

LESSON 25

Last week we read verses 5-7 at the end of class, and we saw where the ram with two horns (Medo-Persia) was trampled by a goat from the West (Greece). There is something about this vision that tells us without any doubt that this vision was not written in the second century BC, as the liberal critics would have us believe. What is it? After Alexander the Great visited Egypt, he was forever thereafter depicted on coins with his head adorned with the ram's horns of Amen-Ra. A thousand years later, Mohammed called him "Alexander, the lord of the two horns." (See the coin on the handout available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com.) One commentator has written:

It is impossible to believe that the writer of Daniel could, in the face of universal attribution of the two ram's horns to Alexander, represent Persia, the power he overthrew, as a two-horned ram (Daniel 8:3, 20) unless he had written before the expedition into Egypt.

Now, of course, we know that the reason Daniel used a ram for Medo-Persia and a goat for Greece is because those were what he saw in the vision he received by God. But, if, as the liberals tell us, the book of Daniel was just made up by some unknown Jew writing from Palestine in the second century BC — such a person would NEVER have depicted Medo-Persia as a ram and Greece as a goat. It would be as if someone today wrote a book about the Eisenhower administration and the Kennedy administration and referred to the Eisenhower era as the days of Camelot. It would be as if someone today wrote a book about Reagan's defeat of Carter, and referred to Carter as the Gipper. Ridiculous, right? Yes, it is. And referring to Greece as a goat and Medo-Persia as a ram in the second century is just as ridiculous! And yet that is just what we find here if Daniel was written in the second cen-

ture as the liberals argue — which means that these visions did not come from the mind of second century BC men. In fact, they did not come from the mind of man at all!

Daniel 8:5-7

5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. 6 And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7 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.

Who is this goat from the west? If we had to guess, it would not be difficult. History tells us that Greece was the great power that conquered the Medo-Persians, but, once again, we are left with no doubt. Verse 21 tells us explicitly that this goat denotes Greece. “And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is

between his eyes is the first king.” (And Greece was not a great power when that was written!)

This goat with one conspicuous horn comes from the west and charges the ram with the two horns. Again, this description is in perfect agreement with history. Alexander the Great and the Greeks came against Persia in 334 BC from Macedonia and Greece, which were in the west. Like this goat, Alexander moved fast. The hooves of this goat did not even touch the ground. (Alexander died when he was 33, but by that time he had virtually conquered the world!)

So, who was this conspicuous horn? As we just said, it must be Alexander the Great. Verse 21 tells us that this horn was the “first king.” Alexander was the first king of the consolidated Greek empire. (He was the one who consolidated it.)

This attack by the goat against the ram appears to be unprovoked. History tells us that the Greeks launched just such an attack in 334 BC, and Alexander emerged victorious just three years later. One commentator wrote:

Alexander’s conquest of the entire Near and Middle East within three years stands unique in military history and is appropriately portrayed by the lightning speed of this one-horned goat. Despite the immense numerical superiority of the Persian imperial forces and their possession of military equipment like war elephants, the tactical genius of young Alexander ... proved decisive.

Daniel is telling us that Alexander had help! He was acting out his part in a plan that God had put into place hundreds of years earlier.

Alexander the Great

For a long time in world history, Greece was a side-show — a small, divided country at the extreme western end of the known world. They were a seemingly insignificant player in global events that saw the Babylonians and Persians rise and become world powers. How did Greece come to take center stage and supplant ma-

gor, world-crushing empires? And how could Daniel possibly have known about that 200 years before it happened? (We know the answer to that last question!)

Unable to ever successfully put up a united force or government, the Greek tribes developed as city-states. The most famous were Athens, Sparta, Thebes, and Macedonia. For 500 years, Greek history was characterized largely by a series of internal conflicts, although they had also been battling Persia off and on for quite a while. The conflicts between Persia and Greece go back at least as far as 547 BC when Cyrus the Great conquered the Greek-inhabited region of Ionia.

Xerxes is the Persian king in the book of Esther, and Herodotus describes his Greek expedition in 480-479 BC, which included the Battle of Thermopylae depicted in the recent movie, *300*, which showed the famous three day suicidal stand in a narrow pass. Although the 300 Spartans arrayed against 100,000 Persians lost that battle, that Persian invasion eventually resulted in a dismal failure for the Persians.

In 470 BC, the Persian army again suffered defeat at the hands of the Greeks, which ended their fifty year struggle with Greece. Persia maintained control over Egypt and Cyprus, but lost control over the Greek colonies of Asia Minor. Xerxes was killed in a conspiracy in 465 BC and was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes I, who is the king who later allowed Ezra and Nehemiah to return.

