

"The Ram and He Goat"

Daniel 8

The prophetic scene becomes narrowed before us in this chapter. One definite portion of future history is here anticipatively written for us by God. The same is the way which God has taken in teaching us those things which were profitable for us to know, as to the past. If we look at the history of man as given in Genesis, we have at first, after the flood, the general statement in outline of all nations in their ancestry and first formation, and then afterwards a narrower scene is brought before us--one family from which springs one nation; and with this we principally have to do in the remainder of the Old Testament. Just so in the prophetic visions of Daniel. We have Gentile power in its committal, course, and crisis; also in its wideness of extent, its moral relations to God, and its actings with regard to those who belong to God; and besides an account of *who* it is that succeeds to the dominion which has been forfeited by the last of the Gentile powers. And then comes the narrower scene in which we see these things set before us in their connection with that same one nation which had been so early taken up in history.

With this chapter the Hebrew portion of the book recommences, and this continues to be the language of all the remainder--the whole of these visions relating distinctly to the Jews and Jerusalem.

This vision was seen in the third year of king Belshazzar, the last king of the first monarchy, just when the Medo-Persian kingdom had so risen into power as to be ready to subvert the Babylonian.

The *place* where the prophet sees the vision is at one of the capitals of the Medo-Persian kingdom, "Shushan, in the province of Elam, by the river of Ulai." It may be doubted whether Daniel were actually there personally or whether it was only in vision. The words are: "I saw in a vision, and it came to pass when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the River Ulai." This is wholly different from the manner in which he speaks in chap. 10:4 of his being actually by the river: "I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel." Here it seems as though in vision the prophetic scene were selected within the territory of the power, the preeminence of which first comes into view: "there stood before the river a ram."

The vision is given us from verses 3 to 14, the interpretation from verses 19 to 26. Daniel first sees "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."¹ The ram is then described as to the exercise of its power, etc.: "I saw the ram pushing eastward [*sic.*; "westward"] and northward, and southward, so that no beasts might stand before him; neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand, but he did according to his will, and became great."

The interpretation of this, as given in verse 20, is: "The ram which thou saw, having two horns, are the kings of Media and Persia."

The next object in the vision is thus stated: "As I was considering, behold, a he goat came from

¹ The word "two" in our modern English Bibles is in italics, as though it were supplied in translation. This, however, is one of the needless changes introduced by Dr. Blayney in 1769. "Two horns" is the rendering of the Hebrew *dual*, as our translators well knew. In verse 7 the numeral is expressed.

the west, on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes." The following verses, 6, 7, describe the manner in which the prophet saw the ram destroyed by the he goat. The interpretation of the goat and its great horn is given in verse 21: "The rough goat is the king of Grecia. And the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king."

We have thus a point of connection between this vision and those of the second and seventh chapters. We first of all have the power which was about to succeed to that of Babylon brought before us in a defined form. The "reign of the kingdom of Persia" (2 Chron. 36:20) is that which we have seen as springing into power, that is the breast and arms of silver of chapter 2, or the second beast like to a bear of chapter 7. The power of this second monarchy, detailed just prior to its taking its place of supremacy and its overthrow by that of Grecia, next come before us; and then the rest of the vision has some relation to a form of things which results from the divided power of the third monarchy.

Is the general subject of the remainder of this vision past or future? If past, our only concern with it would be to learn those lessons which the Spirit of God may have seen fit to record therein. But if future, it assumes, of course, a yet deeper interest; for in that case it would be one of those portions of revealed truth in which our God vouchsafes to call us to fellowship of mind and thoughts with Himself, opening to us those things which will come to pass in the development of His holy counsels.

Some may say, If the vision belongs (as seems clearly to be the case) to the third monarchy, and if that monarchy was superseded (as we know was the fact) long ages ago by the Roman, then, of course, this vision is a thing entirely accomplished and exhausted, as much so as the vision of the third chapter, which related personally to Nebuchadnezzar.

Now in reply to the question as to the past or future aspect of this vision, we must mark as carefully the period on to which it reaches as we do that at which it commences. In the beginning of the explanation given by Gabriel to the prophet, he says (verse 17): "At the time of the end shall be the vision"; and again (verse 19), "Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation; for at the time appointed the end shall be." This is certainly an intimation that the distinguishing features of the vision belong to the time when God's indignation against Daniel's people shall reach its completion, when all the circumstances of their rejection and chastisement shall arrive at their end. We know from many scriptures (such as Jer. 30:7) that the time which immediately precedes Israel's forgiveness and deliverance will be that of their extremest trouble and suffering. In other words, it will be thus in "the last end of the indignation."

