

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Horns, History and Prophecy

by Dan Trygg

“Then I lifted my gaze 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. ⁴ I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him...; but he did as he pleased and magnified himself. ⁵ 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 And he came up to the ram that had the two horns, ...and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. ⁷ 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... ⁸ ... But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns... ⁹ And 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. ¹⁰ And 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹³ ... ‘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 And he said to me, ‘For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.’ ¹⁷ ... ‘Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end...’ ²⁰ The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹ And the shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. ²² And 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. ²³ And in the latter period of their rule, when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise insolent and skilled in intrigue. ²⁴ And 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. ²⁵ And through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; and he will magnify himself..., 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... ²⁶ The vision of the evenings and the mornings is true. Now you must seal up the vision because it refers to many days.” Daniel 8:3-14,17,20-26

Last week, we let our minds wander through the book of Genesis, and we saw how future declarations and prophecies were found throughout the book. In fact, virtually every significant biblical figure in the narrative was motivated to action by a revelation from God about the future. The reality that God knows the future, and communicates it to people, is to be found throughout the book. **How about the next book, Exodus?** First, the dilemma that the Israelites found themselves in had been prophesied in Genesis 15:13, where God told Abram that his descendants would be enslaved and oppressed. In Moses’ encounter with Yahweh at the burning bush, the Lord commissioned him to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. He tells him that they will worship Him at this very mountain (3:12). He tells Moses that the people will listen to him, and that he *will* lead them out, and that God will bring them into the land of Canaan (3:17). He tells Moses that the Egyptians will have favor on the people, and they will not leave empty-handed (3:21,22). In this way, they will “plunder the Egyptians”. He also told Moses that Pharaoh will not simply let them go. God would compel him, by killing the firstborn of the Egyptians (4:21,22). In chapter 6, God repeats all of this, declaring that He will show that He is Yahweh, the covenant-keeping God. He will bring the people out of bondage with an outstretched arm and great judgments (6:1-8). In the next chapter, Yahweh says that He will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that He can multiply His signs and wonders, so that even the Egyptians will know who He is (7:3-5). Throughout most of the plagues, God instructed Moses to warn Pharaoh ahead of time, regarding what He would do. In each case, it came to pass, exactly as He said (chapters 7-10). He prophesied to Moses about the plague of the firstborn, which would be the final plague, and will be a day of remembrance which the people of Israel would observe as a memorial every year (chapters 11,12). They were to put blood on the doorposts and lintel of their doorways, and when the angel of death would pass through the land, he would pass over each house where there was blood on the doorway. This became the feast of Passover, still celebrated by observant Jews today. **Again, Yahweh told them of these events *before* they took place. Those who *believed* in His word, *did* as He instructed, and were spared. There was a word of *future* promise, a prophetic declaration. *Faith* in God’s prophetic word was expressed by *obedience*.** In chapter 14, Yahweh predicted that Pharaoh would pursue them. He told Moses to lift up his staff, and Yahweh would part the sea. They were to go through the sea, on dry ground. Yahweh also predicted that the Egyptians would follow, and be drowned in the sea. The Egyptians will know who Yahweh is. In chapter 16:1-4, when the people were complaining about the lack of food, Yahweh told Moses that He would rain bread from heaven. He provided the manna, as He had promised. **Again, as in Genesis, the predictive declarations and promises of God are found throughout the book. His people were led by, and responded to, the prophetic words He shared with them.**

As we come to Daniel 8, we see again that the vision he saw was very symbolic. Thankfully, God gave Daniel some more clarification. **The vision had some parallels to the previous vision (Dan. 7).** While the earlier vision had begun with the kingdom of Babylon, **this one begins with the kingdom of the Medes and Persians.** In Daniel 7, this was represented by a lop-sided bear, “raised up on one side” (7:5). Note that the ram in chapter 8 had two horns, but one was longer than the other, ...and this horn came up later. This is in accordance with the history of the Medo-Persian empire. The Medes and Persians were originally nomadic tribes, located in what would now be northwestern and southwestern Iran. As the Assyrian empire was beginning to fade, a Median confederacy pulled together to become a kingdom in 720 B.C. They conquered the Persian tribes to form a more formidable coalition against the Assyrians. Along with the Babylonians, and a number of other groups, the Medes defeated the Assyrians and destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C. The Babylonians quickly arose and dominated the area, however, under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar. Their empire continued until 539 B.C. When the Medes had conquered the Persians, they installed members of their royal family to rule the Persians. Cyrus the Mede was descended from them, but not from the line of ruling kings. He overthrew Media in 550 B.C. and incorporated them into his growing Persian Empire. After moving westward to defeat and incorporate Lydia, he turned to the east and captured Babylon in 539 B.C. **In Daniel’s vision, the Persian Empire is represented by the ram with two horns, ...one that came up later, but grew to be longer than the other. At the time Daniel saw this (550 B.C.), the Persians were not even an impending threat.**

