

CHAPTER FOUR

The Ram and the He-Goat

In the eighth chapter of Daniel we find the record of a vision seen in about 550 B.C., the year in which Cyrus created the Persian empire. Daniel sees two beasts which are specifically identified as the Persian and Greek empires. His informant says,

'Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end ...Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation; for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.' (Daniel 8:17, 19)

This third vision is similar to the earlier ones, and is clearly meant to help us with the identification of the four kingdoms. It concentrates almost entirely on a description of Greece and Antiochus Epiphanes — and the description corresponds closely to that of the fourth kingdom and little horn. The information that the vision concerns 'the time of the end' should be enough to clinch the matter. Unfortunately most conservative interpreters think otherwise. For this reason we shall have to go through the vision carefully and see just why it proves that the fourth kingdom is Greek. This is how it begins:

'In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the capital, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was at the river Ulai. I raised my eyes and saw, and behold...'

The ram

'...a ram standing on the bank of the river. It had two horns; and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward; no beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power; he did as he pleased and magnified himself' (Daniel 8:1-4)

Daniel's informant briefly explains,

'As for the ram which you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia.' (Daniel 8:20)

In this vision a clear distinction is made between Media and Persia. The kings of Media are said to arise first and become great. Afterwards the kings of Persia arise and become still greater. This acknowledges the fact that Media held the reins of power before Persia. However, the two horns are on one beast, signifying the fact that they became united as allies. Now it happens that the first two visions (i.e., those of the image and four beasts) were seen at a time when Media was a powerful, independent empire. The vision of the two-horned ram was seen at about the very time (550 B.C.) when Media and Persia became united under the rule of Cyrus. It was therefore especially appropriate at that time to depict the Medes and Persians as united, the Persians being dominant.

Daniel begins his account of the vision by saying that he saw a two-horned ram in Elam (the land of Cyrus' origin). It is subsequently made clear that this ram represented the Persian-dominated Medo-Persian empire. *The two-horned ram therefore primarily refers to the empire created by Cyrus in 550 B.C.*

However, since one horn represents the kings of Media, the ram, superficially at least, appears to incorporate also the Median empire which preceded the Medo-Persian empire

created by Cyrus. This point will be dealt with further in the next chapter, but let it be emphasized here that the beast *primarily pictures the empire created by Cyrus in 550 B.C.* The vision is seen in about 550 B.C. and the beast begins its activities from the land of Elam, after the rise of the Persian horn. All these details point to Cyrus' new empire. The exploits of the beast are entirely those of the Persian empire. The two horns indicate that in fact the kingdom consists of two different peoples, and that the inferior people itself possessed an empire before the rise of the superior race. We can say that the beast represents the Medo-Persian empire formed in 550 B.C., and that the description of the two horns is probably little more than a historical note about the two peoples brought together in that empire. The horns 1) tell us that the new empire is a partnership between the Medes and Persians, the latter being dominant, and 2) give us the interesting information that this Persian dominance was preceded by a Median dominance.

Having described the ram, Daniel goes on to show that it will launch out on an unchecked (and therefore probably rapid) campaign of conquest resulting in an empire of great size. No other kingdom will be able to withstand it. It will do what it likes and make itself great. Now it should be questioned which of the two middle kingdoms of the image and four beasts the ram resembles more closely — the second or the third kingdom?

The second kingdom was 'inferior' to Babylon. It was powerful and rapacious, but we have the impression that it was not a fast mover. A bear is bulky and relatively slow — particularly, perhaps, when it is a lop-sided bear! It was ordered to 'arise and devour much flesh', but we are not told whether it obeyed this command. The third kingdom moved swiftly, was given 'dominion' and 'ruled over all the earth'.

The reader will probably agree that the description of the third kingdom fits the ram better than that of the second. This would indicate that the third kingdom is the Persian empire. There is, however, at least one similarity between the ram and the bear (the second of the four kingdoms). The bear 'was raised up on one side', and of the ram's two horns, 'one was higher than the other'. There is undoubtedly a similarity here; but various considerations make it likely that although *there is a connection*, these two conditions of 'lop-sidedness' do not signify the same thing. A little further on in this chapter it will be shown that evidence for this can be found in Daniel 11.

The connection is the fact that in both cases the lopsidedness has something to do with the partnership between Media and Persia. The unequal height of the ram's horns speaks of Persia's senior role in her partnership with Media. Reciprocally, the bear's one-sided elevation speaks of Media's early supremacy, but later subordination when in partnership with Persia. This suggestion is supported by 1) the fact that the bear as a whole is best explained in terms of the Median empire, and 2) the fact that the ram's exploits approximate more closely to those of the third kingdom than those of the second.

