



Outlines in Bible Prophecy

Daniel Chapter 8

- *The nearer prophecy – the Medo-Persian and Greek empires*
- *Antiochus Epiphanes*
- *The Interlude*
- *The distant prophecy – the Tribulation*

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Introduction to the prophecy of Chapter 8

The prophecy in this chapter centres on the **Medo-Persian** and **Greek** empires. A good deal has already been revealed about these empires in Chapters 2 and 7 of Daniel. There are a number of reasons why the Spirit of God directs the eye of the prophet upon them again in Chapter 8.¹

1. These two prophesied kingdoms will have a **nearer** impact upon Daniel's people - the Jews of Daniel's generation and those of the next.
2. The Medo-Persian and Greek empires will soon become their successive Gentile overlords. Daniel and his people are now alerted to this with timely details concerning how these kingdoms will arise, when they will arise and the conflicts associated with them. There are two aspects to note here. These two kingdoms were to be key Gentile instruments in God's judgment upon His unbelieving people, who were going to pass through dark days under Gentile subjection. It was vital that they know that all was foreknown and ordained by God according to His arm of correction and that He is "watchful over His word to perform it" (Jer 1:12). Their documented rebellion in spite of God's correction will stand as a reproving finger against the nation in a day to come.
3. It was during this kingdom that the prophecy of 70 Weeks (Daniel Chapter 9) had its historical and moral beginning.
4. In the prophecy of this chapter relating to the Greek Empire we are given an instructive picture of events that will transpire in a more **distant** day – the **Tribulation**.

Chapter outline

After a brief introduction, a vision is presented, again rich in symbolism (vv 3-12). It deals with future events that will have a more immediate impact upon the Jews. In verses 13-14 Daniel hears a conversation between two saints. In verses 15-19 we have an interlude in which Daniel is promised an interpretation of the vision. Verses 20-26 contain that interpretation. Towards the end of the chapter, a distant prophecy concerning the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation is presented ("distant prophecies are sometimes referred to as "end-time prophecies").

Nearer prophecy – the vision – four parts

Part 1 Verses 3-4 The Medo-Persian Empire

The Medo-Persian Empire: At the time of this prophetic vision Belshazzar was in the third year of his reign over Babylon (v 1). This would mean that this vision came to Daniel nearly two years after the vision in Chapter 7 (which occurred in the first year of Belshazzar's reign). Like Ezekiel, Daniel was transported to a city in a visionary sense, rather than in a physical one (Eze 8:3 cf 40:2). Here it is not Ezekiel transported to Jerusalem in the present day, but

Daniel transported to Shusan in a future day, in the palace in Elam (Persia in the Hebrew language). While there, he saw a **ram** with **two horns**. The ram symbolizes the **Medes** and the **Persians** (v 20). The ram had one horn larger than the other, which "came up last" corresponding to the later dominance of the Persians over the Medes.

"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" (v 3).

¹ These two empires also feature in Daniel Chapter 11 where more specific aspects of their course are charted in order to display the meticulous prerogative and providence of God in prophecy.

Part 2
Verses 5-7
Defeat of the
Medo-Persian
Empire

Alexander the Great and the defeat of the Medo-Persians. The Ram pushed towards the west (Greece), north and south and became great in territory (v 4). Daniel then saw a male or **he-goat** with a **notable horn**. The he-goat symbolizes great speed in conquest; its feet did not touch the ground as it charged against the Ram from the west i.e., Macedonia and Greece.

“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 [bitterness] 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” (vv 6-7)

The two horns of the Ram are then broken by the he-goat who becomes a great power. The he-goat symbolizes the king of the **Greek Empire**. The “notable horn” symbolizes the first king of that empire, **Alexander the Great** (below). This vision predicts the rapid defeat of the Medo-Persians by Alexander. In



the short space of some thirteen years he became overlord of the then known world. He was indeed a notable horn. His empire is named by Gabriel in his interpretation. “And the rough [he] goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king” (v 21). Alexander was born in 356 BC in Pella of Macedonia. His father was Philip II king of Macedonia who was referred to by the Greek orator Demosthenes as a “pestilential slave of Macedonia.” His mother was Olympia, a princess of Epirus. In his youth he was tutored by Leonidas and later by Aristotle. When Alexander was aged 16 his father left to battle rebels in Byzantium. He placed Alexander in charge as regent, giving him authority in Macedonia. During this time Alexander quashed a revolt in northern Macedonia, and gave the city of the region the name Alexandroupolis. In 336 Philip was assassinated and Alexander assumed full control over Macedonia. He then set about conquering the Persians with “choler.” These traditional and despised enemies of the Macedonians were then in the ascendancy. His armies crossed Hellespont in 334 BC and engaged in successful battles against the Persians. He conquered *Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Gaza, Egypt, Babylonia, Persia* and parts of *India* (Figure 1).



