

# CONCERNING THE WAY

February 3, 2009

## LESSON 46: PROPHECY SERIES — THE BOOK OF DANIEL



### Chapter 8 – 551 BC

Chapters 8-12 are a unit, they happen chronologically, and the rest of the book starting with chapter 8 is written in Hebrew.

This chapter primarily deals with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> prophesied empires – Medo-Persia and Greece (v. 20-21). This vision has nothing to do with Babylon, the Roman empire, or any future kingdom. Having said that, many people want to build their picture of the antichrist from this vision, but you have to be careful about that, because this vision is about the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> empires, which have already come about from our perspective in history. The man who this chapter speaks of is Antiochus Epiphanes, who is a known figure in history. He is a type of the antichrist, but he is not THE antichrist. You can use the descriptions of this man in this chapter as a foreshadowing of the antichrist, but keep in mind that the vision is concerning these two empires. The antichrist will come along someday and recapitulate in a much larger sense what Epiphanes did; he was not THE antichrist.

Some of the people of Epiphanes day had another name for him, they called him Epimones which is the Greek word for idiot. So everywhere the people talked about Antiochus Epiphanes there would be this murmur in the crowd, Antiochus Epimones, and it would sound so close that it sounded like you were saying Epiphanes but you were really saying Antiochus the idiot.

When you start to see the attributes of Epiphanes Epimones and you study his personal life and his character you would be shocked, because some of you have the idea the beast is some sort of a character that creeps up from the sewer and meets with the mafia in the back room, does a lot of plotting, has a perpetual scowl on his face, growls, etc .

Well, Antiochus was a fantastic fellow, he was humorous, he was a philanthropist, he was in the ancient world one of the fine men that were known, he was a model leader. And I point these historic lessons out to you that you can apply them today. When the beast appears he is not going to be some person with “beast” written all over his T-shirt. He is going to be a person who is very attractive, a person who is going to hit it off right with a lot of people; a person who is going to demonstrate human good like you haven’t seen human good before, a fantastic individual.

We’ll also cover that famous period of Jewish history that is not covered in the Old Testament; if you have an apocrypha, and if you like to prepare by reading for this, you ought to get one anyway. The apocrypha is a book that was attached to the Catholic Old Testament; if you have a Catholic Bible it’s already stuck in the Old Testament portion. The apocrypha is not inspired Scripture but it does give valuable history. Two books in particular you ought to read. It’s an adventure story and it is true history, 1 & 2 Maccabees. Read it and you’ll understand one of the most thrilling chapters of Jewish history, their freedom war against Antiochus Epiphanes. It’s all described in 1 & 2 Maccabees and has heroics like you can’t believe, just fantastic stories, and it lays the basis for the New Testament. Again, it was not included in our canon because the canon was closed earlier.

There was no prophet in those days, prophecy had ceased, and so the canon was closed in this era, and 1

& 2 Maccabees is excluded from the canon because it was not written by the gift of prophecy. It was written as an accurate history book but that's all it is. However, I recommend that you read it just for your own benefit and education; you're reading about something that happened between the Old Testament and New Testament, between Malachi and Matthew.

**Daniel 8:1 In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously.**

This takes place a couple of years after chapter 7, in the 3rd year of the reign of Belshazzar. Susa was 230 miles east of the city of Babylon. This city will become the capital city of the Persian empire, and you see it as the setting for the book of Esther, and Nehemiah. Daniel at this time would have been in his mid-60s.

**Daniel 8:2 I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal.**

This verse is a big problem for liberal scholars who say that Daniel was written late, in the Maccabean period. We know from Greek and Roman historians that Susa was reassigned to a new province during the Persian period. During the Maccabean period, Susa was not in the province of Elam. So Daniel demonstrates a 6<sup>th</sup> century understanding, not a 2<sup>nd</sup>-century understanding. He would not have known that Susa was in a different province later on.

The word "vision" shows it was not a dream. Daniel 7 was a dream. Daniel 8 occurred sometime when he was awake; we don't know what he was doing, whether he was having lunch or sitting in his study, praying or what, but it was while he was awake, all of a sudden this vision takes over. A visionary experience is when you can look out, stand at a point, look out and you don't see what you're looking at. In other words, the external world just disappears, and it is replaced, you're not blacked out, but in a vision experience you're actually seeing something else that's out there. This follows and completes the dream of two years ago.

Susa is to the east of Babylon. At this time Susa is a small city, it hasn't been built up, it doesn't have much of a history, they just have a fortress there. But here's the significant thing; Susa is going to become, later, the capital of the second empire, the Medo-Persian Empire. This vision occurs decades before. Susa is not the capital now when Daniel is seeing this; it will become the capital.

Also the Jews are going to face some of their earliest trials of anti-Semitism at Susa. It will be at Susa where Esther defends her people and the entire book of Esther is written at Susa. It will be at Susa where Nehemiah obtains the decree to rebuild Jerusalem.

**Daniel 8:3 Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last.**

The ram is the 2nd kingdom, the Medo-Persian empire. The ram was the guardian spirit of the Persians; they worshiped rams. The emperor even had a crown with rams on it. Daniel confirms the ram as the Persian empire in verse 20. The longer horn again denotes that the Persians were a more dominant part of the empire, even though the Medes were an empire first.

