

A Second Persecuting Little Horn Appears #1

Daniel 8:1-14

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Greg L. Price

Severe persecution for our Christian faith here in North America has not been a reality which we have had to face (thank God—certainly not like Christians face daily in totalitarian regimes around the world). However, just because we have not yet faced severe persecution does not mean we will not face it in the future. Biblical persecution is not merely suffering for some political or religious cause. Jesus does not bless all suffering for whatever the cause may be. Jesus blesses only the suffering of His people for what is His cause, His truth, His gospel, His commandments, and His righteousness (Matthew 5: 10-12). That persecution may come in the form of visible enemies that hate Christ and His truth (as it did with Jesus and His apostles), or it may come in the form of invisible enemies (Satan) that seek to destroy us through suffering (as in the case of Job).

What is God's purpose in our persecution for the cause of Jesus Christ?

First, persecution for Christ's sake identifies us with Christ. It declares loud and clear that Jesus is our Savior and Lord. We are willing to suffer for Him out of love for Him because He was willing to suffer in our place God's holy wrath as a sacrifice for our sin and condemnation. His suffering was meritorious—mine is not.

Second, persecution for Christ's sake humbles us, sanctifies us, and lays bare our pride that there is nothing more important than ourselves. A willingness to suffer persecution declares that Jesus and His truth and righteousness is more important than me, my life—more important than anything.

Third, persecution for Christ's sake builds our faith and strengthens our resolve to follow Jesus Christ no matter what. Through persecution God actually makes us stronger (not weaker), bolder (not more afraid). Fourth, persecution for Christ's sake reveals this world is not our true and lasting home. Through persecution/tribulation for Christ's sake we declare that through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). It reveals that we truly believe (and not simply profess) that the riches of heaven far exceed the things that we cling to here on earth.

These prophetic visions of Daniel are intended by the Lord to prepare His people for periods of persecution with the hope that the end of persecution is not defeat but victory—Jesus will defeat all His enemies and we will reign with Him forever and ever.

The main points from our text are: (1) The Conquest of Nations by the Beastly Kingdom of Medo-Persia (Daniel 8:1-4); (2) The Conquest of Medo-Persia by the Beastly Kingdom of Greece (Daniel 8:5-8); (3) A Second Little Horn Arises to Persecute God's People (Daniel 8:9-14).

I. The Conquest of Nations by the Beastly Kingdom of Medo-Persia (Daniel 8:1-4).

A. As we begin a new chapter in Daniel (Daniel 8), we move from Daniel's first vision given by God to a second vision given by God.

1. **What is similar** about these two visions is that God is forewarning His people of severe persecution that will come upon them from beastly kingdoms who despise the One true living God of the Bible, who hate His supreme authority over them, and who will not bow the knee to His royal law and holy commandments.

a. In the first vision (Daniel 7), there are four beasts: (1) a lion that had eagle's wings (Babylon); (2) a bear raised higher on one side (Medo-Persia); (3) a leopard with four wings and four

heads (Greece); (4) a dreadful, indescribable beast (Rome) with ten horns (barbarian kingdoms that divide the Western Roman Empire—Western Europe) and one little horn (the papal kingdom of Rome) that grows up among the ten horns.

b. Similarly, in the second vision (Daniel 8) there are also beastly kingdoms: (1) a ram with two horns—one higher than the other; (2) a he goat that has a prominent horn which is broken from which come four horns and out of one of those four horns comes another persecuting little horn. There are two persecuting little horns in these two chapters.

c. Beastly kingdoms in history are always a threat to persecute God’s faithful people who will not bow their knee to beastly authority or supremacy, but only to the authority or supremacy of the Prince of the kings of the earth—Christ (Psalm 2).

2. **What is dissimilar** between the vision in Daniel 7 and the vision in Daniel 8 are the following.

a. Daniel 7 focuses on four kingdoms while Daniel 8 focuses on two kingdoms—two of the four mentioned in Daniel 7.

b. Daniel 7 focuses on the little horn that comes from Rome (the papacy), whereas Daniel 8 focuses on the little horn that comes from Greece. In both Daniel 7 and Daniel 8, the most space is devoted to these little horns as a warning of persecution, but also to foretell their destruction by Christ. Thus, they are not the same little horn, though they both grow to become great persecuting horns.

c. Daniel 7 extends the time of persecution by the little horn from Rome until its destruction in the yet future by Christ at which time all nations will be converted to Christ, whereas Daniel 8 focuses on the persecution by the little horn from Greece before Christ first coming.

d. Daniel 7 (Daniel 2:4-7:28) is written in Aramaic (the language spoken in Babylon) and focuses upon the persecution of God’s people by the little horn scattered throughout the world, whereas Daniel 8 is written in Hebrew (the language of Israel) focusing upon persecution of God’s people by the little horn that were living in Israel.

B. The date and place of this second vision.

1. The date of this second vision is found in Daniel 8:1 (the third year) two years after the date of the first vision in Daniel 7:1 (the first year). Though the final night of Belshazzar’s reign occurs in Daniel 5:30, both of Daniel’s visions occur before the king is slain. These chapters were not placed by the Holy Spirit in chronological order.

