

# THE HORN IDENTITY

DANIEL 8:1-27 FEBRUARY 20, 2019

In 1903 a felon named Will West was sent to Leavenworth prison to serve some time. It was the days before fingerprinting was widely used. Instead, the prison used a method called “anthropometrics” for processing. Inmates would have a variety of measurements taken in order to identify them, in the way we think of fingerprints identifying a person today. Will West had things like his height, the reach of his outstretched arms, width of head, length and width of his right ear, length of left middle finger and other things measured and cataloged. The officer processing him went through their database and discovered that Mr. West was a repeat offender and had already spent time in Leavenworth. This was an accusation West denied. The officer said, “Here’s your card with your name and all your measurements right here in front of me.” West kept denying it, so a subsequent investigation was made into the issue. The result? Officials discovered that Will West was *already a prisoner there at the prison* and he had been since 1901. There was *another* man, with the same name and with almost the *exact same measurements*, who was already serving a life sentence for murder.<sup>1</sup>

Very similar in look, even in behavior, but not the same person. That’s an important theme for our passage tonight. Here in chapter 8, Daniel will have another prophetic vision, again dealing with world empires, but only 2 this time, not 4. And again there will be a lot of talk about horns. Specifically he sees, again, a ‘little horn.’ The question that immediately arises is: Is this the *same* little horn that we saw in chapter 7? Or, on the larger scale, what period and what people is chapter 8 talking about? As is normally the case when it comes to Bible prophecy, we’ll find that some people use what we’re about to see as a launching pad for heresy. Some of the information is crystal clear. And then there’s a lot left up for debate, even among great, scholarly believers.

We are not going to solve *all* these mysteries tonight and that’s ok. Let’s wade in and see what we *can* learn from Daniel’s next prophetic vision.

**Daniel 8:1 - In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time.**

About 2 years have passed since chapter 7. And it’s, perhaps, about 12 years *before* the writing on the wall in chapter 5.<sup>2</sup> There are a couple of very significant textual things going on here that are worth noting. First, you may recall that everything from Daniel 2:4 through 7:28 was written in the *Aramaic* language. With 8:1, Daniel is again writing in *Hebrew*. There is a shift in his method. Commentators point out that there is a particular focus on the people of Israel, the Temple, and God’s plan from here on out.

Second, notice that Daniel claims again to be the one writing this book, in a very specific time. This is important. Because what follows is *so specific* and *so accurate* when it comes to world history that this chapter (in particular) is held up by unbelieving critics as proof that the book *must* be a forgery. Yet, it’s right there on the page. Daniel knew centuries before what was going to happen.

**Daniel 8:2-4 - <sup>2</sup> I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which *is* in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://history.howstuffworks.com/historical-events/10-terrible-cases-mistaken-identity3.htm>  
[http://www.dps.state.ia.us/DCI/supportoperations/Information/records/fingerprint\\_procedures\\_manual\\_section\\_2.pdf](http://www.dps.state.ia.us/DCI/supportoperations/Information/records/fingerprint_procedures_manual_section_2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> John Walvoord

River Ulai. <sup>3</sup> Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns *were* high; but one *was* higher than the other, and the higher *one* came up last. <sup>4</sup> I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor *was there any* that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.

We will be told outright in verse 20 that this ram is the empire of Medo-Persia. Now, while it was true that the Medo-Persians were growing in power and influence, at the time Daniel was writing, *Babylon* was still top dog. The vision opens with the city of Shushan. Shushan wasn't significant in Daniel's day, but under the Persian empire it would become the *capital*, the home of Nehemiah and the place where most of the book of Esther takes place.

Even more amazing is the fact that the ram was the mascot of the coming empire. The king would wear a golden ram's head when he led his army, and rams were found on city pillars.<sup>3</sup>

The two horns here also perfectly predict how the Medes would be the *first* and more powerful part of the empire, but with the arrival of Cyrus, power would forever tip from the Medes to the Persians.