**Daniel 8:4 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.**

This is a prediction of the conquering of Babylon by Persia. Remember this chapter takes place twelve years before the events of chapter 5. It is important to understand what these directions are in reference to. Westward, northward, and southward from where? Always Israel. Israel is considered by God to be the center (literally, the “navel”) of the world (Ezekiel 5:5, 38:12)

This prophecy described exactly how Medo-Persia conquered. First they pushed west and conquered Babylon, then they attacked Armenia in the Caspian sea area to the north, and then to the south they conquered Egypt and Ethiopia. But they never pushed further east.

**Daniel 8:5-6 While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. (6) He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath.**

The goat is the 3rd empire, again this prophecy was given over 220 years before it happened. An angel confirms to Daniel that this kingdom is Greece in verse 21. Greece conquered Persia in about 334-331 BC.

Alexander was son of Phillip of Macedonia, but Phillip embraced Greek culture, and Alexander become king after Phillip was killed. Alexander’s armies were not large, but they moved so fast and were so efficient that the Persian armies could not stop them.

So in this vision instead of having four images or five, we have two images. We have a male sheep and a male goat. And the contest between these two is one of power. The sheep is a gentler animal than the goat and the goat overpowers the sheep. So the contrast between these two visions is one of relative power. We look at the two symbols and we ask ourselves where did these come from? Daniel was schooled in the wisdom of the Babylonian astrology; the ram in astrology is one of the signs of Aries, and the goat is a sign of Capricorn. And these animals are applied because in what they call astrological geography Persia was associated with Aries and later on Alexander and the Greeks will be associated with Capricorn. Furthermore, the ram was well known in the ancient world. When they held a military review the Persian king would review his soldiers and march at the head, he would always carry a ram’s head in front of him. So the symbol of the ram and the goat, strange as it may seem to you, would have been easily understood by a person living in that day.

It says the goat came from the west. Where did Alexander come from? He came from the west. He fought his way down the Turkish peninsula, Darius III had him outmaneuvered at Issus and Alexander used one of the great famous tools that he had, nobody else in the ancient world had this, it’s called the phalanx.

Some of these phalanxes would have thousands and thousands of men with spears 25 feet long and these men would line up shoulder to shoulder and they’d hold this spear out with the back of the spear trailing behind them, and then the man in back of him would rest his spear on the shoulder of the man in front of him, and the third row back the man with the 25 foot long spear would rest his spear on the man in front of him, and then Alexander would give the order and then they’d go and it was just like a bulldozer, just plow everything under. You can imagine you see this whole wall of men with 25 foot long spears just marching right toward you it tends you to make you decide you’d like to be somewhere else at that moment. So the phalanx was a tremendous tool that the Greeks used. And the only people that finally found out how to handle the phalanx were the Romans, but the Greek phalanx was Alexander’s salvation at Issus.

Then later on he did the famous battle, the clean up, the mopping up battle against some of the Persians when he had all his camps, he moved along the edge of the river, he didn’t seem to camp at any one place, and the Persians would sit on one side of the river and watch and they’d send their spies over and they’d

see Alexander just riding his horse back and forth, and at night they'd have a march and the group would march down here and then they'd march up here, and finally the Persians just dismissed the whole thing and the moment Alexander saw that they were getting tired of this movement back and forth, boom, he struck. He moved his soldiers 15 miles upstream, he forded the stream by night, came down and attacked them and wiped them out, and that was the end of the Persians. Now he did all this in three years, thereabouts. It took Cyrus 35 years, and it took Alexander, in his 20's, only 5 years to conquer his whole empire, that's why they called him Alexander the Great.

The goat travels so fast he doesn't touch the ground. And that's a prediction centuries before it happened, that Alexander would come into the ancient world like a whirlwind. The ancient world had never seen anything collapse like this; everywhere Alexander went nothing got in his way, he just kept on marching, marching, marching, he marched all the way east to the Indus River. Before Alexander died he had one empire stretching from Europe to the Far East, a tremendous empire.

**Daniel 8:7 I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.**

This campaign against the Persians was retribution for what Xerxes had done to the 300 Spartans in 480 BC, and for the persecution of other Greek city-states. This explains the rage of the goat in verse 7 – revenge was on Alexander's mind for the Persian invasions of Greece. In fact, when Darius III sued for peace with Greece, Alexander refused. Alexander burned Persepolis (the Persian capital at the time) and massacred its inhabitants as part of his revenge.

Alexander wanted to continue to go to east. They stopped at India because his generals advised him to stop, and his soldiers were battle-weary after years of constant campaigning. He probably could have gone further, because God had given him dominion at that time.

**Daniel 8:8 Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.**

That happened in 323 BC at a drunken party in Babylon. Here a man who had conquered the world in five years, they intermarried with a lot of the Persians and they had too much wine, women and song. So the large horn being broken represents Alexander dying at the height of his power at age 32. We're not sure exactly what caused his death, but it is believed to have been either alcoholism, disease, or being poisoned.

Alexander had no heirs, so after his death, four of his generals split the empire into four regions, the four conspicuous horns. There were more than four leaders who contended for rulership, but it ended up after twenty years as Daniel predicted. The four generals were Cassander, who took Macedonia, Ptolemy, who took Egypt, Lysimachus, who took Thrace and Asia Minor, and Seleucus, who took Syria, which included the Holy land. This confirms the interpretation of the 4-headed leopard in chapter 7 representing Greece.

