

# “THE NATIONS RAGE”

DANIEL 8:1-27

**Theme:** Even as the people of God have suffered at the hands of godless men, the Antichrist pours out his wrath against the godly.

## I. The Lord Foreknows All Future Possibilities – 8:1-14

### A. The Setting of the Vision – vv. 1-2

1. *“In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king”* – indicates that this vision was located between chapters 4 & 5 in the year 551 BC when Daniel was 69 years old.
2. *“a vision appeared to me . . . and it came about while I was looking that I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam”* – a significant detail since it was a little known town, not yet the place of power that it would become during the Medo-Persian Empire, when it would be its capital, home of Esther, and place from which Nehemiah would return to Jerusalem.
3. The understanding is that Daniel was not literally in Susa, but instead saw himself in this vision and was thus projected forward to when the Persians and then Greeks ruled.
4. *“and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal”* – a place about 250 miles from Babylon.

### B. The Specifics of the Vision – v. 3-14

1. The first portion of the vision allowed Daniel to see the coming of the Medo-Persian Empire – *“The I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal.”* (Standing is significant in that it seemed to belong).
2. The details identifying it with Medo-Persia are then provided:
  - a) *“Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last”* – a reference to the two parts to the empire; first, the Medes whom the Persians outstripped.
  - b) *“I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself”* – descriptive of the way the Persian Empire operated.
3. After the Medo-Persian Empire, Alexander the Great rose to power

with Greece and is clearly described: *“While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground”* – a picture of the speed and efficiency of Alexander’s army.

- a) The singularity of leadership and the dominance of Alexander as a personality is indicated: *“and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.”*
  - b) Vv. 6-7 demonstrate the fierceness with which Alexander faced the Persians on different occasions when they met in battle (Granicus in 334 BC; Issus in 333 BC; Gaugemela in 331 BC).
  - c) Alexander’s untimely death resulting from his strenuous exertion, debauched lifestyle, and deadly fever is predicted 228 years before the 33-year-old Emperor died: *“Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken.”*
4. As a result of Alexander’s death, his vast empire was divided into four parts at the hands of his four most prominent generals – *“and in its place, there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.”*
- a) Cassander ruled Macedonia/Greece (West)
  - b) Lysimachus ruled Asia Minor (north)
  - c) Seleucus ruled Syria (east)
  - d) Ptolemy ruled Egypt (south)
5. Out of Syria came a ruler known as Antiochus who is now described throughout the balance of this section. He was a ruthless man who perpetrated tremendous atrocities against Israel and Jerusalem in particular.
- a) *“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.”* – a description of Antiochus’ ascending to power – occurring from 175-164 BC.
  - b) Vv. 10-12 describes Antiochus's horrible atrocities against the Jews.
    - (1) *“The host”* and *“the stars”* refer to the Jewish people.
    - (2) *“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”* – a reference

to the desecrations of Antiochus.<sup>1</sup>

6. A heavenly discussion occurs questioning how long this would be permitted – *“For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.”*
  - a) This refers to a literal period from Sept. 6, 172 BC until December 25, 165 BC, when the Temple was restored under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus.
  - b) Hence, these matters were literally fulfilled.

## II. The Literal Fulfillment of the Sovereign Plan – 8:15-22

### A. The Angel from God – vv. 15-19

1. As Daniel was attempting to figure out what all this meant, God instructs an Angel to come to Daniel and explain things: *“And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, ‘Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision.’”*
2. He indicates that what Daniel had been privileged to see was *“at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.”*
3. This is where so many need to be corrected in the interpretation. Daniel sees what will literally occur in the experience of Israel at the hands of the Persians and Greeks; however, Gabriel’s explanation takes it a step further and applies it to the *“appointed time of the end.”*
4. Wood explains this: “It sees the angel Gabriel as now giving the meaning of the vision by showing, not only the significance involving Antiochus of ancient history but also that of the one whom Antiochus foreshadowed, the Antichrist of future history. That is, Antiochus’ oppression is seen to provide a partial fulfillment of the prophetic vision, but that of the Antichrist the complete fulfillment.” (Wood, p. 223)

### B. The Accomplishment of History – vv. 20-22

1. *“The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia”* – literally fulfilled.
2. Just as literally fulfilled is *“the shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king*

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<sup>1</sup> Wood, pp. 213-215.

*[Alexander]. The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power."*

3. Gabriel then uses the final reference to the rising of Antiochus Epiphany to power to describe (as a type) the future, prophetic reign of terror by the Antichrist.

### III. The Legacy Fulfilled by Satan's Pawn – 8:23-25

#### A. The Reality of Antiochus

1. *"In the latter period of their rule, when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise"* – a clear reference to Antiochus as demonstrated earlier.
2. Once again, we recognize the literal fulfillment of prophecy.

#### B. The Reign of the Antichrist

1. From here to the end of the chapter, the power of the Antichrist is in view.
2. The features of his reign are as follows:
  - a) *"Insolent and skilled in intrigue"* – cp. **2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:7-8.**
  - b) *"His power will be mighty but not by his own power"* – cp. **Revelation 13:2.**
  - c) *"He will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will."* – cp. **Revelation 17:12-13.**
  - d) *"He will destroy mighty men and holy people"* – cp. **Revelation 12:13.**
  - e) *"And through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; and he will magnify himself in his heart"* – **2 Thessalonians 2:4.**
  - f) *"And he will destroy many while they are at ease"* – a reference to the mid-term betrayal by antichrist of the Jews.
  - g) *"He will even oppose the Prince of princes, but he will be broken without human agency"* – cp. **Revelation 19:11ff.**
3. *"Then I, Daniel was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it."* – its impact on Daniel was intense.

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