

Details For Trust

WE ARE quick to believe that Socrates existed, that Pythagoras was a mathematician, Plato was a scholar, and Julius Caesar was the first ruler of the Roman Empire. It is amazing we are willing to believe that the seven wonders of the world existed even when there is so little historical and archaeological evidence for some of them. Few question the existence of the obscure Egyptian priest Manetho, or the founders of two major religions: Muhammad or Buddha. Yet, many doubt the truth about the Bible and Jesus even though there is more proof that Jesus was born, lived on this earth, and died. The same is true for the prophecies in the Bible. Public television ignores the fascinating prophecies found in the Bible. Recent research says men and women believe there is a God and are looking. Yet, many do not even know the Bible contains very accurate, fulfilled prophecies - especially in the book of Daniel - rather than vague predictions. Since the Bible is accurate when it makes future predictions, should we not trust it when it speaks about God? As we come to Daniel 8 we find the fulfillment of another prophecy - the defeat of the Medo-Persian empire by the Greek Empire.

BACKGROUND. When we started our study in Daniel, we discovered that God had provided us with an overview of the prophecies found in this book. The first kingdom was Babylon followed by Medo-Persia, Greece and then the Roman Empire.

In Daniel 5 we saw the fulfillment of the first prediction that the Babylonian Empire would be defeated by the Medo-Persian Empire. When we came to Daniel 7, we were provided with many details to that overview. It is interesting that Daniel 2 was the start of the Aramaic section of the book and Daniel 7 was the end. As we come to chapter 8 we find that Daniel started writing in Hebrew. Did Daniel

write in Hebrew in order to keep chapters 8-12 a secret from the Babylonians, Medes and Persians? We will answer this question at the end of this study.

NEXT VISION. Daniel 8 begins by telling us that the prophet Daniel had a vision in the third year of Belshazzar

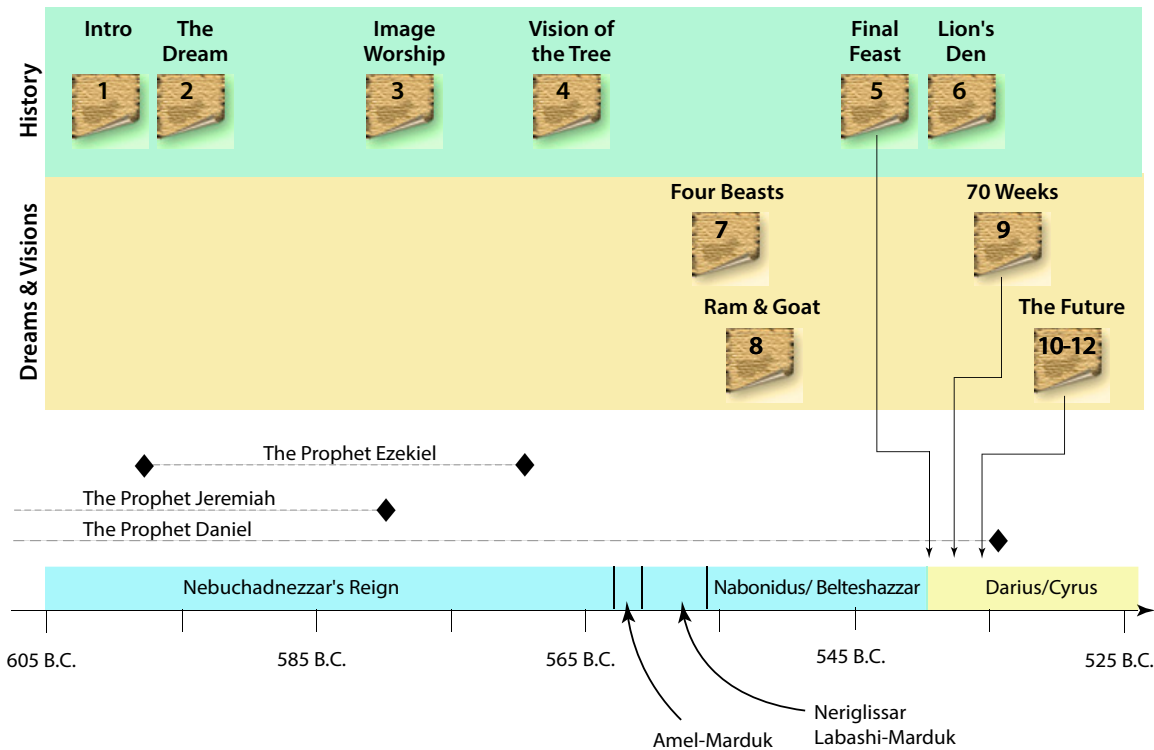
- the last king of the Babylonian Empire (550-549 B.C.).