**Daniel 8:5-7 - <sup>5</sup> And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes. <sup>6</sup> Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. <sup>7</sup> And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.**

Babylon was the current world empire, but Medo-Persia was growing in strength. Anyone in a political office like Daniel would've been able to see that was the way the ball was rolling. Babylon was in decline, as far as empires go. But, the kingdom which would come *after* Medo-Persia was impossible to know. Here Daniel sees a fierce and speedy *western* power coming and obliterating Medo-Persia, with intensity and rage.

We'll be told outright who *this* is too (down in verse 21): It is the kingdom of Greece. Amazingly, this vision was spot on, down to the fact that the goat would be a mascot of the empire. One commentary writes this:

*"The goat was a symbol of Macedonia. According to tradition...the first Macedonian king was directed by an oracle to take a goat for a guide and build a city. This he did, following a herd of goats to Edessa, which he made his capital, changing its name to Egea (the goat city)."*<sup>4</sup>

The notable horn, we'll be told, is the first king of the Grecian empire: Alexander the Great. Alexander, seeking to conquer the world and to bring revenge on the Persian empire for their attacks on Greece, decimated the kingdom of the ram with brutality and impressive speed. That ram, who had been so powerful and so unstoppable was suddenly just like one of the earlier victims, unable to withstand the might of this new kingdom. It's a good reminder that only God's Kingdom will endure

<sup>3</sup> Exploring The Book Of Daniel John Phillips, Jerry Vines

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

forever. And it's a good reminder that men and nations reap what they sow. The Medo-Persian empire had poured out merciless violence against the world, and they reaped that same crop.

**Daniel 8:8 - <sup>8</sup> Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.**

Alexander died suddenly before his 33rd birthday. His wife and son were murdered and, with no clear heir, the empire split into 4 parts, ruled by 4 of his generals. The vision will now focus in on the future of *one* of those quarter-kingdoms: The one that covered Syria, Babylonia and Media.

**Daniel 8:9 - <sup>9</sup> And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land.**

Now, here we run into an area of great divide. The rest of the vision will deal with the character and actions of this little horn. It is uniformly believed that this little horn finds fulfillment in a future king of the *Syrian* branch of the Greek empire who was named Antiochus Epiphanes. The questions that come up, though, are these: Is this the *same* as the little horn in chapter 7? Does the prophecy in this text *only* refer to Antiochus, who lived during the time in-between the Old and New Testaments, or does it *also* speak of a yet future individual? *If* it also points to a future world leader, is it referring to the Antichrist, or some *other* figure?

There's lots of debate among really solid guys. We don't want to become dogmatic on this sort of thing, but there are some pretty evident answers to some of these questions. First of all, is this the *same* little horn as chapter 7? Reading the text in english, we'd prone to think, "Ok, 'little horn.' We're talking about the same guy as before." But, if we look at the context and the language it becomes clear that they are *not* one and the same. For example, their rise to power is different. The horn in chapter 7 uproots 3 others. This horn in chapter 8 simply comes out of 1 of 4. In chapter 7, it's the *4th* world kingdom in view. In chapter 8, it's the *3rd*. Also, linguists will point out that, where we read 'little horn', different words are used in each chapter. In chapter 7 the words mean "a horn, a little one." In chapter 8 they mean, "A horn *less* than little."<sup>5</sup>

The next question, then, is: Is this prophecy *totally* fulfilled by this guy Antiochus Epiphanes? Well, we'll see that he was the *primary* character in view. But, like many Bible prophecies, there is also another, *ultimate* fulfillment still to come. This isn't an unusual arrangement in the Bible. For example: When God was making His prophetic covenant with King David in 2 Samuel chapter 7, God said this concerning David's son: "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men."

But then the writer of the Hebrews says that the first part of that verse finds fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Of course, the second half *does not*, since the Messiah could never commit iniquity. So, we see that, in the *same* prophecy, we have a portion corresponding to a *far* future fulfillment while it also prophesies something in the nearer future, if that makes sense.

Our position is that the little horn of chapter 8 prominently foretells the life and character of Antiochus Epiphanes, who is also a type and *foreshadow* of the ultimate little horn: The Antichrist.

