

Identity Of The Little Horn

(Daniel 8:9-14, 23-27)

Intro: This morning we return to Daniel's vision in chapter 8. In our previous study we unraveled the prophecy of one of history's greatest generals—Alexander the Great. Alexander, depicted as a conspicuous horn on a he-goat, defeated Cyrus' Persian Empire, depicted as a ram. But as soon as Alexander became great, he was broken, and his vast empire was divided up among his four generals (v. 8).

The remaining verses in Daniel 8 are extremely difficult to understand because they describe two of history's most vile dictators—Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who lived from 215 BC. to 164 BC., and the Antichrist, whose diabolical reign is yet future. The tyrannical reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the small horn who rose up from Alexander's general Seleucus, is detailed in verses 9-14. The closing verses of the chapter, verses 23-27, provide additional details concerning Antiochus' brutal reign, but also foreshadow the future reign of the coming man of sin, Antichrist.

Let's begin by looking at Daniel's vision of the little horn in Daniel 8:9-14

I. The Vision Of The Little Horn (vv. 9-14)

A. Identity of the little horn (vv. 9-12)

9 And out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. **10** And it grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. **11** It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. **12** And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.

As we noted two weeks ago, the shaggy goat represented Greece, and the large horn between his eyes, her first king, Alexander the Great. Following his death, with no heir to succeed him, Alexander's vast empire was

divided up among his four generals. Daniel watched as a rather small horn came forth out of one of the four horns/generals of Alexander's kingdom.

The little horn depicted here in chapter 8 is not the little horn we looked at previously in chapter 7. The little horn in chapter 7 refers to Antichrist, who will rise up out of the restored Roman Empire, comprised of the 10 Nation Federation. The little horn described here in verses 9-14 of chapter 8 rose up out of Greece, and refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who lived from 215—164 BC. Antiochus was the son of King Antiochus III of Syria. His name, Antiochus Epiphanes, means "God manifest."

Antiochus had an insignificant beginning. He seized the Seleucid throne by murdering his brother, the rightful heir to the throne, in 175 BC. As soon as he established himself as king over Syria, he exerted his power southward—*conquering Egypt*, and eastward—*subjecting Persia and Babylon*, and toward the Beautiful Land, *that is, the land of Israel*.

In his vision Daniel watched as Antiochus attempted to destroy God's people, the Jews. v. 10—The little horn rose up against the host of heaven, and caused some of them to fall to the earth, and he trampled them down. In biblical symbolism both "the host of heaven" and "the stars" refer to God's people, the Jews.

History records numerous accounts of Antiochus' horrible persecution of God's people in Jerusalem and throughout Judea. He attempted to Hellenize the Jews, make them adopt Greek culture and practices. Antiochus' real purpose, according to the apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees was to completely annihilate the people of God, and the Jewish religion.

On his return from his initial conquest of Egypt in 170 BC., Antiochus came to Jerusalem and subjugated the people, outlawed Jewish feasts and traditions, desecrated the temple, and plundered the temple treasury.

11 It, the little horn—Antiochus, even magnified itself/himself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it/he removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. **12** And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it/he will fling truth to the ground and perform its/his will and prosper.

In December of 168 BC. Antiochus sent his general, Apollonius, with twenty thousand troops to seize Jerusalem on the Sabbath. He desecrated God's sanctuary by erecting an idol of Zeus in the temple, and the sacrificial altar by offering a swine on it. This idol became to the Jews "the abomination of desolation." In Hebrew, an abomination refers to an "idol." The Jews were forbidden to practice their faith, and no longer allowed to circumcise their infant sons. The Jews revolted, and thousands were slaughtered. Historians tell us that during this attack on Jerusalem, Antiochus' forces killed eighty thousand Jews, and captured and sold another forty thousand into slavery (2 Maccabees 5:11-14).

In December of the following year, 167 BC., the Jews were commanded to offer unclean sacrifices and to eat swine's flesh or face death. Antiochus further made possession of the Hebrew Scriptures an offense punishable by death. He had his men burn every copy they could find.

Antiochus Epiphanes' brutal persecution of the Jews, and desecration of God's holy temple, was predicted to last for 2,300 days, vv. 13-14

B. Duration of the little horn's persecution (vv. 13-14)

13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?" **14** And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."

