

Daniel 8: The Little Horn of Greece

“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.”

Daniel 8:9

Introduction:

1. The first vision told the rise of Antichrist, the Man of Sin, the Catholic popes, by a little Roman horn.
2. This second vision tells the rise of a powerful persecuting ruler against Israel by a little Greek horn.
3. The errors made in this chapter are Legion, and the consequences of these errors have been significant.
4. William Miller, a New England farmer, arrogantly using a Bible and concordance exclusively, concluded in 1818 from this chapter that Jesus Christ’s Second Coming would occur in 1843.
5. He began preaching this publicly in 1831 with the urging of others and created quite a stir in our nation.
6. His first forecast chose the full year between March 21, 1843 and the same date in 1843. No luck there!
7. His second forecast was the supposed Day of Atonement, October 22, 1844. No luck there either!
8. After promising the earth’s destruction and calling on followers to sell everything, nothing happened!
9. Ellen G. White took some of these simpletons to form the Seventh Day Adventists by telling them Jesus had truly come ... to the heavenly sanctuary and was now engaged in the “investigative judgment.”
10. Jonas Swendahl took other of the simpletons to form the Second Adventists with 1874 as the target date.
11. From this group, Charles Taze Russell formed the Watchtower Society by forecasting Christ’s coming in 1874, then 1914, then 1925, then 1941, then 1975. You get the drift; his failed prophecies are Legion.
12. How many followers do these groups have living today based on abusing Daniel 8? About 30,000,000!
13. We can and must be thankful for the clear prophetic interpretation of this vision given by Gabriel to Daniel for understanding and for God’s light in our souls. It is all plain to him that understands (Pr 8:9).
14. Valuable and honest commentaries on this chapter have been written by Poole, Henry, Gill, Barnes.
15. Pitiful and mistaken commentaries on this chapter have been written by Newton, Clark, and others.

The Vision (8:1-14)

- 8:1 This is the second vision that God gave to Daniel of events to come in the future (1-2).
1. The first vision was four beasts and a little Roman horn – papal Antichrist – in chapter seven.
 2. The timing of this vision is two years after the first vision (7:1 cp 8:1).
- 8:2 God gave this second vision to Daniel at the palace in Shushan in the province of Elam.
1. He was in the palace at Shushan in Elam, apparently on business for king Belshazzar (27).
 2. Shushan was an important city and became a capital city of the Persian Empire (Esther 1:1-2).
 3. But the vision took him out of the palace to beside the river of Ulai.
- 8:3 Daniel saw a ram with two high horns, and the one horn was taller and came up last.
1. Beasts so far in our study represent kingdom, and there is no change here (20). See chapter 7.
 2. A ram is a male sheep, which is the leading sex of a weak animal, compared to earlier beasts.
 3. Horns have represented ruling powers so far in Daniel, and there is no change here at all (20).
 4. The single kingdom was ruled by two successive powers, the latter power being the greatest.
 5. The kingdom under consideration began with Medes, but became great under Cyrus the Persian.
 6. This kingdom was represented in Daniel’s earlier vision as a bear rising up on one side (7:5).
- 8:4 The ram exerted itself in three directions with great success, and no other beasts could resist it.
1. Obviously coming from the east (the missing direction), the ram expanded in three directions.
 2. Persia is modern Iran. It pushed west (Babylon), north (Turkey), and south (Egypt).
 3. There were no other beasts at that time which could resist these territorial advances of the ram.
 4. Persia expanded until it numbered 127 provinces from Ethiopia to India (Esther 1:1).
- 8:5 Daniel then saw a he goat from the west come rapidly toward the ram, and it had a notable horn.
1. Goats are rougher, tougher animals than sheep, and this goat was a male of its species.
 2. It is an interesting study to see how the Macedonians (Greeks) considered themselves goats.
 3. The kingdom would come from the west. Greece was clearly west of Persia (including Turkey).
 4. He covered and conquered all that part of the earth lying to the west of the Persian Empire.