I conclude, therefore, that the Persian-dominated Medo-Persian ram on the whole supports my identification of the second kingdom as Media and the third as Persia. More will be said about this part of the vision later.

The he-goat with a conspicuous horn

'As I was considering, behold, a he-goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the river, and he ran at him in his mighty wrath. I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns; and the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled upon him; and

there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power. Then the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly; but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.’ (Daniel 8:5-8)

Daniel’s informant explains,

‘And the he-goat is the king of Greece; and the great horn between his eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.’ (Daniel 8:21, 22)

We have here a very vivid description of Greece’s destruction of the Persian empire. The fantastically swift progress and irresistible power of the Greek armies is pictured in colourful detail. The single great horn symbolizes Alexander and the four subsequent horns symbolize the four kingdoms founded by the four generals who gained control of the Greek empire after the death of Alexander.

When we compare this picture of Greece with Daniel’s four kingdoms, it is immediately obvious that there is a very striking similarity between the he-goat and the fourth kingdom. Let us list the similarities, quoting a) details of the he-goat, followed by b) details of the fourth kingdom.

1. a) ‘came across the face of the whole earth’
b) ‘devour the whole earth’
2. a) ‘his mighty wrath’
b) ‘terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong’
3. a) ‘struck the ram and broke his two horns’
b) ‘devoured and broke in pieces’
4. a) ‘cast him down to the ground and trampled upon him’
b) ‘stamped the residue with its feet’

Greece and the fourth kingdom both had this initial phase of immense power, but they both had a second phase of division and weakness.

5. a) ‘four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power’
b) ‘it shall be a divided kingdom ... partly strong and partly brittle’

It is quite obvious that the description of the fourth kingdom corresponds very closely indeed to that of the Greek he-goat. In my opinion, the two things are so manifestly parallel accounts that the fourth kingdom must be identified as the Greek empire. I do not deny that there are certain similarities between the he-goat and the third kingdom, but they are all features which Greece and Persia just happened to have in common — that is, ‘four kings’ (or kingdoms) and a large empire. Swiftness of movement is also suggested by the appearance of the third beast, though this is not specifically mentioned. Regarding the four heads and horns, it should be noted that the four heads of the leopard were prominent features of its *dominion*, whereas the four horns of the Greek he-goat are associated with a very marked *decrease* in dominion. The leopard’s heads appear to be connected with an initial phase of power and expansion, whereas the he-goat’s horns are connected with a secondary phase of division and weakness. This indicates that the four heads of the leopard are to be identified not with the four horns of the he-goat, but rather with the four kings of Persia mentioned in Daniel 10:1 and 11:2.

In these two verses we are told about the *four* powerful kings who created the Persian empire. Almost immediately afterwards, in 11:4, we are told about Alexander’s Greek empire being broken and divided, after his death, toward the *four* winds of heaven. The natural conclusion is that the leopard’s four heads represent the kings of Persia, whereas the he-goat’s

four horns represent something entirely different — namely, the four kingdoms into which the Greek empire was divided after Alexander’s death. This has a bearing on the interpretation of one of the other beasts also — the bear. We have seen that the he-goat’s four horns have nothing whatever to do with the leopard’s four heads. In a similar way (if our interpretation is correct), the unequal horns of the ram do *not* signify the same thing as the unequal sides of the bear. There is a connection, however, since in both cases the inequality has something to do with the partnership between the Medes and Persians.

The little horn

‘Out of one of them [the four horns] came forth a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. It grew great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them. It magnified itself, even up to the Prince of the host; and the continual burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through transgression; and truth was cast down to the ground, and the horn acted and prospered. Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to the one that spoke, “For how long is the vision. concerning the continual burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled under foot?” And he said to him, “For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.”’ (Daniel 8:9-14)

Daniel’s informant, the angel Gabriel, explains,

‘And at the latter end of their [the four kingdoms’] rule, when the transgressors have reached their full measure, a king of bold countenance, one who understands riddles, shall arise. His power shall be great, and he shall cause fearful destruction, and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people of the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall magnify himself. Without warning he shall destroy many; and he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes; but, by no human hand, he shall be broken.’ (Daniel 8:23-25)

In these passages we have a description of Antiochus Epiphanes. There can be no doubt about this whatsoever. The following brief outline should make this clear.