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. Daniel 8:1 (NASB)

This time it is about the fall of the Medo-Persian empire to the empire of Greece.

Outline of Daniel



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And I looked in the vision, and it came about while I was looking, that 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. Daniel 8:2 (NASB)

In the vision Daniel finds himself in the capital city of Susa which was in the region known as Elam. Susa was a major metropolis and center of trade. It is in this city that archaeologists have found the Code of Hammurabi, the Persian Palace where Queen Esther lived, and a fortress which looks like a castle. The city was located next to the Ulai canal which connected two major rivers. Daniel was in a major city much like the cities of Los Angeles, London, Paris, Sydney, or Buenos Aires. He was at the cross roads of civilization for his time.

MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE. In the vision Daniel saw two animals. The first one was a ram - a male sheep.

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. 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. Daniel 8:3-4 (NASB)

Later in this chapter, Daniel asks for an explanation and the angel Gabriel (Daniel 8:15-19). The angel Gabriel starts by explaining that the ram symbolizes the empire of Medo-Persia.

The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. Daniel 8:20 (NASB)

The Ram had two horns since the leadership of this empire included both Medes and Persians. Darius was the Mede



(Daniel 5:31; 9:1) and Cyrus was the Persian (Daniel 6:28; 10:1). History says this empire was a Persian Empire and this is consistent with the Bible. It says that Cyrus assumed control after Darius.

The Ram expanded its empire as it moved west, then north, and finally south. It was powerful and did as it pleased. That is consistent with ancient history. It is also interesting that a fourth century historian recorded that the Persian kings would wear the head of a ram as he rode in front of his troops (Ammianus Marcellinus 19.1). This shows the ram refers to Medo-Persia.

EMPIRE OF GREECE. The visions continue and Daniel next sees a male goat rushing from the west.

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. And 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. And 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. Daniel 8:5-7 (NASB)

The goat has a horn between his eyes. Once again the angel Gabriel explains.

And the shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Daniel 8:21 (NASB)

The goat symbolizes the first king of the empire of Greece. History tells us the king is Alexander the Great, the military general. Some have claimed that Daniel is recorded history. If so, why not give us the name of Alexander the Great? But if it is prophecy, this is all we need to know.

The vision goes on to say that the goat “rushed at the ram.” This seems to imply that Alexander’s attack was unprovoked. This was a surprise attack which happened quickly. History tells us that he conquered a large amount of territory very quickly. That is the meaning of the phrase, “. . . coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground . . .” He started his conquest in about 334 B.C. and within eight years he had expanded his empire into India. When he crossed the Hindu Kush Moun-



tains and dropped down into the Ganges Valley, his army mutinied. Confronted with a rebellious army, Alexander the Great finally yielded and agreed to go back home. He went south and then returned to the region of Babylon where he died at the age of thirty-two as the result of a fever.

FOUR GENERALS. The vision goes on to accurately predict what history says happened. The vision says that after the horn (Alexander the Great) was broken, four horns took

over the empire.

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.
 Daniel 8:8 (NASB)

We have already learned that a horn symbolizes a king. This



means these four horns are four kings and that is the explanation given by the angel Gabriel later in the chapter.