Which of these generals do you suppose Daniel will focus on? The dynasty of Seleucus, of course, because he is the one who controlled the area of Israel. Daniel will focus on a man who was descended from Seleucus.

**Daniel 8:9 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.**

Here's another little horn, but this horn is not the antichrist, but one of the four existing horns. The original words used for the horn in chapter 7 and 8 are different, which tells us these are not the same. Also notice that the description of the horn in chapter 7 is very different than this one.

Remember Daniel 7:8, the fourth horrible beast came up and he had ten horns. Daniel 7 gives us the four kingdoms and tells us that the Roman Empire gradually is going to issue into these ten kingdoms. Three of these kingdoms will be destroyed and produce this little horn. That's all in the future. There will be a ten nation confederacy, three of those nations are going to unify and out of those three nations that unify will come this monster man. That's the monster of Daniel 7.

We are now in Daniel 8 dealing with Greece, and of the four men that come after Alexander, out of one of them comes this monster, out of one of the horns came this little horn. This is Antiochus, who was descended from Seleucus and ruled from 175 to 164 BC. On the grand stage of history this man is not that significant, there have been many men who have been as nasty and depraved as him. So why is he mentioned in the Bible? Perhaps because he gives us an accurate picture of what the future antichrist will be like. This also explains why he is mentioned as a "small horn" like the antichrist is in chapter 7.

Antiochus conquered toward the south (Egypt), toward the east (Mesopotamia), and toward the Beautiful Land, which is a reference to Israel. At first Israel was under the Egyptian quarter of the empire, but eventually came under the Syrian quarter. The four kingdoms fought with each other, of course. The Egyptians did not impose Hellenism on the Jews, but when the Syrian part of the empire took over, they did impose Hellenism on the Jews, and it led to unrest and rebellion. Israel was often a battleground between these two Hellenistic empires.

**Daniel 8:10 It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down.**

What's happening here? Antiochus obviously wasn't warring against the angels, he was warring against the Jews in Israel. The "host of heaven" refers to the armies of Israel (Exodus 12:41 you find the same reference) It may seem unusual that God's holy people are called "stars", but it's not the first time (Genesis 15:5, 22:17, 37:9-10). Use of this term may be related to the fact that there are angels (who are also mentioned as stars in the Bible) whose responsibility it is to protect Israel. Also, the faithful people of God are spoken of as "shining like stars" in Daniel 12:3 and Matthew 13:43. Finally, in verse 24 of chapter 8 the angel confirms that the stars here are believing Jews. This also is a prophecy that the Jews would be back in the land by then. When this prophecy was written, they were in exile.

Antiochus persecuted the Jews. He imposed Hellenistic rules on them which were in direct conflict of Mosaic law. He outlawed the reading of the Torah, circumcision, etc. If a woman was found to be attempting to circumcise her baby, the baby was slaughtered and tied around the mother's neck, and then she was also slaughtered. Antiochus was not a nice guy. It is estimated he killed about 100,000 Jews and sold another 40,000 into slavery. Here's a sample of the crimes he committed:

1. He plundered Jerusalem
2. He outlawed the Jewish religion and replaced it with Greek pagan worship
3. He outlawed observance of the Sabbath
4. He outlawed circumcision
5. He outlawed the reading of the scriptures
6. He burned whatever scriptures he could find
7. He sacrificed a pig on the altar at the temple
8. He set up an idol in the temple



9. He forced the Jews to worship idols
10. He claimed he was God manifest in the flesh

So Israel was in the way of Antiochus' plans. It's the same today, Israel is in the way. Israel is always a stumbling block that sends the nations reeling.

**Daniel 8:11-12** 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. (12) And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.

This describes the "abomination of desolation". Antiochus IV gave himself the title Epiphanes, meaning "manifest God". You would think that the commander of the host might be the high priest, but it can't be a Jewish leader because it says, "from him" and "the place of his sanctuary was thrown down." Now that sanctuary has to be the temple in Jerusalem and the temple in Jerusalem isn't some human's temple. So the word "his" must be God's. So the "Commander of the host" here is actually Jesus Christ. It is Yahweh and, as we know Jesus is God, and He is always called the prince of the armies of the Lord, the captain of the armies of the Lord in the Old Testament, and here's a preincarnate title of Christ. So verse 11 is saying Antiochus elevated himself as equal to God.

Many of the Jews embraced the new Hellenistic culture, but not all. Antiochus stopped the sacrificial system in the temple, and replaced it with pagan practices. He desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar in the temple and set up a status of Zeus. This happens in 168 BC. The persecution of the Jews foreshadow a similar persecution by the Roman general Titus in 70 AD. Both of these men foreshadow what the future antichrist will do. We'll see Titus talked about in chapter 9. Scripture always predicts that these types of guys will have their "heyday", but they will ultimately be defeated.

Verse 12 says that on "account of transgression" would Antiochus be allowed to persecute the Jews. So it's apparent that God is allowing this persecution of Israel because of her sins.

