THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL

In the Light of PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE EVENTS

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE VISION OF THE RAM AND THE HE GOAT

Foreshadowing That Part of the Roman Empire out of Which the Antichrist Will Arise

AS WE enter upon the study of the eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel, let us keep in mind the central theme of the entire prophecy—the commencement, character, course, and consummation of "the times of the Gentiles."

In our present lesson we see yet further details of things to come being unfolded to us by the Holy Spirit of God. When the vision recorded here was given to Daniel, all of it had to do with then prophetic events; whereas we today can look back and see that everything in verses 1-22 refers to men and empires that have come and gone.

We read about them on the pages of secular history. But verses 23-27 of the chapter before us have to do with "a king of fierce countenance" who shall appear "in the latter time" (v. 23); and he is none other than the Antichrist who is to come. Again, while verses 1-22 have to do with history, yet the men of whom they speak were shadows of that coming "man of sin," who is more fully described in the closing verses of the chapter.

In our study of chapter seven we saw that the Antichrist will arise out of the territory which comprised the old Roman Empire, and that he will have associated with him ten subordinate kings who will do his bidding.

In chapter eight we shall see that God was revealing to Daniel that part of the Roman Empire out of which the Antichrist will come—the part over which Alexander the Great once ruled. In other words, the "king of fierce countenance" of Daniel 8:23 is the same as "the little horn" of Daniel 7:8. Some teach that these are two different persons; but such a position is contradictory, confusing, disastrous.

A glance at our chart will show us that the ram of Daniel's vision in chapter eight represents Medo-Persia; the he goat, Greece; "the notable horn," Alexander the Great; the "four notable ones," the four generals under whom Alexander's kingdom was divided.

All this is set forth in verses 1-8 and 15-22. Verses 9-14 have to do with Antiochus Epiphanes, an exceedingly wicked man who lived after Daniel's day, fulfilling this prophecy in every detail—a graphic type of the "man of sin." The chapter closes with a detailed description of that terrible Antichrist, who will rule on earth during the last, seven-year period of Gentile world dominion.

Let us read the chapter repeatedly getting the outline view of the whole, before we try to study it analytically.

As we read, we shall see that it is not man's speculation that interprets the ram to represent Medo-Persia and the he-goat, Greece, for God Himself gives the full interpretation of the vision on these inspired pages. Moreover, He gives us the key to the chapter; indeed, the key to the whole book, when He tells us in verse 19 that He wants us to "know what shall be in the last end of the indignation."

God always wants us to "know" what the future has in store, not only concerning our own neverdying souls, but also concerning the ultimate development of world events and world movements. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples in the Olivet discourse, concerning the end of this age, "Behold, I have told you before . . . When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matthew 24:25, 33). Likewise, in Daniel's prophecy He was telling us what shall take place "in the last end of the indignation"; that is, when the "cup of iniquity" of the Gentile nations is full.

Through the Apostle Paul God has also told us that He would not have us "to be ignorant" concerning His coming for His own, at the first resurrection and the translation of the church, before the Antichrist is revealed. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

God desires His people now to live their lives in the light of a revealed future. Yet some preachers actually tell their congregations that it is wrong to inquire from God's Word regarding things to come.

Once I received a letter from a Sunday-school teacher who said she had been asked to give up her class, just because she was seeking to teach her group what God has written in the prophetic Scriptures. May we ever let the Spirit of God instruct us in every portion of His wonderful Word.

At least three times in the chapter before us He explains that the vision has to do with "the time of the end." Let us look once more at these references:

- "At the time of the end shall be the vision" (v. 17);
- -"I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation" (v. 19);
- "the vision . . . shall be for many days" (v. 26).

So then, because the complete accomplishment of what was revealed to Daniel concerns "the time of the end" of Gentile dominion, it must of necessity have a greater importance for us now than it ever had for others who have gone before us. "The last end of the indignation" has not yet been fulfilled. But every circumstance in the world today seems to indicate that the yet unfulfilled prophecies must surely come to pass in the not far distant future. Therefore, these things acquire an urgency for God's people that should stimulate a keen interest regarding every detail of Daniel's vision.

Some of these details of chapter eight had been revealed previously to Nebuchadnezzar and to Daniel.