Figure 1

The four divisions of the Greek Empire:

**Part 3
Verse 8
The four
divisions of the
Greek Empire**

“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” (v 8).

Alexander died in his early thirties in Babylon in 323 BC after a time of debauched living. The notable horn was “broken” when he was strong. The he-goat is now seen afresh and he has **four horns**. These four horns symbolize the next phase of the Grecian Gentile Empire that subjugates Jerusalem. Alexander did not have any natural successors. The Grecian Empire was eventually divided into four parts by its warring generals (Figure 2). This four-fold division is symbolized by the four horns of the he-goat (which correspond to the four heads of the leopard in Daniel 7). These generals and their dynasties were:

- **Seleucus** (the Seleucids) who ruled Syria, Mesopotamia and Babylon
- **Ptolemy** (the Ptolemies), who ruled Egypt
- **Lysimachus**, who ruled over Trace and Asia minor
- **Cassander**, who ruled over Macedonia and Greece



The Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties were of particular significance because of their geographical position relative to Israel. The “beautiful” land lay between them, and its people, the saints of God suffered during their dynastic wars. This is why they and not the two other dynasties and their kings are the subject of divine prophecy. These two dynasties and their kings are referred to in Daniel 11 as the kings of the North and the kings of the South respectively.

The Seleucid kings are noted in the Table at the end of this study. Their deeds are part of history (Ptolemy I, above left).



Figure 2

A king emerges out of one of the four divisions – Antiochus Epiphanes IV

Part 4
Verses 9 -12
Antiochus
Epiphanes IV

“And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered” (vv 9-12).

We now come to an additional vision in Daniel 8 which is also part of history. A **little horn** comes into view (Figure 3). Now we must be careful to note that this little horn of Daniel 8 is *not* the same little horn of Daniel 7 – the Antichrist (although it is *typical* of him). In Chapter 7 a little horn came out the *ten-horned* and *fourth* beast. We are told this explicitly (Dan 7:7-8). *This* little horn of Chapter 8 comes out of *one* of the *four* horns. “And out of one of them [the Seleucids] came forth a little horn” (v 9). This is a prophecy of the **Greek** Seleucid king **Antiochus Epiphanes IV** (right). He “waxed great” even to the “host of heaven” [Israel] and oppressed them - he “stamped upon them.” Some 100,000 Jews were massacred by him during the days of the Maccabees (the host of heaven, v 10); he magnified himself even to the prince of the host (the God of Israel) (v 11); he stopped the daily Temple sacrifices; the sanctuary was “cast down” (done away with and desecrated) (v 11). The Temple however was not destroyed. He favored the Jews who transgressed against the Mosaic Covenant and they supported him.



“And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered” (v 12).