Thus we have a point to which the vision reaches, as well as a starting point; and we have therefore to see what portions belong respectively to the past and to the future.

After the rise of the empire of Alexander and his personal rule have been spoken of in the vision (verses 5-8), we find: "The great horn was broken, and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven."

In the interpretation, this is stated (verse 22): "Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." This we know to be a past thing, not merely historically, but as a simple matter of revelation; for these things were to

spring out of the breaking off of the first king. This fourfold division had been intimated in chap. 7 by the four heads of the third beast, and it is also mentioned in chap 11.

We know simply as a matter of historical fact that after the death of Alexander his dominions were parceled out among his generals, and that after a few years (subsequently to the battle of Ipsus, 301 B.C.) four kingdoms were formed.

Ptolemy possessed Egypt, Cyrene, Coele-Syria, and some of the southern parts of Asia Minor.

Cassander, Macedon and Greece.

Lysimachus, Thrace, Western Bithynia, Lesser Phrygia, Mysia, and Lydia (the Meander being the boundary).

And Seleucus all the rest.²

These historical facts enable us to give names, etc., to the four kingdoms here mentioned; and this is a convenience. But it cannot be too fully borne in mind that for the real understanding and use of the truths revealed in Scripture, history possesses no authority whatever; the Scripture itself supplies us with all that is *needful*.

The vision, after speaking of the formation of the four horns, proceeds thus: "And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceedingly great toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." This is stated thus in the interpretation: "And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up," etc. The history of this horn or king is then given, and it reaches to the end of the vision. Everything concerning this person and his actings must therefore belong to the period called "the last end of the indignation."

The point then at which the vision divides itself between that which is past to us and that which is future, is at the statement of the fourfold division of the kingdom of the he goat (verses 8 and 22). All that follows, "the latter time of their kingdom," and the springing up of the persecuting power, must be future.

The dealings of God in the latter day with the Jews and Jerusalem possess an exceeding interest to all those who see the importance which God attaches to that place and people. A degree of prominence, which might at first seem strange, is given in the prophetic word to those scenes. But it is our place to sit as learners, having our ears open to receive the instruction of God, even when we are most at a loss to perceive the bearing of that instruction. Whatever is important in God's eyes ought to be so in ours, as being made the children of God. He has said of Jerusalem, "My eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually." He has said of Israel, that if His covenant with the day and night cannot be broken, then He will not cast off His ancient people. Jesus died for that *nation*; they are still "beloved for the fathers' sakes." No marvel then that our eyes are directed again and again to the closing scenes of the period of God's indignation, and the dawn of that day in which God has said, "In those days and at that time, saith the Lord [Yahweh], the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they

² Some of the districts included in the fourfold division became subordinate states. The kingdom of Lysimachus included the territory in which his lieutenant founded the more durable kingdom of Pergamus. This may, perhaps, be regarded as a continuation of his kingdom.

shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve" [Jer. 50:20]. What soul is there that has tasted the mercy of God and rejoices in the grace which has been shown in the precious blood of Christ, that does not feel joy in the contemplation of this great and surpassing display of the same grace? It is indeed a privilege to be allowed to know what God is going to perform; and, knowing what the result is, we cannot judge any of the details to be unimportant.

To this period, then, the issue of this vision belongs. A king rises from one of the four parts of that dominion which once was in the power of Alexander. His power extends in various directions, among others, "towards the pleasant land." This, of course, means the land of Israel, and this is the first direct intimation in the chapter of its connection with Daniel's people. Violent oppression and blasphemy appear to characterize this king, both from the vision and the explanation given by Gabriel: "He shall destroy wonderfully [fearfully], and shall prosper and [thrive] practice, and shall destroy the mighty, and the holy people (people or nation of the holy ones or saints). And through his policy [cunning], also, he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand, and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall he destroy many" [ver. 24]. General as these terms are, they very clearly show the persecuting and oppressive power of this king. It is also clear, from the mention of the nation of the holy ones or saints, that these oppressions are especially inflicted on the Jews.

What the condition of the Jews may be at this time, how divided into classes as regards their recognized standing before God, etc., we can learn from other scriptures. But however these things will be, one thing is clear--that this horn is present in persecuting power at the last end of the indignation.