5. He did not touch the ground, as we say that fast creatures barely touch the ground (II Sam 2:18).
 6. This kingdom is represented in Daniel's earlier vision as a leopard with four wings (7:6).
 7. This kingdom was ruled by a singular and exceptional ruler, which we know was Alexander.
- 8:6 The he goat attacked the ram with speed and ferocity, while the ram simply tried to hold his ground.
1. Alexander raised an army and traveled through Asia to meet the Persians first at Granicus.
 2. The Persians under local satraps, not considering the Macedonian army a threat, remained put.
 3. Holding the higher bank at the River Granicus, Alexander stormed across and routed them
 4. The descriptions of Alexander's first victory fulfill the description wonderfully. Praise the Lord.
- 8:7 The he goat in raging fury and revenge stormed across the Hellesponte into Persia against the ram.
1. The fury, ardor, anger, and confidence by which Alexander attacked the Persians are legendary.
 2. Choler is what we call the choleric temperament – a hot temper and easily provoked anger.
 3. Alexander had no fear of the mighty Persians and attacked them with the ferocity of a wild goat.
 4. He had a personal mission to avenge the great invasion of Greece by Xerxes in 480 B.C.
 5. Darius could do nothing against this furious leader with his own troops or hired mercenaries.
 6. In three great battles, Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela, Alexander crushed the Persians.
 7. At Issus, he captured the royal family; at Gaugamela, he routed a great army, slaying 600,000.
- 8:8 The he goat continued to conquer and expand, but then his horn was broken at the height of his power.
1. Alexander conquered the known world from Egypt to India, from Greece to Mesopotamia.
 2. At the young age of 33 and bored with no worlds yet to conquer, Alexander the Great died.
 3. At his death, Greece was the strongest it would ever be, just as the prophecy indicates.
 4. His brother and two children tried to reign, but they were all assassinated within a few years.
 5. The kingdom was then divided among four of his generals, who fought each other for dominion.
- 8:9 Out of the four ruling kingdoms that divided the Greek empire, another little horn rose into prominence.
1. "Out of one of them" refers to the four horns, not the four winds. Winds do not grow horns!
 2. One of the segments of the divided Greek Empire would have a persecuting ruler against Israel.
 3. This ruling power had small beginnings and came from the north or the south, by elimination.
 4. This ruler was a hostage in Rome and obtained the throne unjustly and unworthily by treachery.
 5. This ruler exercised himself against the pleasant land, which must be personal to Daniel's land.
 6. The land flowing with milk and honey and the joy of the whole earth was Israel of Palestine.
 7. A ruler of the Seleucid dynasty did attack Egypt (south), Persia (east), and Israel (pleasant land).
 8. The "exceeding great" rule of the king is toward the south, east, and Israel, not the whole world.
- 8:10 The little horn grew in power and arrogance against the kingdom of God and cast down some of them.
1. The kingdom of God at this time was the nation of Israel, recently regathered from Babylon.
 2. Some of the host would refer to citizens, and some of the stars would refer to their rulers.
 3. We do not take figures of speech and think he rode into heaven and threw down literal stars.
 4. An angel's interpretation applied these words to the destruction of many of holy Israel (24-25).
 5. Seven pastors of seven churches in Asia were called stars by Jesus Christ to John (Rev 1:20).
 6. God gave Joseph a prophetic dream where his brothers were stars worshipping him (Gen 37:9).
 7. As saints in the New Testament, we are part of the kingdom of heaven and of God. Surprise?
- 8:11 This ruler lifted up himself even against the Prince of the host of Israel, even the Most High Himself.
1. Blasphemous arrogance against God would not be new, as the previous vision had such (7:25).
 2. This great enemy of God took away the daily sacrifice of lambs, one morning and one evening.
 3. The sacrifice was stopped and God's blessings of protection withdrawn for Israel's sins.
 4. The city and temple of God, where His sanctuary was located, were cast down and destroyed.
- 8:12 The arrogant ruler was given power to eliminate the daily sacrifice and crush the truth for Israel's sins.
1. The little horn placed an army in Jerusalem to hinder the daily sacrifices of temple worship.
 2. You can read about this ruler's soldiers hindering worship and burning the law (I Maccabees 1).
 3. And the reason for this abdication of His temple by God was for the transgression of His people.
 4. And the host, or army, of the little horn prospered in its war against the truth of God's people.
 5. They were successful in many ways to stop the true worship and cause many to apostatize.
- 8:13 One angel answers another about the length of this successful war against Israel's nation and religion.
1. The evil events include the ending of the daily sacrifice, a transgression of desolation, and the destruction and occupation of the temple and land.

2. In determining the length of this situation in Israel, all the events listed here must be covered.
- 8:14 The answering angel told Daniel that the sanctuary would be cleansed 2300 days after the trouble began.
1. We are in a horn of the Greek beast; we cannot for any reason consider 2300 years, as many do.
 2. William Miller got excited with a calendar in 1818, as he knew years would give him a story!
 3. But how do you squeeze 2300 years into an empire that only lasted 300 (333 B.C. to 31 B.C.)?
 4. Then poor Mr. Miller started the 2300 years with the totally unrelated 70 weeks of Daniel 9.
 5. Let every reader tremble before the Lord and His Word, for the blindness He gives is terrible!
 6. The days are 2300 literal days for four reasons, and there is no reason to stumble here as others.
 - a. This verse records an angel giving a plain explanation to another angelic observer.
 - b. The Greek Empire was far too short for any expanded interpretation of the 2300 days.
 - c. The Greek Empire in the “latter time” of its divided existence (23) was even shorter.
 - d. The days are defined as evenings and mornings in verse 26, just as in Genesis 1.
 - e. If we were to dabble in Hebrew as many pseudo-scholars, we would see it by “day” in our text; but we have the English of verse 26 to get us there much more expeditiously.
 7. A vicious Seleucid ruler certainly did persecute Israel in the manner specified for 2300 days.
 8. Matthew Poole gives four options for the fulfillment of the six years, three months, and 18 days.
 9. John Gill gives two fair options for the fulfillment of the six years, three months, and 18 days.