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

**Daniel 8:10-12 - <sup>10</sup> And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some* of the host and *some* of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. <sup>11</sup> He even exalted *himself* as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily *sacrifices* were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. <sup>12</sup> Because of transgression, an army was given over *to the horn* to oppose the daily *sacrifices*; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did *all this* and prospered.**

Who are the host and the stars? Well, it can't be that a man climbed up and pulled down any residents of heaven. The host refers to the people of Israel, the stars either to the priests or prominent leaders among them. This man, Antiochus, would come centuries after Daniel wrote these words, but was prefigured perfectly. He did exalt himself as high as a god, in fact the name he gave himself was "God manifest." Once he came to power, he did go out conquering to the south in Egypt, the east in Babylon, and to Israel. He desecrated the temple, offering swine flesh on the altar and setting up an altar to Zeus in God's house. He outlawed following the law of Moses and circumcision, under penalty of death. Verse 12 is, according to scholars, very difficult to translate, and our version there is pretty confusing. It's better understood by either saying that the *host* of Israel was given over to him, or that the host of heaven was *restrained* from intervening on behalf of God's people. Antiochus was powerful and successful in his attack on Jerusalem. Over 80,000 Jews lost their lives in his rage.

**Daniel 8:13-14 - <sup>13</sup> Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" <sup>14</sup> And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."**

Here we have another great point of contention among readers and scholars. Some of you may know that verse 14 is foundational for the faith of the Seventh Day Adventists.<sup>6</sup> Back in the 1800's, the teaching of a group called the Millerites was that these 2,300 evenings and mornings meant 2,300 years and, at the end, Jesus would return. Well, then 1844 came along, the 2,300 years were up. Jesus didn't come back. This is known as "The Great Disappointment."<sup>7</sup> Out of that disappointment came the SDA church. And now, the teaching is that at the end of the 2,300 years the *investigative judgment* began. Sadly, the Jehovah's Witnesses also arose out of the Millerites after this false interpretation.

Within evangelical circles, it's debated over whether the 2,300 days refer to Antiochus or foreshadow something of the future Antichrist. Within those who hold that they refer to the reign of Antiochus, there's debate over whether it is 2,300 literal days, or if it is 2,300 morning and evening sacrifices, which would count out to 1,150 literal days. There's lots of calculations and theories. In the end, we cannot make a definitive conclusion. However, there's a lot *more* reason to associate this number with what was future to Daniel, but is now past to us: The reign of Antiochus, rather than looking forward to the Great Tribulation. Because Judas Maccabeus *did* cleanse and restore the Temple after the death of Antiochus.

**Daniel 8:15-19 - <sup>15</sup> Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. <sup>16</sup> And I**

<sup>6</sup> <http://perspectives.adventist.org/en/questions-answers/questions/go/2017-07-21/do-adventists-still-believe-in-the-2300-day-prophecy/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Disappointment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Disappointment)

heard a man's voice between *the banks of the Ulai*, who called, and said, "Gabriel, make this *man* understand the vision." <sup>17</sup> So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision *refers* to the time of the end." <sup>18</sup> Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. <sup>19</sup> And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end *shall be*."

This is the first time in all the Bible than an angel is named. And, as is often the case, we see some fun angel/human interactions. It's always kind of like *The Odd Couple*. Gabriel starts talking to Daniel, but Daniel isn't conscious. When Gabriel realizes it, he has to wake him up, get him on his feet, and start over. He says, "Look, I'm trying to help you know what's going on!"

Gabriel starts referring to the time "of the end." From here out, there are definitely things that do not fit if you take the position that this vision is all, *only* about Antiochus. There's something further being talked about here that wasn't fulfilled by him.

**Daniel 8:20-22 - <sup>20</sup>The ram which you saw, having the two horns—*they are* the kings of Media and Persia. <sup>21</sup>And the male goat *is* the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that *is* between its eyes *is* the first king. <sup>22</sup>As for the broken *horn* and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.**

The Bible was perfectly correct: That was the flow of kingdoms. And those that came to power *after* Alexander the Great never had the same power he did. Notice too, that these symbols, though strange, had real, literal fulfillment in history. It wasn't some grand, mystical allegory.