Another of his prominent characteristics is blasphemy: "He shall stand up against the Prince of princes" (verse 25). "He magnified himself even to the Prince of the Host" (verse 11), so that he is found not merely as the opposer of God's ancient people, but also of the Lord Himself.

It is scarcely possible for us to have examined this chapter thus far without being struck with many points of resemblance between this horn and that which has been spoken of in the seventh chapter: that in the seventh chapter [this horn] continues to act till Christ takes the kingdom; [that] the one before us acts up to "the last end of the indignation." These two periods are synchronous, for the deliverance of Israel belongs to that point of time which is the epiphany of our blessed Lord--when He appears, then they will look upon Him whom they pierced, they will mourn for Him, and the fountain for sin and for uncleanness will be known by them as opened to their souls. Thus the horn in this chapter and that in chapter 7 coincide as to period of time.

Further, the four divided kingdoms which formed themselves out of the empire of Alexander were one-by-one incorporated with the Roman empire, but it is out of one of these kingdoms that the horn in this chapter springs. Hence it is clear that he belongs to the Roman earth. Thus the persons spoken of in the two chapters are found within the same territorial limits.

The moral features which are alike in the two have been already noticed. But it may be added that both the one and the other coincide remarkably in this respect with a king mentioned in the eleventh chapter of this book. The origin of this king is altogether similar to the horn of chapter 8; that is, from one of the four parts of Alexander's empire.

Compare the following passages:

7:25 - "He shall speak great words against the most High."

7:21,22 - "The same horn prevailed until the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."

8:9 - He waxed great "towards the pleasant land."

8:17 - "At the time of the end shall be the vision."

8:19 - "In the last end of the indignation."

11:36 - "He shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods."

11:37 - "Neither shall he regard the God of his father," etc.

11:36 - "He shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished."

11:41 - "He shall enter also into the glorious land."

11:40 - "And at the time of the end," etc.

11:36 - "He shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished."

The conclusion from all this appears to be inevitable, that the horn of chapter 7 and that of chapter 8 are one and the same person. If this be not the case, we have at the same time within the same territorial limits and similarly described two kings, alike in blasphemy and persecution, alike in claiming divine honors, alike in their almost unhindered course of evil. The non-identity of the two would involve difficulties of the greatest magnitude--so great that the supposition may be regarded as a moral impossibility. I believe that those who have considered that they are not one and the same have supposed that they were not marked as belonging to the same period. This, however, is utterly contradicted by the express statement of "the last end of the indignation" in this chapter, and by events which are detailed as following immediately on the destruction of the king in chapter 11.

But it has been sometimes asked (rather, I believe, in the way of difficulty than of objection), How can these powers be identical, for that in chapter 7 springs out of one of the ten parts of the Roman earth, that before us from one of the four parts of the third empire? The answer to this is simple and, I believe, satisfactory. In chap. 7 we see that the whole of the Roman earth is to be divided into *ten* kingdoms--these ten being found in its whole extent, the East as well as the West. The four parts of Alexander's empire formed a considerable portion of the eastern half of the Roman territory; and [because], as we see here, these four [are] existent as kingdoms at the time of the end, it only follows that four kingdoms out of the ten will be identical with the parts into which the third empire was long ago divided. A horn springs out of one of these parts. It may be described in a general manner as in chapter 7, as rising from one of the ten kingdoms, or else in a much more definite way as in this chapter, in which we see even what part or direction of the Roman earth will give him his origin.

There appears to be a peculiar fitness in the way in which these things are presented in this chapter. The Medo-Persian power is first seen, and then the ground is cleared (so to speak) by the Grecian he goat. Then that distributive form of the countries bordering upon the Holy Land, which came into existence after the death of Alexander, is mentioned. "The pleasant land" being the central object, there was no occasion for going beyond the countries with which that was *locally* connected; for here we have no statement about wideness of extent of dominion. It does not come at all into consideration, but it is the power as exercised in one place and over one people. The consideration that this is in the Hebrew portion of the book, and that chapter 7 is in

the Chaldee, tends to make the whole matter simple.

No one need find any difficulty in the idea of his being spoken of as springing from one of the ten parts of the Roman earth, and here from one of the parts of Alexander's empire. Everyone would see how Simeon (for instance) might be described as one the twelve sons of Jacob, or as one of the six sons of Leah. The latter designation would be the more definite, but the sons of Leah would be all comprehended under the more general expression "sons of Jacob."

