

The Goat & The Ram



With this chapter the book begins to be written in Hebrew again instead of Aramaic. This chapter contains the third prophecy pertaining to world kingdoms (Dan. 2 & 7). The previous prophecies discussed four kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome). This chapter primarily discusses the second (Medo-Persia) and third (Greece).

Remember that this chapter is apocalyptic in nature. This means that it is written mostly in symbolic (figurative) language. (Fortunately, in this chapter we are told what nearly everything means!) Furthermore, apocalyptic literature describes a time when God will intervene on behalf of His people. This time of intervention usually is depicted as “The day of the Lord” or “The End” or similar.



This chapter is badly misused to try to support premillennialism. Before we “jump in”...

Remember the “rules” for understanding symbolism:

- Be consistent with interpreting the language – do not arbitrarily make one part representative and another part literal.
- Always consider the historical context.
- Understand the overall theme of the writing.
- All interpretation must agree and be in harmony with *the rest of the Bible*.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Rightly dividing the word of God remains important when dealing with apocalyptic language. We must resist the temptation to automatically equate similar words or phrases or figures from different Bible text, that may reference different things. Daniel 8 may have language similar to Matthew 24 and to the book of Revelation, but this doesn’t mean all three are discussing the same events. They are not! Matt. 24:1-35 is discussing the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The book of Revelation discusses the victory of Christianity over Rome; Daniel 8 is not dealing with either. (Symbolic language may have the same *general* meaning, but a different *specific application* based on the context!)

Daniel 8 contains prophecies that at first may not seem that exciting, some things that are easy to pass over if we don’t know what later came to pass. Consider the following as you study this chapter:

- The Medo-Persian empire was initially led more by the Medes; when Cyrus came into power the Persians became far more dominant. This empire took over everything including into Egypt and Asia Minor.
- At the time Daniel had this vision, “Greece” consisted of independent states that fought, tied together through ancestors. Philip of Macedon gained power over this region in 359 BC. His son, Alexander (‘the Great’) was born in 356. He took control of the kingdom in 335 BC and unified it.
- Alexander the Great attacked Persia (coming from the west) and had defeated them by 333 BC. He swept down the coast of Palestine, into Egypt, then went to India, and back to Babylon. He had conquered ‘the world’ by 323 BC. He died that same year, reportedly due to excessive drinking / fever.
- Upon his death, his kingdom was divided through wars leading to four divisions: **Cassander** took Macedonia; **Ptolemy** took Egypt; **Seleucus** took Syria; **Lysimachus** took Asia Minor. The **Seleucid** and **Ptolemy** kingdoms subsequently take over the other two, and are at odds over the following years. Palestine lies as a border between them.

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•Antiochus IV Epihanes, from the Seleucid line, comes into power just before 170 BC. He was not a military leader, but rather used deception and political prowess to his control. He tried to Hellenize (make Greek) other cultures, and seemed to have a particular hatred of the Jews.

•From Jewish records (Josephus and the Maccabees), in our October, 167 BC, he gave an order to stop sacrifices in the Jewish temple. On Dec 25, 167 BC he desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig, pouring the broth about the temple. (Years vary by one in some accounts.) He erected a statue of Zeus in the Holy of Holies, and ordered sexual acts to occur in the temple as well. The Jews were forbidden to have a copy of the scriptures or to circumcise their children, under penalty of death. Due to the persecution many Jews quit practicing their religion completely.

•Through the Maccabean revolt he was pushed out of Palestine exactly 3 years after he desecrated the temple.

•Antiochus Epiphanes reportedly died of some horrible disease.

Questions

1. The best estimates from history are that Belshazzar / Nabonidus' reign lasted 14 or 15 years. Knowing it ended in 539 BC, in approximately what year did Daniel have this vision?
2. What is symbolized by the ram?
3. What is symbolized by the male-goat?
4. Who or what is represented by the single horn on the male-goat?
5. Who or what is represented by the four horns on the male-goat?
6. What is the "*Glorious land?*"
7. Of all this symbolism, what seems to be the central focus of this prophetic vision?
8. This is symbolic language – how can we be so sure to what this prophecy is specifically referring?
9. What is the reason the little horn was allowed to have such an impact (vs 12)?
10. Who are the host and stars that fall in vs 10?
11. Per vs 19 this pertains to the time of the end – *end of what?*
12. Consider question 1 and the history above. What is so impressive about vss 20-21?
13. Regarding the "2300 evenings and mornings" of vs 14, the following are some of the proposals: (a) 2300 evening and morning sacrifices (1150 days) from the order to stop sacrifice until cleansing the temple; (b) 2300 days from the beginning of war between Antiochus and the Jews until the date of his death; (c) symbolic, being short of "7 years". What do you think?