The male goat with the conspicuous horn, that rapidly crossed the ground without touching it, was fulfilled by Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C). The speed, wrath and complete decimation of his foes were characteristic of his campaign. After defeating the Persians, he continued eastward as far as India. Due to demands from his homesick troops, who had been gone from home for nearly ten years, he returned to Babylon, where he suddenly died. **His four generals divided his empire among themselves. They are the four conspicuous horns in Daniel’s vision.** Although they had been compatriots in war, it did not take long for rivalries to break out between them, especially between the dynasties of Seleucus, located in Turkey, and Ptolemy, located in Egypt.

The small horn that grew out of one of them, and grew toward the south, east, and toward “the Beautiful Land” would seem to be at least partially fulfilled by the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He came to power about 175 B.C. through trickery and intrigue. He was not in the direct line of succession. The true king was a hostage in Rome, when his father died. Antiochus saw an opportunity and seized the throne, ostensibly as a regent for the infant son of the true king, unless he should return. He curried favor with the Romans to be sure that they kept the true heir in Rome, and the infant son mysteriously died. Antiochus was thus the *de facto* ruler. **He was arrogant, and took for himself the name “Epiphanes”, which means “great one” or even “god manifest”. His detractors called him “Epimanes”, which meant “mad man”.** He was shrewd and ruthless, as a politician and general, but lavish and generous with those in his favor. His capital city was Antioch in Syria, the same city referred to in the NT (Act 11:26).

In 170, the Ptolomaic dynasty in Egypt declared war on Antiochus’ empire. Antiochus had received warning of their intentions, and had built fortifications and moved his forces into position to repel their attack. He continued southward, and conquered Alexandria, and took Ptolemy captive. He permitted him to rule as a puppet, while he withdrew his forces. In 168, however, he led a second attack against Egypt. This time, he was confronted, and humiliated by a single Roman ambassador, who demanded that he withdraw, or Rome would consider this an act of war. On the way back, he attacked Jerusalem, and killed many traditionalist Jews, ...40,000 men, women and children slaughtered in a three-day period, and 40,000 more sold into slavery. **Antiochus appointed his own high priest, outlawed Jewish religious rites and traditions, including the cessation of sacrifice to Yahweh, and turned the Temple into place for Greek worship, dedicating it to Zeus. He desolated the sanctuary.** So, in effect, this Antiochus opposed the Commander of the Host, the Prince of princes, ...God Himself..., by his sacrilege. He exalted himself, and referred to himself as “God manifest”. **These actions spurred the Maccabean revolt, where observant, traditionalist Jews rose up against their Greek oppressors, and defeated them, although Antiochus was no longer there.**

While Antiochus had been preoccupied with these affairs, King Mithridates I of Parthia attacked the eastern portion of his kingdom. He left a commander in charge in Judea, and left to address these matters. He had initial success, but **Antiochus suddenly died from a mysterious disease in 164 B.C.** According to 2 Maccabees this was the hand of God’s judgment. **Certainly, this fulfilled Daniel’s prophecy, “...he will be broken without human agency” (8:25).** According to 1 Maccabees 1:54 the “regular sacrifice was stopped on the 15th day of Kislev (December), 167 B.C. It was restored on Kislev 25th, 164 B.C. (1 Macc. 4:52-53). When you take into account the Jewish calendar, months of 30 days, and two “leap months” that would have occurred during that period, this comes out to be 360 x 3= 1,080, plus 60 for the “leap months”, plus the extra ten days = 1150 days. Each day in the Temple service normally had a morning and evening sacrifice. **That meant that the sacrifice was disrupted for exactly 2,300 mornings and evenings!**

Now *while so much of this has been fulfilled* in this episode of Antiochus, **these images are referred to in future prophecy. We see amazing precision in what God has fulfilled in the past, ...and we also images of future events.**