The ram of chapter eight represents the same empire symbolized by the arms and breast of silver in the image of chapter two and by the bear of chapter seven; likewise, the he goat is none other than that empire foreshadowed by the belly and thighs of brass in Nebuchadnezzar's vision and by the leopard with four heads and four wings of Daniel's vision recorded in chapter seven. In like manner, the Antichrist is described in chapters seven, eight, nine, and eleven, to say nothing of other typical chapters which foreshadow his manifestation, reign, and certain doom.

Let no one think for a moment that these oft-repeated references to the same four Gentile world empires and to the same Antichrist and his subject kings are given here merely for the sake of repetition. Not at all!

Each prophetic picture is set forth for a divine purpose, to present a different aspect of the character, course and consummation of "the times of the Gentiles." And, we repeat, the central thought of our lesson today is that chapter eight tells us the part of the old Roman Empire out of which the Antichrist will come.

And now let us read together the first two verses of chapter eight, which are introductory, giving us the circumstances under which Daniel received this vision from God:

In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.

Let us remember that, when Daniel saw this vision, Babylon had not yet fallen; for it was given to the prophet "in the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar."

Yet it foretold the second and third Gentile world empires—Medo-Persia and Greece. Daniel was not really in Shushan, but in the vision he saw himself as if he were there. At the time of this vision, Shushan was comparatively small; later it became the capital of Persia, after the time of Cyrus. A glance at the map in the back of our Bibles will show that Elam was northwest of Persia proper, south of Media, and east of Babylon. The river of Ulai is now called "Kerah" or "Karasu."

THE RAM AND THE HE GOAT

1. The Ram—Representing Medo-Persia.

In verses 3 and 4 we read:

Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

Verse 20 leaves us in no doubt as to the identity of the empire represented by the ram; for the Angel Gabriel said to Daniel,

The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.

The two horns, one higher than the other, and the higher coming up last, represent the same thing as that pictured by the bear which "raised up itself on one side" (7:5). Media was more ancient than Persia. "Darius the Median" became king that night when the army of Cyrus conquered Babylon while Belshazzar was drinking wine out of the sacred vessels. But, as we have seen, Darius was weak; and his power lasted only two years. Then Cyrus became strong; and under him Persia dominated the consolidated kingdoms of the Medes and Persians. Thus the "higher" horn, or "king," "came up last."

Daniel saw the ram "pushing westward, and northward, and southward."

The accuracy of Scripture is seen in the most minute details, for Daniel did not say that the ram pushed eastward. That was the direction from which the Persians themselves came! The maps of history show that the Medo-Persian Empire did push in the other three directions, conquering Babylon, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Asia Minor toward the west; Armenia, Iberia, even unto the Caspian Sea toward the north; and Judea, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Libya toward the south.

Such is this third prophecy concerning the second Gentile world power; for the breast and arms of Nebuchadnezzar's vision, the bear of Daniel's vision, and the ram—all foreshadowed in a marked degree the empire that has long ago fulfilled every word of the God-given message.

2. The He Goat—Representing Greece.

As Daniel beheld the ram, which "did according to his will, and became great," he saw another strange sight, a conflict between the ram and "an he goat." And he wrote in verse 5, saying:

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.

Before we consider this conflict between the ram and the he goat, let us read God's interpretation concerning the he goat. It is found in verse 21,

And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

From history we know that "the first king" of the Grecian Empire was Alexander the Great. He "came from the west" of Medo-Persia, "and touched not the ground," so swiftly did he conquer his enemies. With "incredible swiftness" he "overran the world in less than twelve years." Having lived a dissipated life, he died at about the age of twenty-eight.

They tell us that he wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. He had been very angry with the Persians for their cruelties to the Greeks; therefore, he was "moved with choler against the ram"

Let us read of the conflict in verses 6 and 7:

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. 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.

In this figurative language God foretold the coming of the third Gentile world power. And history corroborates every word of it. Alexander, the heir to Philip of Macedon, welded together the independent, warring Greek states; turned eastward; conquered his enemies; and became a world ruler.

But Daniel (in v. 8) beheld until his power was broken:

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.

Since Alexander died in the prime of life, while his kingdom was very powerful, the Word of God was literally fulfilled, in that "when he was strong, the great horn was broken." He died from "fever at Babylon" at the time when his power was very great, i. e., "when he was strong."