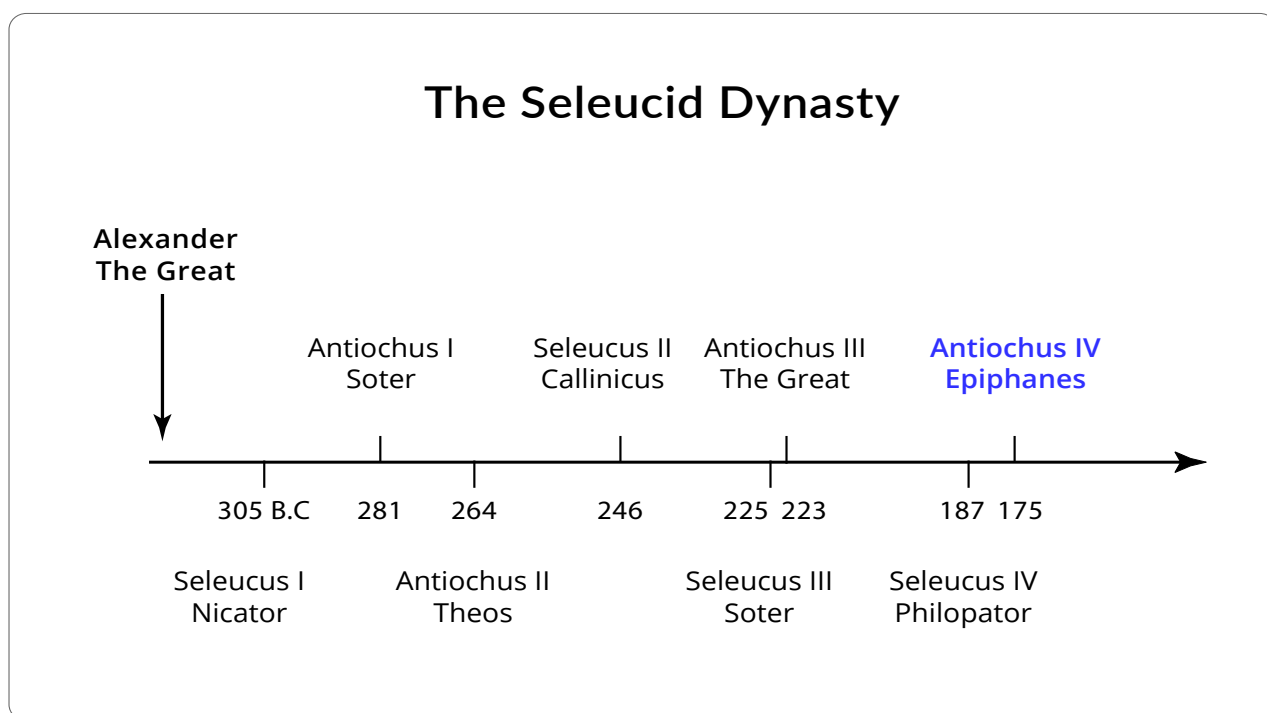
And the broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power. Daniel 8:22 (NASB)

Ancient historians tell us that Alexander the Great's four generals divided his empire and assumed control of different parts. His four generals were Lysimachus, Cassander, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. Lysimachus received Thrace and

is simple. God is sending a message to those who will listen. The message is, "I have spoken." Once again God gives us an explanation through Gabriel.

And in the latter period of their rule, when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise Insolent and skilled in intrigue. Daniel 8:23 (NASB)

This little horn comes to power near the end of the empire. He is Antiochus Epiphanes. He is related to Seleucus I Nicator.



most of Asia Minor. Cassander obtained Macedonia and Greece. Ptolemy was given Egypt, Palestine, Cilicia, Petra, and Cyprus while Seleucus controlled the rest of Asia: Syria, Babylon, Persia, and India.

VERY LITTLE HORN. The vision continues and predicts that from one of these kings a very small horn will arise.

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. Daniel 8:9 (NASB)

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES. Both history and the vision tell us that Antiochus Epiphanes was a cruel general.

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. Daniel 8:10 (NASB)

What does this mean, "... it grew up to the host of heaven and caused ... some of the stars to fall ..."? One more time the explanation is given in Daniel 8:24.

We need to ask why does the vision keep going? The answer

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. Daniel 8:24 (NASB)

The “host of heaven” is the “holy people” or the Jewish people. This horn persecuted the Jewish people. This agrees once more with history which tells us that Antiochus Epiphanes came against the Jewish people in 06 September 171 B.C. and desecrated the temple, stopped the sacrifices, changed the Mosaic Law, sacrificed a pig on the altar, and placed an idol of Zeus in the temple.

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. 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. Daniel 8:11-12 (NASB)