So we know he is going to concentrate his assault against the religious foundation and faith of the Jews. We're going to see why, Antiochus told us in history why he did this; it's very clear. And when I give you this you can easily see how using Antiochus' reasoning any politician today could do exactly the same thing. It's so moral, it's so nice sounding, it just sweeps you off your feet with the loftiness of his great ideal and motivation for having to just do away with this Jewish problem and why he was right and the Jewish people were wrong; it sounds so convincing.

**Daniel 8:13-14** Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?" (14) He said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."

Daniel heard one angel talking to another in his vision here. Some say the mornings and evenings mean 1150 days, but the Hebrew doesn't actually say this, it says evening-mornings, so it is best to take it literally, it is 2300 days. It can be shown that exactly 2300 days passed between the time Antiochus began his persecution of the Jews and the time it ended. 2 Maccabees 4:7-15 talks about this period of time. From 171 BC when Antiochus desecrated the temple, to December 25<sup>th</sup>, 165 BC, when Judas Maccabeus restored the temple to it's proper worship, that's when these days occur. Maccabeus organized a

successful rebellion against Antiochus, cleansed the temple, and lit the candelabra. This is the famous miracle of the oil, where they only had enough oil to last one day, but it lasted eight days. That's the story of Hanukkah, and where this holiday comes from. Even Jesus celebrated this feast in John 10.

Israel was free from this point for about 100 years, until the Roman Empire conquered them in about 65-67 BC. It is considered by Jews to be the "golden age" of Israel.

I might add that there have been some weird interpretations of this verse. For example, 7<sup>th</sup>-Day Adventists tried to interpret the 2300 days as years, and predicted that Christ would come back in 1843. It is always a mistake to try to predict the date of the Second Coming.

**Daniel 8:15-16** When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man. (16) 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."

Again we get an interpretation, we're not left on our own to figure it out. Whenever an angel appears, they appear as a young man. This is the first time Gabriel is mentioned in the Bible, but he appears again in Daniel and the book of Luke. The name Gabriel means "man/hero of God", and he is a messenger angel who stands in the presence of God (Luke 1;19) Gabriel is the angel that appeared to Mary and told her that she would give birth to the Messiah.

The man's voice between the banks of Ulai - we don't know who this was but many commentators suspect this is Christ preincarnate.

**Daniel 8:17-18** So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end." (18) Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright.

Gabriel calls Daniel "son of man", but this is not Messianic, he is just referring to Daniel's humanness. He tells Daniel the vision refers to a time far beyond Antiochus, the time of the end.

"He touched me" literally means grabbed me. You see Gabriel reaching down grabbing Daniel by the nap of the neck. I mean he just lifted Daniel right up off the ground; Daniel is flat on his face and Gabriel comes along and picks him up and lifts him straight up. John had the same treatment in the book of Revelation. Everywhere you see these angels they have to pick us up off the floor.

This means not just the end in the sense of last end, in the sense of time, but it means like the ninth inning in a baseball game, that kind of an end, an end which fulfills it, it's not just the end of time but it's the completion.

**Daniel 8:19** He said, "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.

It is difficult to fit the term "final period of the indignation" into the time of Antiochus. That term is used elsewhere for the 7 year Tribulation when the antichrist will rule.

Although the context of this chapter is about the Persian and Greek empires, Gabriel is telling us that these

prophecies will have an ultimate fulfillment during the Great Tribulation, just before the return of Christ. The atrocities of Antiochus will be surpassed by those of the antichrist in the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. Because Antiochus was a Syrian, some scholars believe that the antichrist will be Syrian, but that is just speculation. We cannot know for sure.

**Daniel 8:20-22** "The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. (21) "The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. (22) "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.

So the angel confirms that the ram is Persia, and the goat is Greece. The first horn has to be Alexander, and the four horns that come up are his general that took over after his death. Notice it even mentions that the divided empire was not as strong as the original empire, which makes sense with known history, because they were not unified.

**Daniel 8:23** "In the latter period of their rule, When the transgressors have run their course, A king will arise, Insolent and skilled in intrigue.

Now we come to the end of the vision, and the end of this passage deals with the future. A lot of the principles we've seen were fulfilled by these men who have been in the past, Antiochus Epiphanes and so on. But there are some factors about this prophecy that have not yet been fulfilled, and it's those aspects that we must study.

Now the question is often asked, why in Daniel 7 does the beast come out of Rome and in Daniel 8 the beast appears to come out of the Grecian Empire? Because these two visions emphasize two different parts of the beast. Daniel 7 is talking about the chronology; there'll be this kingdom, then this kingdom, then this kingdom, then this kingdom. So obviously the beast comes out of the last kingdom or the Roman kingdom. But in Daniel 8 the emphasis is more on the character or piece of culture that will breed the beast.

So this verse is saying that in a future day there will be a massive society of rebels, "transgressors" is *pashaa*, and it means a participle, "the rebels," there will be a large group of people who cannot stand authority. There will be a total disrespect for authority, and this prophecy in its final fulfillment will be on a global scale. That will cause chaos, chaos everywhere.

The antichrist is going to be the person who can walk into that mess, that chaos, and say okay, you people have fouled up, and he probably won't be one of the rebels, he will probably be a fine "law and order" person with a genius for organization. So "in the latter period of their rule," that is in the future time, whether it's our own generation that's going to see this, or maybe 50 years later or whenever, it will be a time characterized by the rising of the beast out of the Hellenistic dream of a manmade perfectly ordered society; it will be a time when in the streets there will be mobs, there will be general disrespect for law and order.