2. Daniel’s second vision takes him to Shushan (called Susa by the Greeks) which was the ancient capital of the kingdom of Elam. After Cyrus conquered Babylon, it became one of the royal cities of Persia (Nehemiah 1:1; Esther 1:2). The River Ulai (per the Roman historian, Pliny) was a wide artificial canal (900 ft. wide) that flowed near Shushan.

C. In the vision, Daniel beholds a strong ram with two horns (Daniel 8:3). Daniel observes the following characteristics about this ram.

1. The two horns of the ram are deadly, but one of the horns is higher and more prominent than the other—the second larger horn growing and coming up after the first smaller horn (Daniel 8:3). We learn later in this chapter (Daniel 8:20) what the ram with the two horns signifies: the ancient kingdom of Media/Persia. The first and smaller horn representing Media, which was an older empire; and the second and larger horn representing Persia, which was a more recent empire. These two kingdoms formed a single empire in which the Medes being older initially played a more significant role, but eventually it was the Persians that assumed the more significant role in history. The 4th century historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, writes that the Persian ruler actually wore the head of a ram as he led his army into battle.

2. The second characteristic in the vision about the ram with two horns (Medo-Persian

Empire) is that by its might it strikes with its horns and subdues all kingdoms to the west (Babylonia, Syria, Asia Minor), to the north (Armenia, region around the Caspian Sea), and to the south (Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Ethiopia). The Medo/Persian ram also captured territory to the east (as far as India), but the most significant territory was to the west, north, and south.

a. This Medo-Persian ram was unstoppable for over 200 years (539-333 BC). No kingdom could stand before it, and there was no kingdom that was able to deliver the conquered nations out from under its power. Because of its great military might, this mighty ram did according to its pleasure among the nations.

b. To give some historical testimony to the strength of the Medo-Persian ram, the Greek historian, Herodotus, records that Persia had over 2.5 million soldiers, 1,200 war ships, and 3,000 lesser fighting ships and supply ships. By its vast fleet and mighty army it was able to conquer a great portion of nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. It was the military machine at that time that ruled the world. It was invincible for that period of time.

II. The Conquest of Medo-Persian by the Beastly Kingdom of Greece (Daniel 8:5-8).

A. As Daniel is fixed in this vision upon the mighty ram of Medo-Persia, there appears a strong he goat (male goat). Once again, the interpreting angel gives to us the meaning of this strong he goat—the kingdom of Greece (Daniel 8:21—“rough” means hairy). What are the characteristics of this beastly kingdom?

1. It had a prominent horn between its eyes (Daniel 8:5,21). This great horn is Alexander the Great. He came with his military power from the west (as stated here) striking with its horn all that stood in its way from Greece to the Persian capital of Persepolis (in 330 BC); and he did so with such speed that it still amazes military experts. The Grecian army of Alexander was swifter than any of the ancient armies in its advance against the enemy. Its power was not in its greater numbers, but in its swifter maneuvers with a smaller army. By the age of thirty, he had the largest empire in history up to that point and was undefeated in battle. He died (perhaps from poisoning) at the age of 33 years (323 BC).

2. Even the mention of the “choler” (anger—“was embittered against him” Daniel 8:7) is accurate as Alexander saw his campaign against Darius III as personal revenge for seeking to bribe assassins to kill Alexander and to turn Alexander’s generals against him.

3. After the untimely and unexpected death of Alexander, his vast empire was in fact divided among four of his generals just as it states in Daniel 8:8: Macedonia/Greece (Antipater/Cassander), Thrace/Asia Minor (Lysimachus), Syria (Seleucus), and Egypt (Ptolemy).

B. Application

1. What is seen by Daniel in this vision is not to occur for over 200 years (Alexander), and yet it portrays these events with such accuracy. Only the omniscient mind of the one true living God could present history so accurately when it has not yet occurred. This ought to instill within us a confidence that our Bible is the revelation of God to us—it is not myths and fairy tales. We can’t pick and choose the parts that we like or don’t like. It claims to be the inspired Word of God (from beginning to end): the history, the science, the miracles, the gospel and the commandments, the promises and the warnings.

2. The fact that God can reveal such facts about world leaders and world empires in this prophetic vision means He controls them. There is a divine plan that He is unfolding in history that assures us that Alexander the Great did not control his destiny, otherwise he would have prevented his own death. Our great King and Savior rules and is bringing His purposes to pass through these beastly governments and rulers (Daniel 4:35,37). Alexander never professed this.

3. Let me ask you, who was richer, who had inherited a greater kingdom? Alexander or the poor beggar, Lazarus (Luke 16)? Alexander lost it all at death and is suffering for all eternity. Lazarus gained it all at death and is rejoicing for all eternity.

4. Let us not be moved by anger, bitterness, or revenge (like Alexander). Let us rather be moved by forgiveness even when we are wronged like Jesus (“Father, forgive them”). “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Romans 12:19). Don’t be a slave like Alexander, be free like Jesus. It is such bondage to be bound by anger and to live in unforgiveness. It is a serious sin even if we have been wronged. Let Jesus set you free today.

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