboured for. After his death, the kingdom was divided among Alexander's four captains. **"The great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones, toward the four winds of heaven"**. After some confusion and conflicts that arose there was a division of Alexander's empire among four victorious warriors, Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander and Lysimachus. How wise is the man who heaps up riches without knowing who shall gather them or whose all those things shall be which he has laboured for? How wise is it for a man to work relentlessly, then die suddenly before enjoying the labour of his hands, only to go into eternity without any hope of rest? (Psalm 39:6; Luke 12:15-21; Mark 8:36,37).

THE UNDISGUISED PERVERSION OF A SACRILEGIOUS KING

Daniel 8:9-14; 7:20-26; 11:21,25-29,36; 9:27; Matthew 24:15; Isaiah 63:17-19; Luke 21:20-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8.

"And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great". This little horn sprang up out of one of the four notable ones. From one of the four kingdoms into which the empire of Alexander would be divided, there would spring up this ambitious king. All the circumstances of the prediction find their fulfilment in Antiochus Epiphanes. This little horn became a great persecutor of God's people. He set himself against **"the pleasant land"**, the land of Israel. **"It cast down some of the host and the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them"**. Antiochus, in fulfilment of this cast down and trampled on the people and the princes of the children of Israel. With indignation and contempt he persecuted the Jews. **"He magnified himself even to the prince of the host"**, that is, against the Ruler of the host of heaven. **"And by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down."** History has left it on record that Antiochus destroyed Jerusalem, killed much people in Israel and laid the sanctuary waste like a wilderness. He polluted and defiled the temple, sacrificing unclean beasts on the altar. **"And it cast down the truth to the ground"**. The great enemy of God and of God's people trampled upon the book of the law, the word of truth. The intention of the wicked, sacrilegious king was that true worship and divine truth might be forgotten. All this would be for a limited period because the notable horn would come to an ignoble end. **"He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand"** (Daniel 8:25). The divine prediction of Antiochus' death was fully accomplished, he died under the frightening judgment of God, without human instrumentality. His death was distressing and horrible.

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