The man with "fierce countenance" means scar tissue all over his conscience; no moral sensitivity, he could care less. He acts like a computer that has no conscience. Remember the Greek dream, manmade perfect social order, the computer is a massive organizer, there's only one thing wrong with a computer, it has no conscience.

So this man combines absolute genius with zero conscience, and that is an explosive combination. He is



going to be a genius that is greater than Solomon. He is going to be Satanic Solomon is what it amounts to, "skilled in intrigue."

**Daniel 8:24 "His power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people.**

Now this is an enigmatic sentence that can't be understood really until the prophecy is fulfilled... He is going to have the appearance of strength, but he really doesn't have the strength he appears to have, that's the point. He gains it by deception. And if he's Satan incarnate, so to speak, obviously he's going to use this very skillfully; it's one big scam. And by one big deception this man gains power after power. Now applied to the lesser beasts of history it's the same thing. Did Hitler really have that power in the 30's in Germany? No, Germany was sleeping so Hitler attained power, but Hitler had power but not by his own. It's always that way. Did the communists in 1917 after the Bolshevik government, before the Bolshevik revolution occurred did the communists really have that power? No they didn't. It was due to the inability of the Russian people to see the issue, but it wasn't that they were so powerful. Lenin didn't have that much power; he could have been eliminated very quickly. So always you'll see this tendency, these evil men appear to have more power than they really do. And if you are a person with understanding you'll see through the delusion, and everybody else may go along because they're afraid and you won't because you know, this guy is one big bluff, he doesn't have power, it's not there.

Now we go to a further characteristic in Daniel 8:24 of this future man, "he shall destroy to an extraordinary degree," just means miraculously or in a very astonishing way. It doesn't necessarily mean a direct miracle but it just means he destroys his enemies in the most amazing ways possible. So if you try to conceive of a political leader ingeniously ridding himself of his enemies, that's this man. He has the most ingenious way of solving problems of the opposition. "Mighty men" doesn't mean people of super strength, it just means men of other nations. So he will destroy the Jews and other nations.

**Daniel 8:25 "And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify himself in his heart, And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency.**

Verse 25, suggests how he does it. We have had treachery in high places in the political scene. And in eternity when God judges people are going to pay for the blood of young servicemen who have died on the battlefield because of treachery in high places. This beast is going to make the most phenomenal, underground, underhanded deals that you have ever seen. And, this guy is a negotiator like you haven't seen.

And finally, "he will even oppose the Prince of princes," this is a reference to the Messianic line in Antiochus' day, the high priesthood, and also in the future to the Lord Jesus Christ, he will stand up to the believers of that day identified with Christ. Just as Paul on the Damascus road Jesus said, why are you persecuting me, Paul?" Paul said I'm not persecuting you, I'm persecuting the Christians. And Jesus said by persecuting the believers you're persecuting me. So this man is going to have a holy war directed against believers. But now the promise given at the end of verse 25, means God will intervene, without man's gimmicks, without a manmade solution. Antiochus died of a horrible and fatal disease, which fits the end of verse 25.

All of these descriptions of the king that arises were true of Antiochus, from the Seleucid dynasty, that is the context. Again, this is a foreshadowing of the coming antichrist, a pattern of him. So, if you want to

understand the antichrist, it is important to understand what both Antiochus and Titus were like and what they did. Titus, too, will fit this description, and he will also desecrate the temple with the “abomination of desolation” (Matthew 24:15).

I’ll go through a bit of the history because I want you to understand how Antiochus would have been seen in the ancient world. The average person in the ancient world would not have seen Antiochus as the beast that the Bible teaches him as. He was a nice man, he was a brilliant man. And this is the surprise, a man who would be commended by his generation is pictured in the Bible as an absolute satanically inspired leader. Why does the Bible so radically shift its view of a man that was very popular in his day? The reason is that the Bible sees something in his character that most people do not see. And hopefully some of you will realize that the same kind of argument that would defend Antiochus can be used today to defend a lot of activity which would destroy Christianity.

Antiochus, when he starts to reign, is what we would call a good leader. He’s a philanthropist; he was well known for his financial generosity. He would give to the poor; he would give to alleviate social conditions. So he immediately was accepted in many, many cities. He also had a strange habit of playing practical jokes on his citizens, and one of his favorite jokes was that at night he would put a cloak on and go visiting in a city as a beggar or somebody else, he’d just drop in on various people and wouldn’t introduce himself as who he really was, and this way he had good communication with the people, and then he’d get back and have a big laugh about it. He had a sense of humor.

He was also a good soldier and an excellent administrator. But for reasons I won’t go into, he needs money badly for his kingdom, he’s got to get an infusion of funds. So how is he going to do it? He starts by moving eastward and gaining territories which he can tax. He also starts to move southward to get to Egypt.

Meanwhile, in Judah, many of the Jews were adopting Greek ways and as Hellenization progressed, there was a group of Jews that countered this. Their names—the Hasidim; these were the super patriots. And they refused to go along with Hellenization. So we now have the rise of two parties in the Jewish community, the Hellenists and the Hasidim. And tension is slowly building in Judah.