In the last Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, which happened around 420 BC, Sparta made an agreement with Persia to use part of the Persian navy to bottle up the Athenian fleet. The Spartans won the war, but their victory came at a price — the Persians were now back in Greece.

In 370 BC, a Greek king arose in Macedonia known as Philip II of Macedon. (See the handout available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com.) In seven years he was able to subdue all the Greek city-states and unite them, something that had not happened in almost five centuries.

But Philip wanted more than just a unified Greece. He also wanted Persia. In 336 BC, when his invasion of Persia was in its very early stage, Philip was assassinated,

and he was succeeded on the throne by his son Alexander III (Alexander the Great). Alexander had been educated as a child by a very famous tutor — Aristotle! Alexander came to power when he was just a teenager, and he would be dead by the time he was 30. In that short period he conquered the entire civilized world.

One of his campaigns brought him to Jerusalem. He arrived most likely around 329 BC. (He was dead by 323 BC.) The Jews were terrified of the now victorious Greeks because the Jews had backed Persia in the war. The High Priest had earlier refused Alexander's demand for provisions and men to help him conquer Tyre claiming that a treaty with Persia prevented Israel from helping the Greeks.

The Talmud describes what happened. The High Priest came out with other members of the priesthood, as well as the Sanhedrin, to greet Alexander at the gates of Jerusalem as he sat on his famous white horse. When Alexander saw the High Priest he dismounted and bowed to him. Instead of destroying and subjugating them, Alexander made an arrangement with the Jews. As long as they would be his loyal vassals and pay their taxes, they could remain autonomous.

Out of gratitude to Alexander, the Jews did several things. First, they agreed to name every child born the next year "Alexander," which must have caused some confusion on the first day of school a few years later! Second, the Jews agreed to install a system of tax collection, which would later lead to terrible corruption (as it would again later under the Romans). It was so corrupt that the Talmud held that anybody who was a tax collector was presumed to be a thief. Ironically, by showing Alexander their gratitude by naming their children after him they unwittingly opened the door to the Greek language. And with the Greek language came the Greek culture, which would create many problems down the road.

Why did Alexander spare Jerusalem? The Talmud says that Alexander had a vision. Josephus tells us that the High Priest brought out the scroll of Daniel written 200 years earlier and pointed to Daniel's vision of a one-horned goat defeating a ram in Chapter 8 and explained that it shows a king from Greece defeating the Persians.

Daniel 8:8

8 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.

This goat “waxed very great” or “magnified himself.” What does that mean? It could denote Alexander’s advances into Afghanistan and India, which occurred in 327 BC. That is, Alexander magnified his empire. More likely, it refers to Alexander’s pretensions of divinity, which distressed his troops to the point that they mutinied and refused to advance further into India. Egyptian priests had told Alexander that he had descended from Zeus, and he took that very seriously. He required his comrades to prostrate themselves before him.

This horn is broken at the height of its power, and in its place arise four other horns. Here we will see that four is used literally, but there could also be a figurative meaning — these four kingdoms were man-made kingdoms.

Alexander died in Babylon in 323 BC at the age of 33 due to a sudden fever brought on by dissipation. (The rumor was that he had in fact been poisoned by Cassander, the son of Antipater, viceroy of Macedonia.) After his death, attempts were made to hold his empire together, but they proved futile. By 311 BC, four of his generals had claimed independence and by 301 BC they had it. (At one point thirteen men were trying to carve out a piece of the Greek empire, but when the smoke cleared only four were left standing.)

- Ptolemy in Egypt (including Palestine).
- Seleucus in Babylonia.

- Lysimachus in Thrace and Asia Minor.
- Cassander in Macedonia and Greece.

History tells us that the division of Alexander's kingdom was four-fold and that is what Daniel tells us as well. The difference is that Daniel told us many years before Alexander was even born!

Daniel 8:9-12

9 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. 10 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. 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. 12 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.

Here we have another little horn. We saw a little horn in Chapter 7 that we identified with Domitian, the eleventh emperor of Rome. Should we expect this little horn to be the same person? No. The little horn in Chapter 7 came up from the

fourth kingdom (Rome). The little horn here in Chapter 8 comes up from the third kingdom (Greece). This little horn is a perfect example of our rule that similarity of language does not prove identity of subject.