The Interpretation (8:15-27)

- 8:15 Daniel seeks the meaning of the vision, and an angel is sent to give him understanding of it.
1. We should ask why he couldn't figure this simple lesson out while running 45 mph (Hab 2:2)!
 2. We should ask why he couldn't simply apply dictionary definitions, which give the meaning!
 3. Let us be humble saints that seek our understanding from heaven. It will be sent (Ps 119:18)!
- 8:16 An angel calls for Gabriel, an angel from the presence of God, to give understanding to Daniel.
1. Understanding is a gift from heaven, not just a mechanical application of dictionary definitions!
 2. We do not seek angelic messengers today, but we do seek spiritual understanding from heaven.
- 8:17 Daniel is frightened by the angel, who tells him the vision is not for fulfillment until the time of the end.
1. If angels cause fear to men with Daniel's exposure to kings, what must the glory of God be like!
 2. The end under consideration is not the end of the world or the end of the Jews, but the end of this appointed indignation (19). Jesus died on the cross in “the end of the world” (Heb 9:26).
- 8:18 Daniel was sleeping on the ground with the angel talking, but he set Daniel up for the interpretation.
- 8:19 The angel narrows the whole vision to the appointed indignation against Israel and its events.
1. God was already angry at Israel, as a reading of Haggai and Malachi will clearly reveal.
 2. The angel's intent was to explain the events of the end of the indignation against Israel.
 3. God's providential appointment for this indignation would come at the time He had purposed.
 4. And in the details of the interpretation, the angel skips many great events to focus on one ruler.
- 8:20 The ram with two horns was the kingdom of Media Persia, with two ruling powers of Darius and Cyrus.
- 8:21 The goat with the one horn is the kingdom of the Greeks, and the notable horn was Alexander the Great.
1. The he goat here is called a rough goat, which well contrasts Alexander with the Persian kings.
 2. Consider that Daniel was told about Alexander about 150 years before he was even born!
 3. At the time of this prophecy, about 460 B.C., Greece was not exactly a world power.
- 8:22 Alexander's rule would be broken, and four generals would rule the kingdom, but not in his power.
1. The Greek Empire was never again as great and glorious as it was under Alexander's rule.
 2. As is typical in prophecies, the 10-15 years of a brother and sons trying to reign are ignored.
- 8:23 In the latter time of the Greek Empire, a wicked and subtle king would persecute Israel for their sins.
1. Let this be settled once and for all – the little horn was a ruler in the Greek Empire! Get it!
 2. Let this be settled once and for all – the little horn was a ruler in divided Greece by “their”!
 3. This fierce king rose while the plural segments (their) of a single empire (kingdom) existed.
 4. And this is the same kingdom with a notable horn that crushed Persia – it is the Greek kingdom.
 5. This ruler would come in the latter time of the Greeks, who ruled from 333 B.C. to 31 B.C.
 6. Though the Greek Empire had seriously declined long before the defeat of Cleopatra at Actium.
 7. Emilius Probus had subdued Perseus and the Macedonias to conquer Greece proper in 166 B.C.
 8. Pompey conquered Syria for the Romans to end the Seleucid kingdom and rulers in 63 B.C.