Now into this tension steps Seleucid’s administration. In 174 BC Antiochus Epiphanes, when he takes over in Antioch, he appoints the high priest. The Jews are having a problem with their high priest, so Antiochus IV steps in and he appoints a man by the name of Jason. Jason agreed to slowly Hellenize all of Palestine and make Jerusalem a Greek city.

Here are some of the things that he did that the Hasidim objected to. First, he opened up a gymnasium in the city of Jerusalem for upper class noblemen. He had kind of an athletic club. You say what’s wrong with that? Because of what went with the athletic club, the Greek way. What Greek way? Well, everybody who was a member of this athletic club had to wear the Greek wide brimmed hat, and this was just offensive that the Jewish young men were losing their national identity and being absorbed into the Greek culture. Another thing the Jews did not like was that all athletic contests were in the nude. And because they were in the nude and the Jewish youth were circumcised, they had made various surgical procedures to try to undo their circumcision, or to cover it up, and this offended the Hasidim because this was a violation of the Abrahamic Covenant. Not only that, but finally they developed a great set of sports fans among the priests, and so the priests would hurry up with their duties and by 1:00 or 2:00 o’clock they decided they were going to take a break and go over to the gym and watch the games. So they started putting sports ahead of their religious duties and this offended the Hasidim.

All this was building up, and then to add insult to injury, Antiochus decides to hold this sporting tournament, which was kind of their equivalent to the Olympics, in a city called Tyre, just to the northwest. Well,

everybody that came to the games that year had to bring a gift and the gift had to be dedicated to Bel Melkart, Melkart was the god of Tyre. And so when they gave their gift they would bow down to Melkart, and place the cash.

So all during this period the Hasidim become furious and more furious, and finally the straw that breaks the camel's back is in 171 BC, and this 171 BC is a key year because this begins a seven year period of the abomination. In 171 BC Antiochus decides Jason is not delivering on the cash, he doesn't like the money flow. So to straighten things out he fires Jason and appoints Menelaus. The whole office of high priest is no longer something that glorifies God; it's a sheer political appointment for the sake of tax funds.

But in 171 BC, when this man is appointed, Menelaus is not of the family of Zadok, that is, he is not a proper Levite, he doesn't qualify by family background, he qualifies only for the priesthood because he can deliver the taxes. When this happened, that's it, as far as the Hasidim are concerned. That marks the abomination; that marks the interference by the state into the sphere of religion, when the state says we will not respect the Mosaic Law of the priesthood.

In 168 BC one of the Ptolemys dies and his successors decide they're going to take Palestine away from the Seleucids. It's going to be an attack made from the south against, not the Jews, but against Antiochus. They want Palestine in Egypt. By this time, if you are a Hasidim, which party do you favor? Wouldn't you favor going with Egypt if you had to choose between Egypt and Antiochus, who had Hellenized your city? So the Hasidim want to defect to the south and rejoin the Ptolemaic dynasties in Egypt.

So Antiochus goes to Egypt to confront these attackers, but is forced to retreat. He begins moving back to Judah in 168 BC. Things have happened in Judah those weeks that Antiochus was in Egypt. The rumor has gone around that Antiochus was killed. And so during his absence in Egypt Jason replaces Menelaus, he throws him out. The Hasidim are clapping; there are celebrations all over Judah for the destruction of Antiochus IV. But Antiochus hasn't been destroyed; he's just been humiliated. And so as his armies retreat and he's depressed because of this tremendous defeat, he walks through and he sees the Jews celebrating his death, and because Menelaus his high priest has been dethroned.

So he says all right, these Jews are perpetual rebels. I will treat the city of Jerusalem as a captive city. So on one Sabbath day he orders all the citizens of Jerusalem together and he says I'm going to make it so you people will never revolt again. And on that Sabbath day he orders his soldiers to tear down the walls of Jerusalem. Then he said why is it, of all the people in my kingdom I have the most trouble with these Jews all the time? What is it that is different about the Jew? They're always saying they can't do something because of their religious law. The Jews have that fanatical exclusivist religion; so if I can get rid of the Jewish religion, then I can have unity in my kingdom, I can control these people and I won't have any more revolts, things will be fine.

That was the worst decision that Antiochus ever made. And it launched the program beginning in 167 BC, and for three years, from 167 BC to 164 BC there was the most horrible persecution that the Jews had ever known. Here is the plan of Antiochus to subjugate the Jews, to force them to make payments to him, to become integrated with the administration of his vast kingdom:

- (1) All temple rituals will be suspended.
- (2) All copies of the sacred Scriptures will be destroyed and burned; anyone found reading the Scriptures will be punished.
- (3) No special days will any longer be observed, including the Sabbath day.
- (4) All strict Jewish food laws will be destroyed.
- (5) Any woman caught circumcising or having a circumcised son will be killed, there will be no more

circumcision of the Jewish male.

And finally to add insult to injury, if this wasn't enough to infuriate the Jewish population, he walked into the temple, desecrated the altar and sacrificed a pig to Zeus on their altar (or as he's known in that part of the world, Baal). When he did this he said that the Jews must worship Baal Shamim, which is the lord of heaven; the word "Baal" is just another word for lord.