**Daniel 8:23-26 - <sup>23</sup>"And in the latter time of their kingdom, When the transgressors have reached their fullness, A king shall arise, Having fierce features, Who understands sinister schemes. <sup>24</sup>His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; He shall destroy fearfully, And shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the mighty, and *also* the holy people. <sup>25</sup>"Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; And he shall exalt *himself* in his heart. He shall destroy many in *their* prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; But he shall be broken without *human* means. <sup>26</sup>"And the vision of the evenings and mornings Which was told is true; Therefore seal up the vision, For *it refers* to many days *in the future*."**

These descriptions measure out Antiochus Epiphanes *pretty* well, but not perfectly. It's kind of like our man Will West. There's a lot that lines up, but a few things just a little off. For example: It's hard to make a case that Antiochus came "in the latter time" of the Greek Kingdom. He died a hundred years before the empire.<sup>8</sup> Also, the phrase "when the transgressors have reached their fullness" is problematic if you try to say this whole vision has already been fulfilled. No, there's something ultimate and final also in view here. Like Will West, there's *another* guy who looks very similar, but has something even more going on. The "less than little" horn of chapter 8 is a prototype of the "little horn" of chapter 7, the Antichrist who will rule over a revived Roman empire in the Tribulation.

John Walvoord writes:

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<sup>8</sup> John Walvoord

*“It may be concluded that this difficult passage apparently goes beyond that which is historically fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes to foreshadow a future personage often identified as the world ruler of the end time. In many respects this ruler carries on a persecution of Israel and desecration of the temple similar to what was accomplished historically by Antiochus. This interpretation of the vision may be regarded as an illustration of double fulfillment of prophecy or, using Antiochus as a type, the interpretation may go on to reveal additional facts which go beyond the type in describing the ultimate king who will oppose Israel in the last days.”<sup>9</sup>*

**Daniel 8:27 - <sup>27</sup> And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king’s business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.**

I find it interesting: Gabriel said, “Hey I’m here to make you understand.” And he did his job, but Daniel still couldn’t full grasp everything that was being said. There was more that the Lord would share, even about this Antiochus era. That’s coming later in the book. And of course, there was a lot more God would reveal to other prophets, especially John in the New Testament. But, to me it’s an encouragement that we can continue to discover insights from God’s word, but we should realistically accept the fact that there will be gaps in our understanding. In the mean time, Daniel went about the king’s business. He lived out his life, faithfully and diligently. Paul had to address this with the Thessalonian church, right? Some people, thinking about the rapture, decided, “Well, we’ll quit our jobs and just hang around.” Paul said, “You better start working and being a productive member of the church and society.” With Daniel as our example, we’d say we need to be about the king’s business while being about the King’s business. Be faithful in your life.

As we wrap this up, what’s something we can think about to apply to ourselves? I was thinking about the emphases on *horns* in this vision. The ram’s horns, the goat’s horns. Horns are different than antlers. Antlers are solid and shed off regularly. Horns have a core but then are hollow with the shell around it. They grow throughout the life of the animal. When humans use horns, they use them to make noise or to fill up with oil and things like that. The horns in these visions represent terrible, wicked men. Guys who did (or will) fill themselves with bloodshed, with drunkenness, with cruelty, with blasphemy, with transgression. These historically ‘great’ men, Alexander, Xerxes, the Antichrist...they may accomplish big things, but would you want your children to be any of them? No. Their lives were full of evil and waste and hatred. In the mean time, as the horn of *your* life is growing day by day, you’re called to be *filled* with the Holy Spirit. Your mouth to be *filled* with praise. To be *filled* with the glory of the Lord. You are called to be *filled* with the *fullness* of God. Growing larger and deeper and fuller in the fruits of His righteousness, by Jesus Christ, as you go about your day-to-day life, being faithful and fruitful, not seeking the world’s greatness like some Alexander or Antiochus, but seeking the joy of the Lord and the knowledge of the Lord so that you can be a part of filling the earth with *His* glory.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://walvoord.com/article/249>