9. The transgressors were regathered Jews, who were very wicked (Josephus and I Mac 1:11-15).
10. The particular king would be of a fierce nature – cruel and vicious in his conduct toward others.
11. He would understand dark sentences – he would use subtlety in deceiving others by subterfuge.
12. This king is clearly and only Antiochus IV, a Seleucid ruler known as Antiochus Epiphanes.
- 8:24 He would have mighty power from another source, and he would successful destroy the people of God.
 1. He was not a great general or a regal ruler, but the God of heaven granted him his power.
 2. He was assisted in his reign by the aid of Eumenes, king of Pergamos, and his brother, Attalus.
 3. He was assisted in his treachery against Israel by the wicked priests Menelaus and Jason.
 4. He would have power against Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple very few before him ever had.
 5. He would destroy the mighty and holy people – both saints and soldiers suffered at his hands.
 6. Israel, by God’s divine assistance, had been a mighty nation against various opponents.
- 8:25 In his arrogance he would stand up against the God of heaven and prosper in his efforts until his end.
 1. He prospered in the use of all sort of treachery and deceit to corrupt and destroy the Israelites.
 2. He magnified himself – he would command the sea waves and measure the high mountains.
 3. He sold the priesthood for money, put an altar to Jupiter on God’s altar, and offered swine in the temple to Jupiter; and he and his soldiers used prostitutes in the temple, specifically to defile it.
 4. By so flagrantly defiling God’s religion, he stood up against God Himself, as Antichrist (7:25).
 5. He died a miserable death of some divine plague according to I Mac 6:1-19 and II Mac 9:1-29.
- 8:26 The angel confirms the vision of the 2300 days was true, though it would not happen for a good while.
 1. Daniel saw this vision about 460 B.C., three hundred years before Antiochus Epiphanes!
 2. Revelation was not to be sealed, for its prophecies were to occur very soon (Revelation 22:10).
 3. The prophecies of Revelation began fulfillment immediately after writing (Rev 1:1,3; 22:6).
- 8:27 The vision caused great grief to Daniel and confusion to others, but he continued in the king’s service.
 1. Consider that at this time there was no city or temple at Jerusalem (Belshazzar’s third year).
 2. Consider the magnitude of political and religious upheaval that Daniel saw in this vision.

Conclusion:

1. This vision has nothing to do with Daniel 7 or 9, as it presents two beasts within the longer prophecies.
2. The “little horn” in chapters 7 and 8 are totally unrelated, as one was Roman and the other Greek.
3. Chapter 7’s ten horns have nothing to do with chapter 8’s four horns, as they were different kingdoms!
4. Rome is not under consideration in Daniel 8! It is the Greek kingdom with which the vision ends (23)!
5. The little horn of Daniel 8 is of the Greece (21-22), and it is also of the divided kingdom by “their” (23).
6. It is disappointing to see the leaps Miller, Isaac Newton, Thomas Newton and Adam Clarke take here.
7. Living on this side the fulfillment makes this prophecy simple and certain, even if we estimate the days!
8. How does Daniel 8 profit? It builds faith (Jn 13:19); it warns (I Cor 10:6-12); it comforts (Rom 15:4).
9. Valuable and honest commentaries on this chapter have been written by Poole, Henry, Gill, Barnes.

For further reading:

- 1.** Alexander defeats Persians at Granicus: http://joseph_berrigan.tripod.com/ancientbabylon/id32.html
- 2.** More about Granicus: <http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/prm/blalexandersfirstgreatvictory4.htm>
- 3.** More about Granicus: http://www.hackneys.com/alex_web/battles/granicus.htm
- 4.** Alexander defeats Darius at Issus: http://joseph_berrigan.tripod.com/ancientbabylon/id33.html
- 5.** Alexander defeats Darius at Gaugamela: http://joseph_berrigan.tripod.com/ancientbabylon/id35.html
- 6.** A chronology with more about Alexander: http://www.livius.org/aj-al/alexander/alexander_chrono.html
- 7.** Map of Alexander’s expeditions: http://www.macedonianpark.com/alexanders_expedition_map.htm
- 8.** More about Alexander: http://www.hackneys.com/alex_web/alexfram.htm
- 9.** More about Alexander: <http://www.macedonianpark.com/ALEXANDER.htm>
- 10.** A short, readable history of the four Greek kingdoms: <http://www.zianet.com/maxey/Inter2.htm>
- 11.** A short, readable history of the Maccabees: <http://www.zianet.com/maxey/Inter3.htm>
- 12.** Geneva: <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/GenevaStudyBible/gen.cgi?book=da&chapter=008>
- 13.** Matthew Henry on Daniel 8: <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/MatthewHenryComplete/mhc-com.cgi?book=da&chapter=008>
- 14.** Gill on Daniel 8: <http://www.gospelcom.net/eword/comments/daniel/gill/daniel8.htm>

- 15.** Ex-SDA against SDA: http://www.truthorfables.com/2300_Days_by_Vowless.htm
- 16.** First Maccabees: <http://www.hope.edu/academic/religion/bandstra/BIBLE/1MA/1MA0.HTM>
- 17.** Josephus: http://bible1.crosswalk.com/History/BC/FlaviusJosephus/?book=Ant_12&chapter=5&s=
- 18.** Josephus: http://bible1.crosswalk.com/History/BC/FlaviusJosephus/?book=Ant_12&chapter=6&s=
- 19.** Josephus: http://bible1.crosswalk.com/History/BC/FlaviusJosephus/?book=Ant_12&chapter=7&s=
- 20.** William Miller and 2300 Year Dupes – White and Russell: <http://www.scionofzion.com/hall.htm>
- 21.** Jehovah's Witnesses and date setting: <http://www.christiancommunitychurch.us/dovenet/jwerror.htm>
- 22.** A few JW dates: http://www.macgregorministries.org/jehovahs_witnesses/false_prophecies.html