As in his previous vision, God dispatched a holy one, an angel identified as Gabriel (v. 16), to interpret the meaning of the vision. As in the previous visitation by Gabriel, Daniel was frightened (7:15), and fell on his face before him. Gabriel informed Daniel that Antiochus' brutal persecution of the Jews, and desecration of the Temple would last for 2,300 days, before it would be cleansed. Most Bible commentators take the 2,300 evenings and mornings to mean 2,300 literal days, a period equal to six years and four months. This period began in the Fall of 171 BC. when peaceful relations between Antiochus and the Jews ended. While 1 Maccabees 1:10-21 does not tell us exactly what happened on that initial day, it gives us a general idea of what transpired"

In those days lawless men [apostate Jews] came forth in Israel, and misled many, saying, “let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us.” This proposal pleased the people, and some of the people eagerly went to the king [Antiochus]. He authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles . . . so they removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined themselves to the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.

Although 1 Maccabees is not recognized as a God-inspired document, it none-the-less provides an amazingly accurate account of what began the 2300 days of Antiochus’ being permitted to trample God’s people and holy place. As predicted, 6 years and four months later, on December 25, 165 BC., Antiochus IV Epiphanes was overthrown by Judas Maccabeus, and the temple was cleansed and rededicated to God. The Feast of Hanukkah, a word meaning “dedication,” was instituted to commemorate the Temple’s cleansing and rededication to God. This feast, also known as “the Feast of Lights” has been celebrated annually by the Jewish community ever since.

II. The Angelic Interpretation Of The Little Horn (vv. 23-27)

A. Identity of the little horn (vv. 9-12)

As we move into the final verses of this 8th chapter, vv. 23-27, we discover that the identity of the little horn provided by the angel Gabriel seems to have a dual application. What I mean is, certain elements of the angel Gabriel’s interpretation of the little horn in verses 23-25 appear to look beyond Antiochus to the future Antichrist, of whom Antiochus is merely a foreshadowing. Let’s read the verses, and then I will attempt show you what I mean.

- 23 “And in the latter period of their rule,
When the transgressors have run their course,
A king will arise
Insolent and skilled in intrigue.
- 24 “And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power,
And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree
And prosper and perform his will;
He will destroy mighty men and the holy people.

- 25 “And through his shrewdness
 He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence;
 And he will magnify himself in his heart,
 And he will destroy many while they are at ease.
 He will even oppose the Prince of princes,
 But he will be broken without human agency.
- 26 “And the vision of the evenings and mornings
 Which has been told is true;
 But keep the vision secret,
 For it pertains to many days in the future.”

Most conservative Bible scholars are of the opinion that certain elements of the angel Gabriel’s interpretation of the little horn in verses 23-25 seem to have a dual application. That is, Antiochus IV Euphianes’ historical oppression of the Jews is seen to provide a partial fulfillment or foreshadowing of the prophetic career that the final world ruler, Antichrist, will completely fulfill. In other words, Gabriel’s interpretation appears to look beyond Antiochus to the future Antichrist, of whom Antiochus is merely a foreshadowing.

My former professor, Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost summarizes 7 facts these verses teach us about the coming Antichrist:

- (1) He will achieve great power by subduing others (v. 24).
- (2) He will rise to power by promising false security (v. 25).
- (3) He will be intelligent and persuasive (v. 23).
- (4) He will be controlled by another (v. 24), that is, Satan.
- (5) He will be an adversary of Israel and subjugate Israel to his authority (vv. 24-25).
- (6) He will rise up in opposition to the Prince of princes, the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 25).
- (7) His rule will be terminated by divine judgment (v. 25).

B. Daniel’s reaction (v. 27)

- 27 Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king’s business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it.

Daniel was physically spent from this vision. However, he eventually got up and carried on the king’s business.

Conclusion:

As we study a passage like this, we might have a tendency to come away fearful. But if we are trusting in Christ as our Savior, then we don't need to worry. God has promised to deliver us from the coming Antichrist by removing us from earth before he comes to power (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:9; Rev. 3:10).

What is more, Paul informs us in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-9 that Antichrist can't come on the scene until the Restrainer is first removed. We understand the Restrainer as referring to the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer. The removal of the Restrainer will take place when God Raptures every true believer to heaven (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

What should we do in light of what we have learned? We need to get busy sharing the Good News about Jesus Christ with lost people. Ask God to help you begin sharing Jesus with your family, friends, neighbors, work associates, and people you meet.

Remember, there are no shortcuts to becoming holy. You need to read your Bible and spend time in God's presence everyday!

Closing prayer:

Closing song: *How Great Thou Art!*