After Alexander died, his empire broke up and his generals fought over the remains. Following the battle of Ipsus, four generals emerged as the most powerful rulers. Cassander held sway in Greece and Macedonia, Lysimachus in Thrace and part of Asia Minor, Ptolemy in Egypt, Palestine etc. and Seleucus in Syria, Babylonia, Media etc.

Over the years of Greek rule, there was a falling away from God in Israel. Many succumbed to the Greek culture and were willing also to compromise in the matter of religion. This was open transgression of God’s law and was a sin which steadily increased, involving more and more people. And so it was that ‘when the transgressors had reached their full measure’ Antiochus Epiphanes became king of Syria. He was a member of the Seleucid dynasty and by means of great cunning and craftiness he raised himself from a position of no importance to one of great power. His campaigns carried him eastwards into Babylonia etc. and southwards into Egypt and Judaea, ‘the glorious land’.

He made it part of his policy to stamp out the Jewish religion. He deliberately set himself against all faithful Jews (‘the host of heaven’, ‘the people of the saints’), savagely persecuting both the people and their leaders (‘the stars’). The first to fall was the high priest himself, Onias, in 170 B.C. In pursuing this policy Antiochus set himself against the God of Heaven

who was in theory the ruler of this theocratic state and in fact the ruler of those Jews who were godly ('the Prince of the host' and 'Prince of princes'). From what will be said in this and a later chapter, it will become apparent that this 'Prince' is Christ Himself. As described already, Antiochus magnified himself to such an extent that he called himself God. He desecrated the temple, caused the daily sacrifices to cease and finally placed in the temple an altar for the worship of Olympian Zeus, whose incarnation he claimed to be.

However, the persecutions of Antiochus stimulated a heroic resistance. Faithful Jews preferred to endure the most bestial tortures and a lingering death rather than betray their faith. The more warlike rallied to the banner of Judas Maccabeus and defeated the armies of Antiochus again and again. In December, 164 B.C. the temple was recovered, cleansed and rededicated, and the 'continual burnt offering' was restored. The time between the death in 170 B.C. of Onias, the first of the host to be cast down, and the cleansing of the temple was probably just about 2300 days, a period of between six and seven years.

Antiochus' fury knew no bounds when he heard of the Jews' successes. He was on campaign in the east at the time, but he hastened back, vowing to slaughter the Jews mercilessly. But the 'Prince of princes' struck first. Antiochus died an unpleasant death, apparently by worms and ulcers. In this the Jews saw the hand of God.

The overall effect of Antiochus' persecution and the faithful Jews' resistance was to weed out the 'transgressors' or Hellenizing Jews, and to purify religion. The latter Jews had sympathized with Antiochus' aims and actually assisted him in his sacrilegious activities. The transgressors had indeed 'reached their full measure.'

Now it is clear that there is a close similarity between this description of Antiochus and that of the little horn in chapter 7. The similarity is so obvious that many people believe Antiochus to be a type of 'The Antichrist' (which is what they take the little horn of chapter 7 to represent). And indeed Antiochus may be such; but not because the little horn of chapter 7 refers directly to the Antichrist. Both little horns refer specifically to Antiochus, although he himself may well be a type of some future antichrist (see II Thessalonians 2:1-12). Let us list the similarities between the two 'little, horns':

1. Both horns arise out of a great empire during a second phase of division and weakness, the first phase being one of immense power and destructiveness.
2. Both horns become great from small beginnings.
3. Both horns persecute and prevail over the saints.
4. The first horn speaks 'great things and words against the Most High' and the second horn 'magnified itself, even up to the Prince of the host'.
5. Both horns have power over certain ordinances. The specific mention of the removal of the daily sacrifice in this chapter tends to confirm the interpretation we put on Daniel 7:25 ('He shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and a division of a time'). The longer period of time mentioned in this chapter (2300 days) covers the period during which both the sanctuary *and the host* are trodden under foot.¹ Antiochus himself was not directly responsible for the death of Onias, and it occurred before the full storm of persecution fell upon the saints. Nevertheless his death was a direct result of Antiochus' policy of meddling in Jewish religious affairs and was the first, and by no means insignificant, ripple preceding the tidal wave that followed.
6. Both horns oppose God and are destroyed by God. *We have in this chapter a very dramatic confirmation of the statement made earlier on, that the fourth kingdom (and*

therefore also the little horn) is destroyed by the pre-incarnate Christ. We are told here that Antiochus rises up against the ‘Prince of princes’, but is broken ‘by no human hand’ (literally ‘without hand’, as in the R.V.). This Prince of princes can be none other, surely, than Jesus Christ Himself — the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). *His* was the divine hand that struck Antiochus down. This is entirely compatible with the teaching of the New Testament. We read in Colossians 1:16, 17, ‘For in him all things were created whether thrones or dominions’. Not only does Christ create thrones and dominions, but He also destroys them. Compare the statement that Antiochus opposes the Prince of princes, but is broken ‘by no human hand’ with the statement that the fourth kingdom is broken by a stone cut out ‘by no human hand’ (2:34). Further proof that this Prince is Christ will be given in a later chapter.