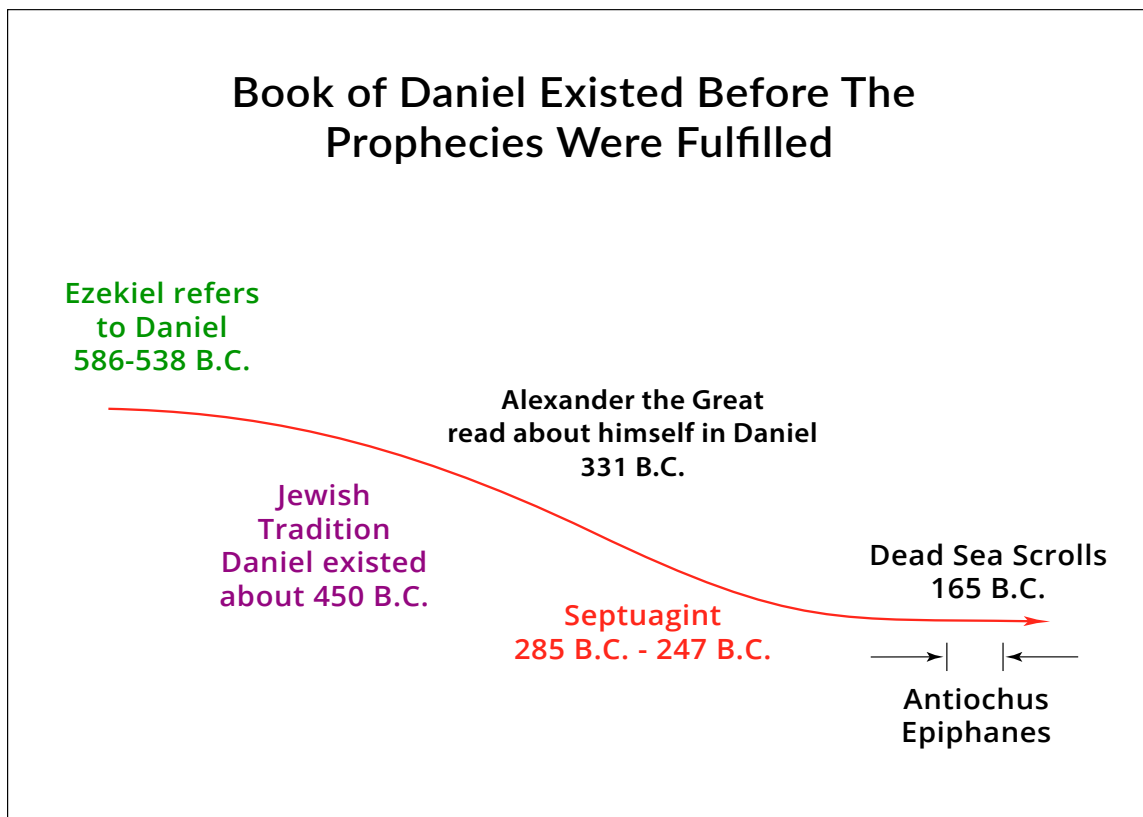
Both 1 and 2 Maccabees describe the evil deeds that Antiochus Epiphanes brought on Israel which lasted for

1,150 days (2,300 sacrifices - two each day, one in the morning and one in the evening) or three years and about three months until 25 December 165 B.C. when the temple was restored.

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?” And he said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.” Daniel 8:13-14 (NASB)

After the Jews revolted and freed themselves, Antiochus Epiphanes died a miserable death.

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.



Daniel 8:25 (NASB)

The Jewish historian Josephus states that Antiochus died of worms along with a revolting smell (Josephus. Antiquities of the Jews. book 12, chapter 11, section 1-2). He did not die from battle but from a disease. He died “without human agency.”

KEEP IT SECRET. The vision is over, but God did not want Daniel to tell anyone.

And 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. 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. Daniel 8:26-27 (NASB)

Is it possible this is the reason Daniel wrote these latter chapters in Hebrew? We are not sure. If Daniel had written them in Aramiac, the Babylonians, Medes, and Persians might of had access to them. Did God want the vision to be a secret because it might have caused Daniel trouble while he was still in the employment of the Medo-Persian empire?

CONCLUSION. Why all of this detailed prophecy? The answer is that we may know for sure that God has spoken!

“How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?”
When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously . . . Deutoronomy18:21-22 (NASB)

Real prophets never make mistakes. God wants us to know that we can trust Him. General statements are not convincing, but detailed prophecies are.

A number of years ago there appeared in the New Yorker magazine an account of a long Island resident who ordered an extremely sensitive barometer from a respected company, Abercrombe and Fitch. When the instrument arrived at his

home he was disappointed to discover that the indicating needle appeared to be stuck pointing to the sector marked “Hurricane.” After shaking the barometer vigorously several times-never a good idea with a sensitive mechanism-and never getting the point to move, the new owner wrote a scathing letter to the store, and, on the following morning, on the way to his office in New York City, mailed it. That evening he returned to Long Island to find not only the barometer missing but his house as well! The needle of the instrument had been pointed correctly. The month was September, the year was 1938, the day of the terrible hurricane that almost leveled Long Island.¹

Prophecies point to God. He wants us trust Him and His Word, the Bible.

1. Swindoll, Charles. The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart. W. Publishing Group. 1998, p. 593