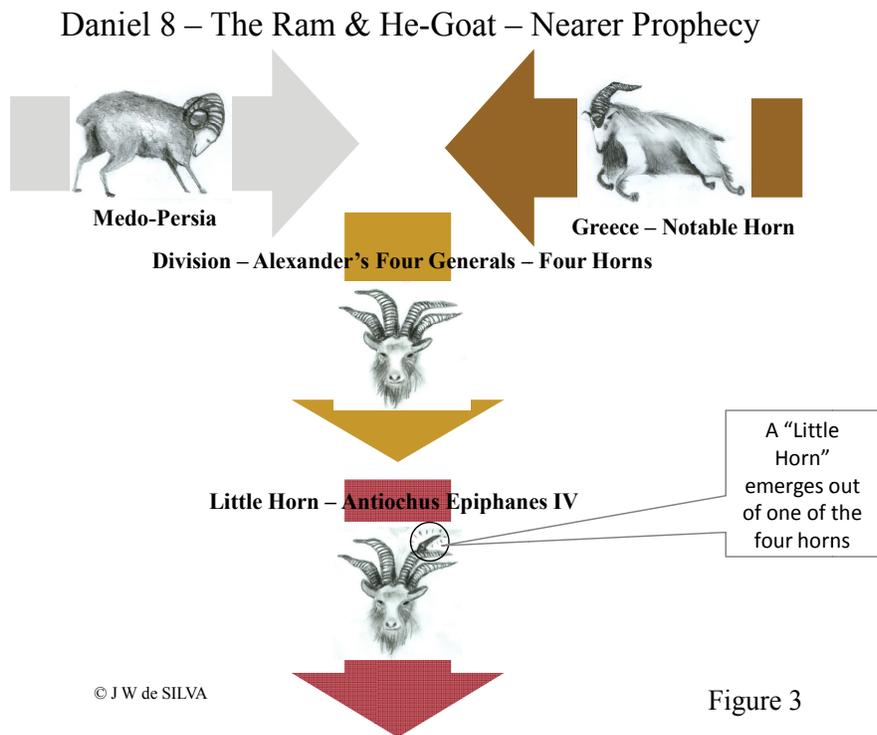


Figure 3

Verses 13-14
A voice and a
time of 2300 days

The vision ends and Daniel hears one of the saints asking another how long will the oppression and desecration under Antiochus Epiphanes continue.

“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” (Dan 8:13-14).

These 2300 days refer to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes. They do not find any correspondence with the 1260 or 2520 days associated with the Tribulation, which is still future. For one thing, we never read anywhere in Scripture of a “cleansing” or of a “rebuilding” of the Temple after the Tribulation – only that there will be a new Millennial Temple unto the Lord.²

Daniel desired an interpretation of the vision.

The interlude
Verses 15-19

“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.” Gabriel is requested to do the interpretation. “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” (vv 15-17).

The expressions “time of the end” in verse 17 and the “end” in verse 19 give us first insights into the distant span of time associated with the interpretation of the vision, which we now take up.

The distant prophecy – the Interpretation - Daniel 8:23-25

As we mentioned earlier, the prophecy of Chapter 8 has a *nearer* and a *distant* aspect to it. The coming of the Medo-Persian and Greek empires, the notable horn, and the four-fold division of the Greek Empire and the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes as the little horn, were foretold in **verses 3 to 22**. They were part of the nearer prophecy, which is now history. This is illustrated in Figure 4.

Then, in **verse 23**, we have the expression **in the latter time of their kingdom** which has been the subject of controversy. How are we to interpret the “latter time?” The following explanation will show that the “latter time” refers to the Tribulation.

- Note first, that this latter time is associated with the destruction (battering) of the “holy people” (v 24). The latter time cannot therefore refer to the last days of the generals of Alexander and their now historical posterity. These last days were marked by a Jewish religious revival, and a priestly and prosperous government in Israel under the Maccabees.
- Second, the latter time of their kingdom will be a time when **the transgressors are come to the full** (v 23). The “transgressors” refers to the Jews. We have here the ripening of Israel’s apostasy during the Tribulation (many accept the mark of the Beast).
- Third, it is a time when a **king of fierce countenance will stand up and understand dark sentences** (v 23). This is the wresting of power by the Antichrist Mid-Tribulation, enabled by Satan who is the “star” from heaven. “And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power” (v 24). Notably, it is not said that this king arises from *within* “their kingdom” or that he “stands

² No doubt, we can add to the many suggestions as to what these 2300 literal days refer to by taking different historical events as our starting and finishing dates. However, given that the prophesied period has passed into history, the inability to categorically fix the start and finishing date of the 2300 days is immaterial. No doubt, it had significance to those at that time. It is sufficient to faith to claim a literal period of time now fulfilled, for it rests on the unerring and divinely inspired biblical record.

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up within their kingdom,” but that he simply *stands up* in the latter *time* of it. It points to a future time in the existence of that kingdom – the Greek kingdom.

- Fourth, this king will stand against the **Prince of princes**, who can be none other than Christ at His Second Advent. It clearly connects this king and the latter time with the Tribulation (v 25 cf Dan 9:25; Acts 3:15; Rev 1:5).

In this passage therefore, we are transported to a still distant day – the latter time of the Grecian kingdom when that kingdom will be one of the kingdoms federated within a revived Roman Empire. If biblical context means anything at all, the “latter time of their kingdom” refers to the Greek kingdom within the future revived Roman Empire under the Antichrist. We know from Chapters 2 and 7 in Daniel, and from Chapters 13 and 17 in Revelation, that the future empire of the Antichrist will comprise a federation of 10 kingdoms. That Greece, or some configuration of it, will be part of that confederation is historically and prophetically clear (i.e., Rev 13:2, “like unto a leopard”). Furthermore, we note that the little horn of Daniel 8:9 is not the king of fierce countenance of Daniel 8:23. This confirms the distinction between the nearer and distant parts to the prophecy in Daniel 8.

