

October 30

Scriptures: Read Daniel 7 & 8

Key Verse: “His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” (Daniel 7:27b)

Overview

Chronologically, the events recorded in chapters 7 and 8 come after chapter four, occurring about fourteen years before chapter 5. By this time, the Babylonian empire had likely begun to weaken. Daniel had a night vision and immediately wrote it down so he would not forget any important details. Daniel’s vision corresponds closely with the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great statue (ch. 2), yet it gives greater information regarding the end-times. The four terrible and fierce beasts came up out of the water in succession after being stirred up by the winds; the winds represent God’s providence over the rise of nations.

The first beast, representing Babylon, was strong and swift (lion and eagle; 7:4). The second beast, the fierce bear, represented the dual kingdom of the Medes and Persians; it had one side higher than the other signifying that one side would come into greater prominence than the other, and this was true of the Persians (7:5). The third beast represented Greece under Alexander the Great. Greece attained a larger empire than had the previous kingdoms (7:6). Although all the beasts were different from each other, the fourth was especially fierce and “exceedingly strong” and “dreadful” (7:7). With its ten horns, it represented the diversified Roman Empire — a system that is still in existence today.

As Daniel tries to find words, he describes the rising up of another horn which was little at first but it destroyed three of the other horns (kings); it grew larger and spoke vain and blasphemous words (7:8, 20). This horn represents the Antichrist whom Daniel later describes as one who was persecuting and overpowering the saints of God for a time period, usually reckoned to be three and a half years (7:21, 25; cf. Rev. 13:5-7). But God, “the Ancient of Days”, intervened with judgment and the beast and the horn were cast into the flames (7:11, 22; Rev. 19:20; 20:10). At this point, Daniel saw that a new and glorious Kingdom was ushered in wherein the saints of the God would rule and reign with the “Son of Man”, the Messiah Jesus (cf. Matt. 24:30), in His everlasting kingdom (7:13-14, 22, 27).

Two years later, Daniel saw another vision, recorded in chapter 8. It is similar to the other visions but gives supplementary information about the Medo-Persian and Grecian periods. This vision would have come at the time when the people of God in the Babylonian exile needed encouragement that God would one day defeat the evil world powers and fulfill His promise of restoration (cf. Jer. 25:11-12).

The vision begins in Shushan (about 400 km. east of Babylon), the future capital city of the up and coming Medo-Persian Empire which defeated the Babylonians. The two horns of the ram represent the duality of that empire; the larger horn, which arose last, represents the stronger Persian element (8:3). This ram was attacked and defeated by a male goat coming quickly from the west, representing the Grecians (Macedonians) under Alexander the Great (one horn; 8:7).

When the goat was at the height of his strength and glory, its large horn was broken, signifying the sudden, unexpected, and untimely death of Alexander the Great at the young age of 33. Four horns came up in place of the broken one (8:8), signifying that in the subsequent years the territory gained by Alexander would be divided into four parts under the control of his four military generals.

We read that near the end of the goat's kingdom, before the period of the Roman Empire, a little horn would arise. This represents the appearance of the sly and sinister Antiochus Epiphanes from out of Syria. As history has proven, Daniel's vision was accurately fulfilled, just as the angel Gabriel explained it. From 171 to 165 B.C. Epiphanes killed and persecuted many Jews who resisted him and he stopped the daily sacrifices at the Temple. The worst thing Epiphanes did, however, was the abomination of desolation in defiling and desecrating the Temple by offering a pig upon the altar and setting up an idol in it. Just as the heavenly being declared, this defilement was to continue for only a little over six years, and then God would intervene (8:14). Daniel's vision would therefore have been a source of comfort to the faithful Jews during this period of persecution (cf. Heb. 11:34-38).

Epiphanes died in 165 B.C., and in the same year Judas Maccabeus took Jerusalem back and kept the Feast of Dedication by cleansing the Temple. On this occasion, the one day's supply of oil miraculously lasted eight days (the apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees detail these events). This Feast is celebrated year after year by the Jews (cf. John 10:22) and is called Hanukkah today.

Prayer

Dear Lord, Daniel saw in his vision, the saints of ; God ruling and reigning with the "Son of Man", and we too want to be among those saints someday. Thank You for the shed blood of Jesus and for the forgiveness and remission of sin that enables us to reign with You for eternity.