Then he not only transformed the altar in the temple, but he demanded that in every major Jewish city there be similar altars set up, to the Baal of this, the Baal of that, etc. Then he adopted the title of Epiphany for himself. His full title was Antiochus Theos Epiphany, Antiochus Theos—God, Epiphany—God appeared. He saw himself as Zeus incarnate and he began to order worship of himself.

I told you that you could prepare to appreciate this by reading an apocryphal book called the 1 and 2 Maccabees. I want to read some parts out of this book because only as you appreciate this will you appreciate references in the New Testament. When the Christians were persecuted they used these persecutions between 167 and 164 BC as their model. The Christian martyrs had a prior Jewish model.

*"For example, two women were brought in for having circumcised their children; these women were publicly paraded about the city with their babies hung at their breasts, and then hurled them down headlong from the wall. Others who had assembled in the caves nearby to observe the seventh day secretly were betrayed to Philip and all burned together because their piety kept them from defending themselves on the Sabbath day."*

*"Now I urge those who read this book not to be depressed by such calamities, but to recognize these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people. In fact, not to let the impious alone for long, but to punish them immediately is a sign of great kindness, for in the case of other nations the Lord waits patiently to punish them until they have reached full measure of their sins, but He does not deal in that with us," Israel, "in order that He may not take vengeance upon us afterwards when our sins have reached their height. Therefore He never withdraws His mercy from us. Though He disciplines us with calamities He does not forsake His people. Let what we have said serve as a reminder; we must go on and tell the story."*

*"Eleazar, one of the scribes in the high position and a man now advanced in age and of noble presence, was being forced to open his mouth to eat pig's flesh but he, welcoming death with honor rather life with pollution, went up to the rack of his own accord, spitting out the pig's meat, as men ought to do who have the courage to refuse things it is not right to taste, even for the natural love of life."*

*"For even if for the present I should avoid the punishment of men, yet whether I live or die I shall not escape the hands of the Almighty. Therefore by giving up my life now I will show myself worthy of my old age and leave to the young men a noble example of how to die a good death, willingly and noble for the revered and holy laws. And when he said this he went at once to the rack, and those who a little before had acted with him in good will now changed to ill will, because the words he uttered were in their opinion sheer madness," and it goes on to describe how they beat him to death on the rack, broke every bone in his body and then kept on beating until all the blood and everything else came out.*

There's another story about a woman and her sons that happened in the same period, the same time. This shows you the bravery of the Hebrew women: *"It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king under torture with whips and cords to partake of the unlawful pig flesh. One of them acting as their spokesman said: what do you intend to ask and learn from us, for we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our fathers."* It describes how their mother

was put up there and she had to watch each of her sons killed before her eyes. *“The king fell into a rage, he gave orders that pans and caldrons be heated. These were heated immediately and he commanded that the tongue of their spokesman be cut out, that they scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the rest of the brothers and the mother looked on. And when he was utterly helpless the king ordered them to take him to the fire, still breathing, and fry him in the pan. The smoke from the pan spread wildly but the brothers and their mother encouraged one another to die saying, ‘The Lord God is watching over us and in truth has compassed on us as Moses declared in his song which bore witness against the people.’”*

It goes on finally to the last son: *“The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honorable memory, for though she saw her seven sons perish in a single day she bore it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord. She encouraged every one of those sons in the language of their fathers. Filled with a noble spirit she fired her women’s reasoning with a man’s courage and she said to them, ‘I do not know how you came into being in my womb; it was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things will, in His mercy, give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of His laws.’”* And it describes the speech that she has and *“in leaning close to him she spoke in her native tongue as follows,”* see, they told her to go and tell your son if he would just eat this meat we’ll let him off.

So the Jewish mother walks over and she whispers into the ear of her son, and here’s what she whispers: *“My son, have pity on me; I carried you nine months in my womb, and nursed you for three years, and have reared you and brought you up to this point in your life, and have taken care of you. I beseech you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth, and see everything that is in them and recognize that God did not make them out of things which existed. Thus also mankind comes into being; don’t fear this butcher, but prove worthy of your brothers, accept death so that in God’s mercy I may get you back again with your brothers.”*

Now these are the tremendous people that you’re witnessing; these people were fortified by the text of Daniel. And so as this went on, obviously it had to erupt in war. And finally in 164 BC war began. The war began with a man by the name of Matthias. If you have some Jewish friends, when we celebrate Christmas they’ll be celebrating Hanukah; in a few moments you’ll know why the Jewish people celebrate Hanukah.

*“Matthias was a priest in the village of Modine. One day at sunrise the king’s soldiers ride into town. They set up an altar and they say everyone in this town will sacrifice; everyone in this town will come out and we will worship and sacrifice to Zeus.”* And so Matthias is the oldest man in the village, he is asked to give the sacrifice. *“Matthias answered and said in a loud voice, even if all nations that live under the rule of the king obey him and have chosen to do this to this commandment, departing each one from the religion of his fathers, I and my sons and my brothers will live by the commandment of our fathers. Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances; we won’t obey the king’s word by turning aside from our religion to the right or to the left. And after he finished his speech...”* it was obvious there was going to be a confrontation so one of the peacemakers, the negotiators, came out quickly and he offered to sacrifice to defuse the situation. And Matthias reached into his robe and he pulled out a sword and stabbed the man and then he told his sons, take care of that king’s men, the king’s representative, and they stabbed and killed him, and that was the beginning of guerilla warfare and what has been known in history as the Maccabean Revolt. The Jews were successful in their rebellion and three years later a peace was negotiated with Roman pressure and the temple was rededicated.