Who then is this little horn that arises out of the Greek empire? We are given a few clues here and more clues later in the chapter. Who is the little horn? Let's summarize the clues:

- He grew great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land (verse 9).
- He was able to cast down some of the host of the stars and the host of heaven (verse 10).
- He greatly magnified himself (verse 11).
- He took away the burnt offerings (verse 11).
- He overthrew the sanctuary (verse 11).
- He was a king of bold countenance (verse 23).
- He understood riddles (verse 23) (KJV — understanding dark sentences).
- He had great power (verse 24).
- He caused great destruction (verse 24).
- He arose from one of the four pieces of the Greek kingdom that came about after Alexander's death (verses 8-9).

There is only one Greek ruler who fits all of these clues. The little horn of Daniel 8 must be Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid Empire. (A bust of him is shown on the handout, and also on a coin. The reverse of that coin includes the inscription, "Theos Epiphanes," which means God Manifest. His people called him Epiphanes, which means The Mad One. The handout is available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com.) Why must Antiochus IV Epiphanes be the little horn of Daniel 8?

Antiochus IV Epiphanes

As we have seen, after the death of Alexander, Ptolemy and his successors established themselves in Egypt and at first controlled Palestine as well. The Seleucids controlled Mesopotamia and Syria. There was constant friction between these two groups, and as was often the case, Palestine became a battlefield. In 200 BC, the Seleucids gained Palestine from the Ptolemies at the Battle of Panias.

We should keep in mind how the spread of the gospel would have been hindered if this constant warfare had been allowed to continue. The fourth kingdom, Rome, put an end to it and brought instead the famous *pax Romana*, the Roman peace. Here is how Wikipedia describes it:

Pax Romana (Latin for Roman peace) was the long period of relative peace and minimal expansion by military force experienced by the Roman Empire in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Since it was established by Augustus, it is sometimes called *pax Augusta*. Its span was approximately 206 years (27 BC to 180 AD). ***The pax Romana is said to be a “miracle” because prior to it there had never been peace for that many centuries in a given area of human history.***

You don't need quotation marks around the word “miracle” in that last sentence!

Initially the Seleucid rule was popular with the Jews. According to Josephus, Antiochus III eased the tax burden considerably. However, he soon came in conflict with Rome and after several defeats was forced to pay a large annual indemnity. This meant that he had to tax the Jews more heavily, and understandably his popularity began to wane. Antiochus III was killed in 187 BC while raiding a temple treasury in Elam to pay off the Romans. His successor, Seleucus IV, continued this policy by plotting unsuccessfully to rob the temple treasury in Jerusalem. He was assassinated in 175 BC. As one might expect, this period gave rise to Jewish opposition and the gradual emergence of a Jewish nationalistic movement.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes came to power after the death of his brother, Seleucus IV. He needed to unify his empire against the threats of Rome to the west, Parthia to the east, and Egypt to the south. Antiochus sought to accomplish this unity by fostering Hellenism; that is, by encouraging the adoption of Greek culture and ideals. He particularly identified with Zeus and took the name *Theos Epiphanes* (“the god appearing”) because he considered himself to be a divine personification of Zeus. Due to the Roman taxes, Antiochus was virtually penniless when he assumed the throne, so he increased taxes and continued to rob temples.

Although they all disliked the taxes, the Jews were divided about Hellenism. Younger Jews were eager to adopt Greek culture and integrate it into Jewish society, but most older Jews were uncompromising traditionalists. Matters came to a head in Jerusalem when two men tried to out bribe each other in an effort to have Antiochus make them High Priest. The winner supported the establishment of a Greek gymnasium within sight of the temple. There, young men (including priests) studied Greek culture and took part in sports. The intertestamental book of First Maccabees contains the following description:

Whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem according to the custom of the heathen. And made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen.

Greek sports were conducted without clothing. Also, when First Maccabees says that they made themselves uncircumcised, it is not just speaking figuratively. Some of the Jews actually tried to reverse their circumcision with surgery.

Later, the High Priest (who had obtained that position by paying Antiochus a bribe) assisted the king in plundering the temple and said nothing while Antiochus murdered citizens and nearly destroyed the city. An altar to Zeus was built in the temple and sacrifices were offered on it. And that was not all.

Antiochus issued decrees forbidding the practice of Jewish religion on pain of torture and death; the Sabbath and the festivals were not

to be observed and circumcision was forbidden; copies of the Torah were to be destroyed and Jews were to be forced to offer sacrifices to Zeus and eat the meat of the sacrifice. Pigs were deliberately chosen as the sacrificial animals because they were considered unclean by the Jews.