We may now consider particular statements which this chapter presents, both in the vision and the interpretation. In verse 23 the description of the condition of the kingdoms when this power arises is worthy of particular attention: "in the latter time of their kingdom *when the transgressors are come to the full.*" These are solemn words. The line of demarcation between what is long past and what is yet future is found in the vision between verses 8 and 9, and in the interpretation between verses 22 and 23. The fullness of transgression belongs to a yet future period. These words do not state to what people, whether Jews or Gentiles, this description applies; but it surely must be regarded as a solemn, general statement of the condition of things which will immediately precede the advent of the Lord Jesus.

If we were to look backward at the history of past ages, we should see scarcely a parallel to the wickedness found among Alexander's successors--and this whether they were looked at in themselves or in their treatment of God's people, the Jews. But evil as these things have been, here is something yet more dreadful. God has given further light, and after this light has been received for awhile, it has been rejected. The countries once subject to Alexander have been used as the scene on which God has especially acted. Those were the lands in the midst of which Israel was set as a witness for God. There it was that Christ, God's blessed Son, in due time appeared, was rejected and suffered. There by his command the gospel was first preached, and fruit was gathered from among Jews and Gentiles. Indeed, the record of the book of Acts (with the exception of the very end) simply narrates the preaching of the gospel within those limits.

We can compare the statements in 2 Timothy 3 and similar passages with this expression, and thus we shall see how the fullness of transgression will come in among those, wherever they may be, who have in former times heard the gospel but who have departed from the holy commandment delivered to them. As to Israel, we know that the closing scenes of their blindness will be the darkest scenes: "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." They will not only be found as the rejectors of the Messiah, but also as the receivers of him who thus stands as the enemy of God and blasphemer of His holy name. Thus on every side there will be the full accomplishment of transgression.

Verse 24: "His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power." Light is thrown, I judge, on this statement by Rev. 13:2: "The dragon gave him his power and his seat, and great authority." He acts by the power of Satan, and all the greatness that he displays is from this source. God at length shall send on men who have willfully rejected this truth, "strong delusion that they should believe a lie". Satan's energies will be freed from many of those restraints which God now imposes; and then Gentile power will be found with this additional characteristic in the person of this king.

Verse 10: "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." This, we must remember, was a symbolic scene in vision. "The host of heaven" and "the stars" appear to me to be descriptive symbols of

those whose portion from God is heavenly glory. Here they seem destroyed by the horn; but they bear a symbolic name, taken from what they are in God's purpose. We may compare chapter 12:3: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." If this refers simply to those who are Jews by nation (and this seems to be the case from the mention of "the pleasant land" immediately before), then it must apply to that portion of them who are not under that blindness which has "*in part* happened to Israel." It must belong to those whose calling is heavenly, as being believers in Him who is above at God's right hand.

Verse 11: "Yea, he magnified himself also to the prince of the host." Verse 25: "He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes." These statements may be well compared with what we read in Isaiah 14 of the king of Babylon and his blasphemy. He takes the place which belongs to Christ and to Christ alone, and says in his heart: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14).

The things stated about the connection of this horn with the daily sacrifice, in the eleventh and following verses, are obscure. But there are some points on which remark may be made, rather in the way of suggestion than in that of teaching.

From the mention of "the daily sacrifice" and the "sanctuary," it is plain that at part of the actings of the horn these things will be found in existence: a portion of the Jews will have returned in unbelief to their own land, and the worship of God will be attempted to be carried on according to the Mosaic ritual. This horn takes away the daily sacrifice and casts down the place of the sanctuary. This apparently implies that he desecrates it to other purposes. From verse 12 it appears as if God gave up these things into his hand, as not owning or acknowledging the worship so rendered "by reason of transgression"; and then the opposition of the horn to the truth, and its practicing and prospering, are especially mentioned.

It appears that in the history of this horn there are various points or stages of narration to be observed. The particular point to be noticed is the difference between what *precedes* and what follows the taking away of the daily sacrifice. When that is done, his blasphemous position becomes the more marked, as well as his acting in persecution.