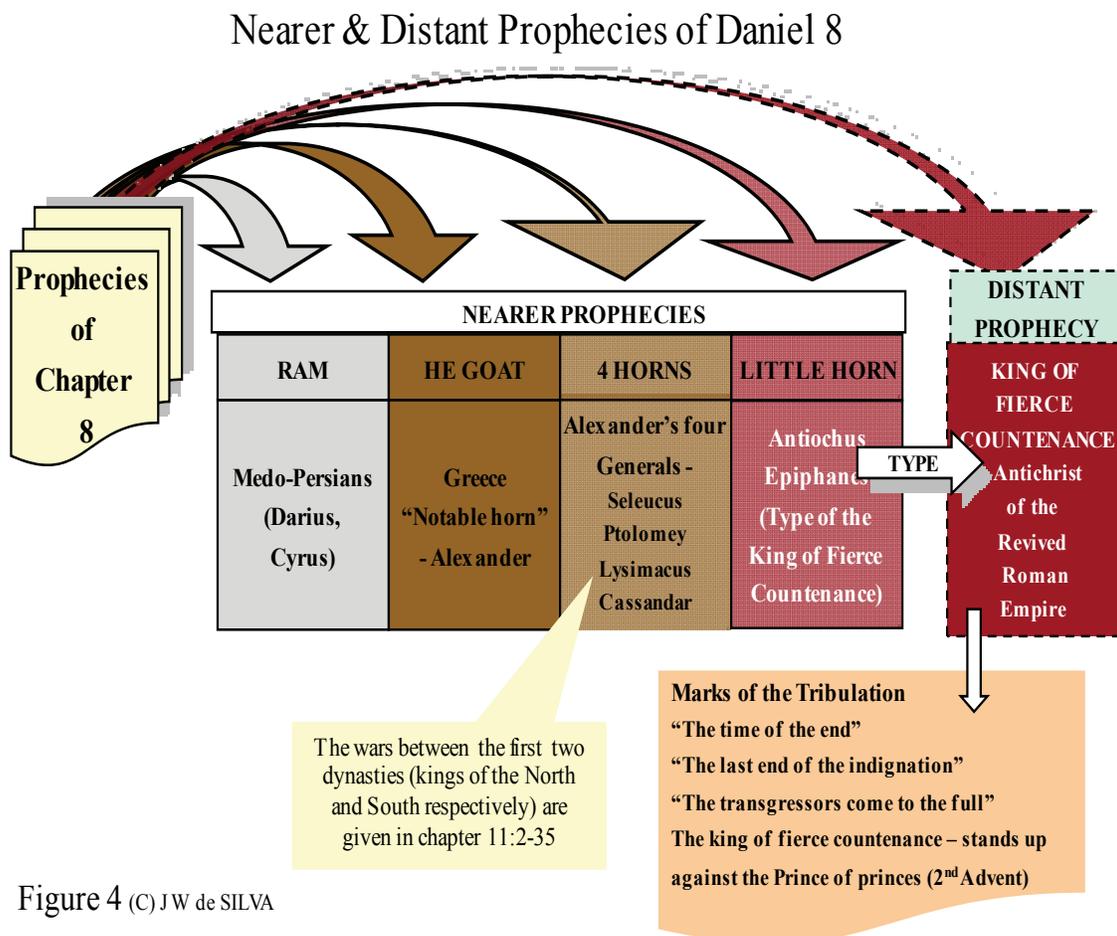


Figure 4 (C) J W de SILVA

Two “little horns” and the king of fierce countenance

The “little horns” in Daniel 7.8 and Daniel 8.9 are not the same person as we have noted. There are similarities in their deeds and times, sufficient for the little horn in Chapter 8 to be a *type* of the little horn in Chapter 7; but the distinction in their **identity** is unambiguous. This is proved by the following observations.

- The little horn of Daniel 7:8 arises *in addition* to *ten horns*, whereas the little horn of Daniel 8:9 arises *out of one of four horns*.
- The little horn of Daniel 7.8 is associated with a confederation of 10 kingdoms. The little horn of Daniel 8.9 is *not* associated with a confederation in any shape or form.

We know, too, that the ten horns symbolize the future empire of the Antichrist in its initial stage during the Tribulation. At a later stage, the Antichrist will take sufficient control to become the “eighth” (Rev 17). The four horns of Daniel 8, therefore, have no correspondence whatsoever with the form of the empire of the Antichrist in its initial or latter stages during the Tribulation. This means, that the little horn that arises out of one of the four horns in Daniel 8.9, cannot be the Antichrist. However, he can be, and is, a *figure* of the Antichrist in his *deeds* and *disposition*.³

The little horn of Daniel 8.9 therefore cannot be the “king of fierce countenance” mentioned in Daniel 8.23-26, because *that* king is associated with the Tribulation. This is substantiated by the grammar - the

“latter time” or the “time of the end,” as well as the context, which refers to the Second Advent and Christ as the “Prince of princes.” The opposing king, the king of fierce countenance, is in fact the Antichrist.