In conclusion, it is clear that the ram and he-goat resemble the third and fourth kingdoms far more than the second and third kingdoms. No person can reasonably deny this. Orthodox and dispensationalist interpreters pick out the differences between the two little horns and inform us that these prove beyond doubt that the two horns do not symbolize the same person. They point out, for instance, that the first little horn comes up after ten other horns, uprooting three in the process, whereas the second little horn grows out of one of four horns. Such reasoning is really most odd! Of course there are differences — there is no point in having a second vision if it reveals exactly the same details as the first vision. In the second vision a different symbol is used to bring out further details. The different details in the two visions are all equally true of Antiochus. In the first vision it is revealed that he will be preceded by a line of seven kings (the Seleucids of Syria), which will arise from the empire of Alexander, and that he will uproot a further three during his rise to power. In the second vision it is further revealed that the kingdom out of which he arises (Seleucid Syria) will in fact be one of a group of four kingdoms which arise out of Alexander’s empire (Macedonia, Thrace, Syria and Egypt).

Thus some of the details about the little horn in chapter 7 are reiterated in chapter 8 and further details are added. An even fuller description of the Greek empire and Antiochus is given in chapter 11. The progression of the revelation is unmistakable. In each succeeding vision we are given a fuller description of an empire which will precede the arrival of the Messiah. In order that no mistake may be made, a particular king is described in great detail. The vision culminates in the revelation of chapter 11, where we find a fantastically detailed account of Greek history from Alexander the Great to the destruction of the Greek empire by Rome. It includes an account of Antiochus Epiphanes which takes up nineteen verses.

In the first two visions the fourth empire is described in very considerable detail. Our attention is *especially focused* on that empire and the little horn, and Daniel himself takes an intense interest in them (7:19, 20). The reason for this, presumably, is the fact that the fourth empire immediately precedes the kingdom of Heaven. The following visions of chapters 8 and 11 are almost entirely devoted to a detailed and lengthy description of the *Greek* empire and Antiochus Epiphanes. The way in which this description corresponds to the fourth empire is so overwhelmingly obvious, it is surprising that many interpreters seriously prefer to believe that in fact it describes the third empire. That the immensely important fourth empire is being identified before our very eyes is by far and away the most likely explanation. It is being named by name.

Finally, let us note again these words concerning the vision of the ram and the he-goat:

‘Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end ... Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation; for it pertains to the appointed time of the end ... but seal up the vision, for it pertains to many days hence.’

(Daniel 8:17, 19, 26)

This states categorically that the 'time of the end' will be associated with the Greek empire and the destruction of Antiochus. Orthodox and other interpreters get round this by saying that Greece and Antiochus 'pertain to the time of the end' only in the sense that they are 'types' of the fourth empire and the little horn. They themselves are to be identified with the third empire, but they are types of the fourth. What an extraordinary interpretation! How unnecessarily complicated! The simple meaning of the words is that Greece itself, preceded by the Persian empire, 'pertains to the time of the end'.

The visions we have considered now give a very clear picture of world history from the time of Daniel to the coming of the Messiah. The kingdom which preceded the heavenly kingdom has not only been described in considerable detail; it has been named by name. At this point the book of Daniel switches over and pinpoints the coming of the Messiah from a different angle. This time the reader is enabled to calculate the actual date of the Messiah's appearance.

But before we go on to study chapter 9, we must take a closer look at the Medo-Persian problem. It is generally stated that there was no genuine Median empire between the Babylonian and Persian empires, and conservative interpreters claim also that Media and Persia cannot be separated. Largely because of this, I believe, a series of comparatively straightforward prophecies has been converted into a dust-filled battle field. The question of Media's place in the prophecies lies at the root of most of the trouble.

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1. Some interpreters try to bring this figure closer to the 'three and a division times' of chapter 7 and 1290 days of chapter 12 by asserting that it means 2300 half days or 1150 full days. This is unnecessary, unsatisfactory and probably incorrect. The expression 'evening-morning' (as it translates literally) is probably based on Genesis 1, and therefore means one day.
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