Now Antiochus died in a very strange way. Nobody knows how, he was on a campaign and he suddenly died. But that is kind of hinted at because in Daniel 8:25 says he wouldn’t be killed in battle like a normal soldier. He died a very strange death, and that is recorded in the book of Maccabees.



The temple was rededicated and the feasts were begun and the lights were lit, and that is the feast of Hanukkah. If you have Jewish friends that's what they're celebrating, the cleansing of the temple from the defilement of this man, Antiochus Epiphanes. The temple was rededicated, the stones of the old temple were put away and they waited for a prophet to tell them what to do.

Now this is a lesson of how believers endured under pressure at one point in history. It probably is the most spectacular martyr filled period of Jewish history. I urge you, if you think you have problems, and if you think you have suffering, that you take 1 and 2 Maccabees and read it. It's exciting reading, it's not a bunch of genealogies; it's active, living history. Read that and then read Hebrews 11; Hebrews 11 is how we are to endure. God provides for every need, God provided for these; these are the cloud of witnesses with which we are surrounded.

As you watch the political picture you should be skilled at spotting this kind of thing; increasingly in our day it is being used, and it will be used with more frequency in the future, and that is Antiochus had to do away with the Jews and their religion because they were people who had an exclusivist religion that wouldn't compromise with other groups. They were people that threatened the unity of the community. And because of this they were dangerous people. And so Antiochus "had to do away with Jews and their religion. So watch for that; exclusivist religious claims always threaten the social engineers who would like to mishmash everyone into the same pot and people who don't mishmash easily or who stick out, or who have a set of absolutes are always the victims of these people.

Such a collision will always result in a massive confrontation between believers and the unbelieving government; it always has and always will. And believers who are not discerning, who do not plan ahead, who do not see the handwriting on the wall when it's clear, then they are doomed to suffer that kind of persecution. Every time in history we have had a social engineer or social benefactor like Antiochus Epiphanes, like Caesar Augustus, like all of the communists, we have always had people that try to arrange society but in the final analysis are compelled to do away with the Christian community because that's the only group of people they can't get to worship Caesar.

**Daniel 8:26-27 "The vision of the evenings and mornings Which has been told is true; But keep the vision secret, For it pertains to many days in the future." (27) Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it.**

That word "shut up the vision" doesn't mean it can't be understood. What it means is that Daniel has written it and he is to keep the document and not lose it, that's what it means. File it away and don't lose it the angel tells Daniel; keep this on record; there are believers who are going to need it in the future.

It doesn't concern his generation, it will not take place for another 386 years. We'll see the same admonition in chapter 12:4,9, where Daniel gets visions of the future Tribulation period and the Millennium. These visions did not concern Daniel personally or his generation. We'll discuss that more in chapter 12.

And Daniel is again traumatized by what he sees, just like chapter 7. This is not a movie that he enjoyed with popcorn, he is sick at seeing all the persecution that his people were going to have to go through. Daniel returned to his work as administrator of Babylon. It would be another 12 years before the "ram" kingdom came (Persia).

Again, God, through these visions, is showing the people that He is in control, that He will preserve the nation through the reigns of Persia and then Greece. Those that lived during the reign of Antiochus would

have been greatly encouraged to know that his days were numbered, that the persecution would end. Those who knew their scripture were probably counting the days!

I want to remind you that in prophecy up to the present moment we can understand it; in the future we can only understand generally. The angel can say okay Daniel, this is going to be a king, this symbol stands for this king out here, this symbol stands for another king out there, but that's as far as the angel can carry the future. Why? Because until history actually occurs prophecy remains inherently vague. I've never been sold on this concept of drawing these fine diagrams and every little piece of prophecy fits in, because until the prophecy occurs you can't really tell how it's going to happen. You can tell the broad outlines but that's all. Do you suppose, for example, as great a prophet as John the Baptist could have predicted every little detail about the life of Christ; he obviously didn't, in fact during the Gospels he has deep reservations about how this prophecy is playing out, it looks different. So prophecy has an inherent vagueness of the future. The angel, even, does not give more detail to Daniel because maybe the angel doesn't know, he hasn't seen what's going to happen.

But this chapter does add to the picture God is revealing of what the antichrist will be like and what he will do. In the next lesson, we will get even more added to the picture. Chapter 9 contains the famous "70 weeks of Daniel", which is hugely important to understand the timing of end times events.

#### Questions on chapter 8:

1. Why does God allow such wicked people, like Antiochus, like Saddam Hussein, like Adolph Hitler, to have success and prosperity? Why doesn't He judge them quickly for their evil? Wouldn't an immediate judgment cause people to have a greater fear and respect for God?
2. While everyone is sinful, it is obvious that there are different levels of evil in the world. Why does God allow those who are sold out to sin to have success against those who are faithful to Him?
3. In your opinion is Daniel 8 about Antiochus from past history or about the antichrist to come?
4. What value does the information in this chapter have to do with the way we as believers live our lives today?
5. In what way would this chapter affect our view of the inspiration and authority of the Bible?