Having no heir to the throne, his kingdom was divided between his four generals, as we saw in the study of chapter seven. This is what Daniel meant when he wrote that "**four notable ones**" came up in the place of "**the great horn**" that was broken. Verse 22 makes this very clear:

Now that [the notable horn, i.e., "the first king"] being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

By way of review, we name again the four generals of history who divided Alexander's kingdom—you will remember that we mentioned them in the previous chapter when we saw that the four heads and the "**four wings of a bird**" on the leopard represented these same four generals: Seleucus, ruling over Syria, Babylonia, and Media; Cassander, over Macedonia, Thessaly, Greece; Ptolemy, over Egypt, Cyprus; and Lysimachus, over Thrace, Cappadocia, Asia Minor.

Thus once more we see these prophetic pictures dovetailing —the belly and the thighs of Nebuchadnezzar's image; the leopard with four heads and four wings; and the he goat whose notable horn was broken, in the place of which came up four notable ones, all portraying the same Gentile power known as the Grecian Empire.

We do not need secular history to vindicate and verify the inspired Word of God, but our faith is confirmed and God is glorified by the annals of uninspired men, as they bear record to the facts which God wrote before they came to pass.

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES—A SHADOW OF THE ANTICHRIST

Earlier in this chapter we stated that verses 9-14 were prophetic of an exceedingly wicked man named Antiochus Epiphanes, who lived long after Daniel's day, and who was a shadow of the Antichrist who is yet to come.

As Daniel saw "the notable horn" of the he goat broken, as he beheld until "four notable ones" came up in its place, he continued to witness the vision until "out of one of them (i. e., these 'four kingdoms') came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great" (v. 9). That "little horn" was Antiochus Epiphanes, of whom history tells. He "came forth" out of Syria, one of the "four kingdoms" into which Alexander's empire was divided.

We must not confuse him with the Antichrist, who is called "**the little horn**" in Daniel 7:8. As we shall see from the study of 8:9-14, these verses prophesy concerning a man that has already lived and died— a veritable monster, who persecuted Israel, and is a remarkable type of the Antichrist.

In these verses we read at least seven things that are written of Antiochus Epiphanes:

- 1. He "Came Forth" out of one of the "Four Kingdoms" into which Alexander's empire was divided. We have seen that this kingdom was Syria.
- 2. He "Waxed Exceeding Great"—"toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land" (v. 9). "The pleasant land" refers to Palestine.
- 3..He Exalted Himself. He "waxed great, even to the host of heaven" (v. 10). He defied Israel's God, even setting up a statue of Jupiter in the Holy of Holies to be worshipped.
- 4. He Persecuted Israel. "**He cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them**" (v. 10). This was a forecast of the persecution of the spiritual leaders among the Jews. We need to bear in mind that this prophecy concerned Daniel's people, Israel.

- 5. He Claimed Honors Due Israel's Messiah. "Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host"—"the prince of the host" is the Messiah of Israel. (See verse 11.)
- 6. "By Him the Daily Sacrifice Was Taken Away!" Israel's morning and evening sacrifice was "taken away," that is, Antiochus refused to allow the Jews to offer the sacrifices that pointed on to Jesus, their Messiah and "the Lamb of God." "And the place of his sanctuary was cast down" (v. 11).
- 7. He "Cast Down the Truth to the Ground!" In his transgression, in his robbing Israel of her daily sacrifice, he "prospered" for a time (v. 12).

This is the God-given portrait of Antiochus Epiphanes, that terrible creature who was to come, and who long ago passed off the scene of this world's history. He succeeded to the throne of Syria about one hundred and twenty years after the death of Alexander. The Spirit of God, looking down the ages, saw in Antiochus a type of the Antichrist; that is why He recorded the portrait of that man of long ago, in order that he might be a foreshadowing of that other one who is to come. All that is written of Antiochus—and more—could be said of the coming "man of sin." He, too, will exalt himself as God, sitting "in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." He, too, will claim honors due only to Israel's Messiah, even our Saviour and Lord. He, too, will take away the daily sacrifice, persecuting God's ancient people—Daniel's people—in the "Great Tribulation" that is to come upon the earth.