In verses 13 and 14 we find the prophet listening to certain inquiries. One holy one speaks and asks, "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*" (this is remarkable, the answer is made *to Daniel* and not the inquirer), "Unto two thousand and three hundred days," (evenings, mornings) "and then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (justified or vindicated). This term of 2,300³ recurrences of the morning and evening sacrifice appears to me to relate to the whole period of this horn's connection with it--during, first of all,

³ Some writers on prophecy have, in their explanations or interpretations of this vision, adopted the reading "two thousand and four hundred days," and in vindication of it they have referred to the common printed copies of the LXX version. In this book, however, the translation of Theodotion has been long substituted for the real LXX; and further, although "two thousand four hundred" is found in the common printed Greek copies, that is merely an erratum made in printing the edition of 1586, which has been habitually perpetuated. I looked (in 1845) at the passage in *the* Vatican MS, which the Roman edition professedly followed, and it reads exactly the same as the Hebrew text; so also does the real LXX of Daniel. (So too Cardinal Mai's edition from the MS which appeared in 1857.)

the time in which, as found in other Scriptures (see in "Remarks on the Seventy Heptads, Daniel 9"), it is carried on as upheld and sanctioned by him; and also during the "time, times and a half" (three years and a half) in which he will directly and avowedly oppose God and all worship rendered to Him.

The expression "transgression of desolation" is not to be passed over without notice, for it is the first of the varied mentions made in the book of Daniel of that "abomination of desolation" to which our Lord refers us in Matthew 24.

In the explanation in verse 26, all the further light given to Daniel about this latter part of the vision is a confirmation of its truth and certainty: "and the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true; wherefore shut thou up the vision, for it shall be for many days."

The conclusion of the history of the "king of fierce countenance" is briefly this: "he shall stand up also against the Prince of princes, *but he shall be broken without hand*" (verse 25). These latter words appear to be intended to call back our minds to the description which we had given us in chap. 2 of the destruction of the fabric of Gentile power by a stone cut out of a mountain without hands. That stone is "the Prince of the kings of the earth, the first born from the dead," the Lord of all glory. Although the power of the enemy in blasphemy goes on long, it reaches its highest point; and the personal interference of the Lord Christ in judgment closes the scene and new things are introduced. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever" (Ps. 92:7).

We find then in this chapter:

First, the rise of the Grecian power on the ruins of the Medo-Persian. This gives us the territorial platform of the vision.

Second, the Grecian kingdom in a state of fourfold division.

Third, this fourfold division existing as a thing yet future, at the time of the last end of the indignation; and then another king rises from one of the divided parts.

Fourth, this king acts in blasphemy against God, in persecution against His saints, in tyranny and destructive power over Israel.

Fifth, he stands up against the Prince of princes, and is destroyed by the direct action of God's power.

We must not leave unnoticed the effect which this vision had upon the mind of the prophet: "And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterwards I rose up and did the king's business. And I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it."

The vision appeared as one which held forth a sad prospect for Daniel's people--here were these sorrows to be endured in future ages. It is true that, inferentially, a point of bright hope might be discovered, for these things belonged to "the last *end* of the indignation". Beyond, then, all that other prophets had spoken of, blessing and grace must lie in a bright perspective. But Daniel was confounded at the intervening sorrows. His soul had not been as yet sustained (as we know that it afterwards was) to look through and beyond the sorrow and thus to see the

exceeding brightness of the the distant glories.

The place in which we are set is indeed one of many privileges. God looks on His whole redeemed people as one body, "the heir." While in a state of nonage, i.e. before Christ came, the Spirit was not given as He now is, as the Spirit of sonship, and as the leader of God's children into the apprehension of all the truth which is revealed to us in the word. It is our place to enter into God's revealed counsels and to see that He is making everything tend onward to the glory of Christ. Every portion of truth will have unction for our souls, if we can see it as connected with Him.

In a vision like the present it is true that we have mostly a narrative of evil; but it is our place to see it where it is set in God's counsels. We have not to faint or be astonished like Daniel, but to have our souls so filled with the knowledge of Christ, and what God's purposes of grace are, as to know assuredly that every intervening hindrance will only tend to its more full and glorious display. Opposition to Christ and the working of Satan will reach to a head. And then the Lord, taking the power into His own hand, will be manifested as the King of Israel, as well as being our Head. Then will the indignation be accomplished and the remnant of Jacob will return to "the mighty God," and Jerusalem, the holy city of the great King, will indeed be made "a praise in the earth".⁴

⁴ I may refer the reader who wishes for further examination into Scripture testimonies concerning the person denoted by the horn in this chapter, to a tract of mine entitled *The Man of Sin*; and also to *Prospects of the Ten Kingdoms of the Roman Empire*, by B. W. Newton, and to *Aids to Prophetic Inquiry*, by B. W. Newton (Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony).]