One elderly priest, Mattathias, refused to sacrifice to Zeus and, with his five sons, he rose up and killed the king's officers who were trying to force him to comply. This event led to the Maccabean Revolt, which eventually gave rise to the first independent Jewish nation since before the Babylonian captivity. This nation lasted only 79 years. In 63 BC, the Romans under Pompey conquered Jerusalem and once again the Jews were under foreign domination.

Now, let's look at those clues again. Who is the Little Horn of Daniel 8?

Clue #1: He grew great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land (verse 9).

This clue accurately describes the directions of the Seleucids. The "glorious land" is Palestine.

Clue #2: He was able to cast down some of the host of the stars and the host of heaven (verse 10).

The phrases "stars of heaven" and the "host of heaven" refer to the people of God, who at this time were the faithful Jews. This symbol for the Jews may point back to the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5. Antiochus caused many "stars of heaven" to fall as he caused them to renounce their covenant with God.

Clue #3: He greatly magnified himself (verse 11).

Antiochus declared himself to be the divine personification of the Greek god Zeus. See the coin on the handout available at www.ThyWordIsTruth.com. The phrase *Theos Epiphanes* on the reverse side of the coin means "God Manifest."

Clue #4: He took away the burnt offerings (verse 11).

Verse 11 says:

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 prince of the host may be Jesus Christ himself, whom we also saw in Daniel 7. That is how far this little horn magnified himself! It was by him that the burnt offering was taken away. (The Hebrew here simply says that the *daily* was taken away. That is, the daily activities of the priests were stopped.) As we have seen, Antiochus did just that.

Clue #5: He overthrew the sanctuary (verse 11).

Antiochus looted the temple and set up an altar to Zeus in the sanctuary.

Clue #6: He was a king of bold countenance (verse 23).

Even the Roman Pompey refused to disrupt the Jewish worship, but not so with Antiochus. He definitely had a bold countenance!

Clue #7: He understood riddles (verse 23) (KJV — understanding dark sentences).

A better translation is that he was skilled at double dealings. Again, this was true of Antiochus. History tells us that he was extremely crafty and devious.

Clues #8 and #9: He had great power, and he caused great destruction (verse 24).

This, of course, as we have seen was also true of Antiochus.

In summary, Antiochus IV Epiphanes is the little horn that arose out of the Greek empire and persecuted the people of God ruthlessly. He overthrew the sanctuary and caused the daily sacrifices to end. He caused many of God's people to fall by causing them to renounce their covenant with God in favor of Greek culture and Greek gods.

Verse 12 gives us the reason behind Antiochus' success. It was through transgression. God didn't lack power; it was just that the people were evil. They followed Antiochus and allowed Antiochus to do what he did.

Also, in verse 12 we see that Antiochus would cast the truth down to the ground. In fact, he forbid scriptural faith and service to God on pain of death.

Daniel 8:13-14

13 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? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Daniel hears a “holy one” or “saint” (probably an angel) ask how long the sanctuary and the people would be trampled underfoot. A second “holy one” provides the answer — the sanctuary will be restored after 2300 days (literally 2300 “evenings and mornings”).

The phrase “how long” should remind of us of a similar verse in Revelation 6.

Revelation 6:10 — *And they cried with a loud voice, saying, **How long**, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

As we mentioned earlier, that verse has been called the theme of the book of Revelation. Here we have the same question, “How long?” but the answer we get in verse 14 is curious — 2300 days. (We will see this question again in Daniel 12:6.) The 2300 days of verse 14 presents one of the most difficult interpretive problems in the book of Daniel — and, not surprisingly, the commentaries are all over the map on what it means!

As for **clearly wrong views** of the 2300 days, they are numerous. Here is one example. The Millerites were followers of William Miller, who in 1833 decided that Jesus would return in 1843. Why? He started with 457 BC (which is about the year that Ezra led the second return from exile, with the return under Cyrus being the first and the return in Nehemiah being the third), and then he counted forward 2300 years based on verse 14 and based also on the “year-day method” of Biblical interpretation (about which we will soon have much more to say). Christ’s failure to return as Miller predicted became known as the Great Disappointment, out of which arose the Seventh-Day Adventists, and eventually the Branch Davidians. So, yes, we can draw a straight line between Miller’s false views of verse 14 and the events that happened in Waco in 1993.

Yes, it matters what we believe about Daniel. And, yes, it matters when people purport to know when Jesus will return even when the Bible tells us that Jesus himself does not know when that day will be (Mark 13:32). We can see what happens when false teaching such as that creates the inevitable “great disappointments.”