So diabolical were the acts of Antiochus and so cruel was his persecution of the Jews that he was known as "Epiphanes, the madman." At one time he attacked Jerusalem and slew forty thousand Israelites, selling as many others into slavery. In diabolical mockery he had a sow killed and offered on the Jewish altar, scattering the broth over the sanctuary, defiling the Holy Place, and causing the daily sacrifice to cease for a time. With the setting up of the image of Jupiter to be worshipped, this blasphemy reached its climax.

What a picture of the blasphemy, the sacrilege, the revolting, abominable crimes of the coming "man of sin"! But Antiochus met a horrible death; he "was eaten of worms and ulcers, when on his way to Judea, intending to take vengeance for the defeat of his armies by the Maccabees" (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown). Again his terrible death is but a foreshadowing of the awful doom that awaits Satan's masterpiece, even the Antichrist in that yet future day.

THE CLEANSING OF THE SANCTUARY

No devout Jew could rest until the sacred altar and all the holy things had been cleansed of this blasphemous defilement by Antiochus. And as Daniel beheld the vision, he heard the conversation between two "saints" or "holy ones," angels of God.

Let us read verses 13 and 14:

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

This prophecy was fulfilled when Judas Maccabeus delivered Jerusalem and cleansed the sanctuary, about 165 B. C. This cleansing of the temple took place exactly 2300 days, of twenty-four hours each, from the time when Antiochus had defiled the holy things. These were 2300 literal days that passed, before the sanctuary was purified and re-dedicated to the service of the Lord.

Let us pause just here to expose a blasphemous heresy taught by the Seventh-day Adventists concerning this cleansing of the sanctuary.

A long time ago one named William Miller predicted that Christ would come again October 22, 1844, to "cleanse the sanctuary." He said that Satan was the "scapegoat" of the Levitical law—a horrible blasphemy—and that God laid upon Satan all our sins. Such a perversion of Scripture is unthinkable; for we know that our Lord Jesus bore "our sins in his own body on the tree" (I Peter 2:24)! William Miller had computed time from the issuing of the decree by Cyrus for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, counting 2300 years, not days as in Daniel 8:14, until October 22, 1844. It sounds ridiculous even to repeat his folly; but that is what he did; he counted 2300 years from Cyrus' decree until 1844, and said that on that day Christ would return and "cleanse the sanctuary," meaning an earthly sanctuary.

His followers sold their farms, their homes, their property of all kinds. They got into their "ascension robes," sang hymns, and waited for the return of Christ. And yet our Lord Himself told us expressly not to set dates for His coming! When He did not return on October 22, 1844, many of Miller's followers became avowed infidels—such is the tragedy of all heresy.

The Millerites broke up, but out of this movement Mrs. Ellen G. White formed a group which we know as Seventh-Day Adventists.

Mrs. White tried to make amends for William Miller's error by saying that the "sanctuary" was heavenly, not earthly. She claimed that Christ did enter the Holy of Holies on October 22, 1844, to cleanse it from Satan's defilement. Think of the audacity of such a statement! Our Lord was crucified, arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven forty days after His resurrection. Ever since that time He has been seated at the right hand of the throne of God, making intercession for His own. There He is today, our Great High Priest, our "Advocate with the Father."

Evidently William Miller and Mrs. White and their deluded followers overlooked the plain statement of the inspired Record that the 2300 days were "evenings and mornings," as a marginal reading so renders the words. To make them 2300 years is to pervert the Scriptures—to say nothing of the gross heresy of the doctrinal teaching set forth in this "sanctuary theory."

DANIEL'S WITNESS TO THE GOD-GIVEN INTERPRETATION

After Daniel had seen the vision, he wrote these words (vv. 15-19), explaining that it was God who gave to him the interpretation thereof:

And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.

And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision. Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.

Then follows the interpretation concerning the ram and the he goat, which we have already considered in detail (vv. 20-22).

And from 23-27 the Angel Gabriel continued to speak to Daniel concerning what shall be "in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full" (v. 23). These remaining words of the chapter, as we have stated earlier in this lesson, give us another picture of the Antichrist, called here "a king of fierce countenance." Let us see what the angel said about him.

THE "KING OF FIERCE COUNTENANCE"

This one described here cannot refer to Antiochus, for it is written in verses 23-25 that he shall "stand up" "in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full."