Now this brings us again to the vital observation about the prophecy in Daniel 8 noted at the beginning of this study. In this chapter, we have both a near and a distant prophecy. The near prophecy is about the Medo-Persian empires, the Greek empire and the little horn who is Antiochus Epiphanes. These are to have a nearer impact on the saints of God. The distant prophecy is about

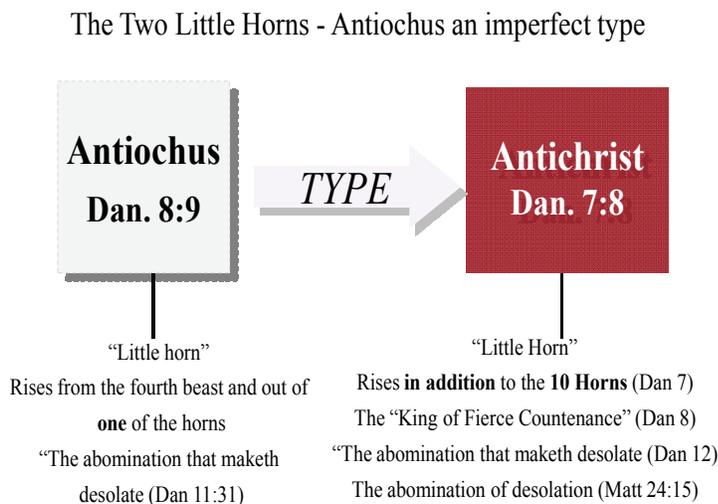


Figure 5 © J W de SILVA

³ Some may object, supposing a contradiction in that the little horn of Chapter 8 arises out of the Grecian kingdom, whereas the Antichrist is of the revived Roman Empire. However, a type is never a “perfect type.” Moses, as a deliverer, is a type of Christ, but Moses was not of the tribe of Judah. Aaron foreshadows Christ as our High Priest, but Aaron’s priestly *order* is not a royal order, whereas the priestly *order* of Christ is royal – even after the order of Melchizedek, the king-priest. That Antiochus Epiphanes was a king of the *Grecian* (Seleucid) Empire, does not therefore preclude him from being a type of the coming *Roman* Antichrist. He can be a legitimate type of the Roman Antichrist purely because of what *he did* – and not necessarily because of where he came from. Besides, even if the Antichrist originates from Greece, this does not deny the coming of a revived Roman Empire and that he is a Roman prince. The Antichrist can arise from within any of the ten confederated kingdoms and still be regarded as Roman – just as a person is regarded as “British,” who is a British subject and resides in one of its commonwealth of nations. Constantine was born in Naissus, the province of Moesia Superior (Turkey/Serbia), yet he took the title of Roman Emperor (and his Roman Empire did not include the city of Rome as its capital).

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the Antichrist – the king of fierce countenance (Figure 4).

There is therefore no person in the *vision* of Chapter 8 (vv 2-12) corresponding to the king of fierce countenance – *except in type*, presented in Antiochus.

All this confirms that the *interpretation* given in Chapter 8 goes beyond the near *vision* and Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn in verse 9. Finally, as illustrated in Figure 5, both of the little horns are associated with the expression “the abomination that maketh desolate,” which is also noted by the Lord in His Olivet discourse concerning the still future Tribulation.

“When ye therefore shall see **the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet**, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt 24:15-21)

This makes the little horn of Chapter 8 a fitting *type* of the little horn of Chapter 7 – the Antichrist.

Seleucid kings – the kings of the North or Syria (Dan 11).

Seleucid (Syrian) Kings - of the North 312 BC – 163 BC	Biblical & Secular Reference⁴
Antiochus I Sotor	Secular history only
Antiochus II Theos	Daniel 11:6
Seleucus II Callinicus	Daniel 11:7-9
Seleucus III Sotor	Daniel 11:10
Antiochus III (the Great)	Daniel 11:10, 13, 15-19
Seleucus IV Philopator	Daniel 11:20
Antiochus Epiphanes IV	Daniel 11:21-32

⁴ See *Daniel*; Arno Gaebelin, Kregal Publications pp 166-177 for a detailed outline of the prophecies fulfilled.