In other words, the Antichrist, arising out of that part of the Roman Empire over which Alexander ruled, will "stand up" "in the latter time." This old world has seen transgressors of evil intent—many of them! But the transgressors will not "come to the full" until "the man of sin" is revealed, and until he and his cohorts defy the God of heaven. The one described here is the same one of whom we read in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation.

A king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power.

It is Satan who will give to the Antichrist his "power, and his seat [throne], and great authority" (Revelation 13:2); for Satan is "that old dragon."

... and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people [i.e., Daniel's people]. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and in their security shall he destroy [corrupt] many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.

Repeatedly in this series of studies we have read, from several portions of Scripture, that this "man of sin" will magnify himself as God, standing up "against the Prince of princes," even our Lord Jesus.

Since the Holy Spirit has often repeated this warning for emphasis, shall we not also warn men to turn to Christ before that awful day comes when the Antichrist shall be made known? If God considers this repeated warning necessary, surely only Satan himself would dare close men's eyes to its message. Yet that is just what he is trying to do—and all too often succeeding in doing.

After all his bitter persecution against Israel, after all his wicked blasphemy against "the Prince of princes," the Antichrist will be "broken without hand," that is, by God's supernatural, divine power. He will be "cast into the lake of fire" when the Lord Jesus returns in glory to purify the earth, and to set up His kingdom of peace and righteousness. How we long for that glorious day!

THE EFFECT OF THE VISION UPON DANIEL

And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.

With these words of verse 26 the Angel Gabriel concluded his message to God's prophet, Daniel.

And in the closing verse of the chapter (v. 27) we read Daniel's own statement concerning the effect which the vision had upon him:

And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

Thus we see that the heart of Daniel was solemnized by the strange revelation which God had given him. Should not our hearts, likewise, be made solemn as we read and ponder the mysteries of His Word, even as we see before our eyes the fulfillment of His prophecies? "**The king's business**" requires haste; and the days may be few, in which we shall have time to witness as ambassadors for our coming King.

Daniel "did the king's business," even though his heart must have been heavy as he thought of all the sin of his people, and of the sufferings that were to come upon them. He trusted in the promises of his God, and went about "the king's business," witnessing to his Lord by doing the duties that were set before him.

Whatever our tasks may be, my Christian friend, let us ever remember that we are ambassadors for the "**King of kings**." His business is urgent. As ambassadors for Him, we are strangers and pilgrims here, for we look for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is **God**" (Hebrews 11:10).

Meanwhile, we have a message from our King, and it can best be delivered to those for whom it is intended if our lives are consistent with our heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:20). The message from our King is for those who are lost in sin, who do not know Him and His great salvation. It is a life-giving message, "Be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:20, 21).

When I went to the death cell of that condemned man in San Quentin prison some time ago, the man of whom I wrote, I went to tell him of a pardon from my King. I had no right to offer him a pardon from the state of California. Such a verdict would have to come through legal procedure. But I could tell him of the One who took his place on Calvary's Cross, offering eternal redemption from the penalty of sin, so that he could be justified before the "Judge of all the earth," in the court of heaven, for all the endless ages.

Thank God, I found that condemned man clear on the plan of salvation, for years ago, under the ministry of the late Dr. R. A. Torrey, in the Church of the Open Door, Los Angeles, he had accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour.

Through the years he had grown cold and indifferent; he had lost his fellowship with his Lord, not his salvation. The result was a life of sin. It took an awful experience to turn him from his self-willed way. As I talked with him in his prison cell, I was convinced that he was born again, and repentant for his crime. Every evening before his execution he walked up and down his cell, singing,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee!

His testimony before the guards and his fellow-prisoners bore fruit. What a wonderful Saviour we have!

This is our business for our King—to go to the lost with His life-giving message, His word of pardon and love and grace. This old world is rapidly speeding on to judgment; and how will sinners find the Saviour if we do not tell them of His love?

My unsaved friend, I would not close this chapter without urging you to accept the message from our King. If you spurn it, you are giving allegiance to Satan.

If Jesus should take the church to heaven today, you would doubtless accept the "**strong delusion**" of the "king of fierce countenance" who is to come.

Put your faith in the atoning blood of Calvary's Lamb, and He will wash you "whiter than snow"! But remember, "Now is the accepted time!"

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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