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~ Part 1A (Ram and Male Goat) ~

3 I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal. It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.

4 I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

5 As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

6 He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath.

7 I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him. And there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power.

8 Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

The vision of these two beasts - the male goat and the ram - and who they were could have puzzled Daniel, but he did not have to guess at their identities. For the angel Gabriel makes his appearance later and explains,

As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. (8:20-21)

How extraordinary! - to be told ahead of time the identity of the next two empires to arise in the Mideast world. Indeed, about ten years later, Medo-Persia rose to power and conquered the ruling empire of Babylon in

539 B.C. And some 200 years later, the Greek empire under Alexander the Great conquered Medo-Persia.

It [the ram] had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. (8:3)



The “ram” with its “two horns”

symbolized a dual empire. The Medes came to prominence first on the stage of history but were joined later by the Persians (through marriage and military conquest), and they became the dominant rulers. Thus it was that the “*higher one came up last.*” In fact, it was at this time in history that the Persian king Cyrus conquered the Medes to bring about the unified empire of Medo-Persia.

The ram charging westward and northward and southward (8:4)

This dual Medo-Persian empire grew powerful, conquering most of the ancient Mideast world. “*Westward*” to conquer Babylon, Syria, Asia Minor; “*northward*” to conquer Armenian and Scythian nations; and “*southward*” to conquer Egypt, Palestine, Libya, Ethiopia.



No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power (8:4)

The former “beasts” who had ruled over Israel - Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon - were overrun by the Medo-Persians. In a previous vision their empire was portrayed “like a bear” with “three ribs in its mouth (symbolizing, presumably, the same three empires)”. (7:5)

He did as he pleased (8:4)

The founding emperor of Medo-Persia, Cyrus, enjoyed much favor from God and was mentioned by name in prophecies (Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1), received about 150 years before he entered the stage of history. It was Cyrus’ policy to promote loyalty among subjugated nations, and after conquering Babylon, he released the Jewish people in exile and even sponsored the re-building of their temple (mentioned at the end of the Book of 2Chronicles and in the Book of Ezra).

Later Medo-Persian emperors, however, were not so enlightened, for as

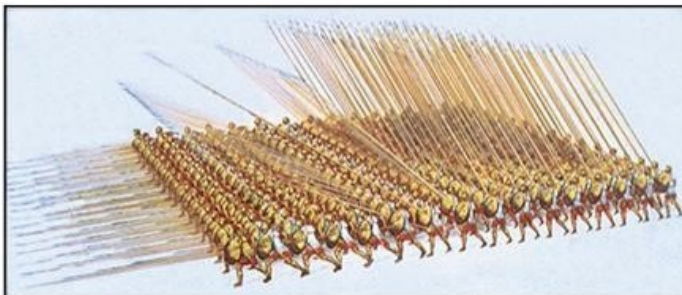
the phrase above puts it, *“he [the ram-beast] did as he pleased”*. This phrase appears a few times also in chapter 11, and it seems to be a sign that the empire or the emperor is going off track, relying too much on past victories, and is headed for collapse. And indeed, the Medo-Persian empire eventually fell before the rising power of Greece. Even king Cyrus got in trouble in his later years when he may have become a little too sure of himself, and on an ill-fated expedition to the north, was killed by one of the Scythian tribes who dwelt there.

And became great (8:4)

Compared to the previous Mideast empires of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, Medo-Persia was much bigger than them all.

A male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. (8:5)

The Greek empire (symbolized as *“a male goat... from the west”*)



**Greek military formation known as the Phalanx
was instrumental in victory**

was led by Alexander the Great - the *“conspicuous horn”*. His brilliant leadership and strategy brought stunning victory, even against the much greater numbers in the Medo-Persian armies. The Greek armies, which came from the *“west”*, were invincible in battle and in a few short years (334-331 BC) conquered Medo-Persia and by 323 BC had conquered all the lands of the former empire, and even beyond into India. And so we learn in verse 8: *“the goat became exceedingly great.”*

The Greek armies moved *“across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground.”* This reminds us of the beast *“like a leopard”* from

the previous revelation, the one that had the *“four wings”*. (7:6) Both the wings of the leopard and the airborne status of this goat, vividly illustrate the great speed of the Greek conquest.

Incidentally, the comparison of Medo-Persia and Greece to a ram and a he-goat accurately portrays the nature of these two empires: the ponderous but firm nature of the ram versus the nimble lightness of the goat - similar to their portrayal in chapter 7, as a bear (Medo-Persia) and leopard (Greece). (7:5-6)



Ch. 8 - Medo-Persia - Ch. 7



Ch. 8 - Greece - Ch. 7

He [the male goat] ran at him [the ram] in his powerful wrath... he was

enraged against him (8:6-7)

For two centuries the Greek kingdom had to put up with the meddlesome attacks of the Medo-Persian empire, so when the time of retribution arrived, it was no surprise that the Greek forces were “*enraged*”.

The resounding defeat of the once great Medo-Persian empire is described thus,

“[The male goat] struck the ram and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him.” (8:7)



Then the goat became exceedingly great (8:8)

For a few years the extent of the consolidated Greek empire matched, even exceeded, that of the Medo-Persian empire.



But when he was strong, the great horn was broken (8:8)

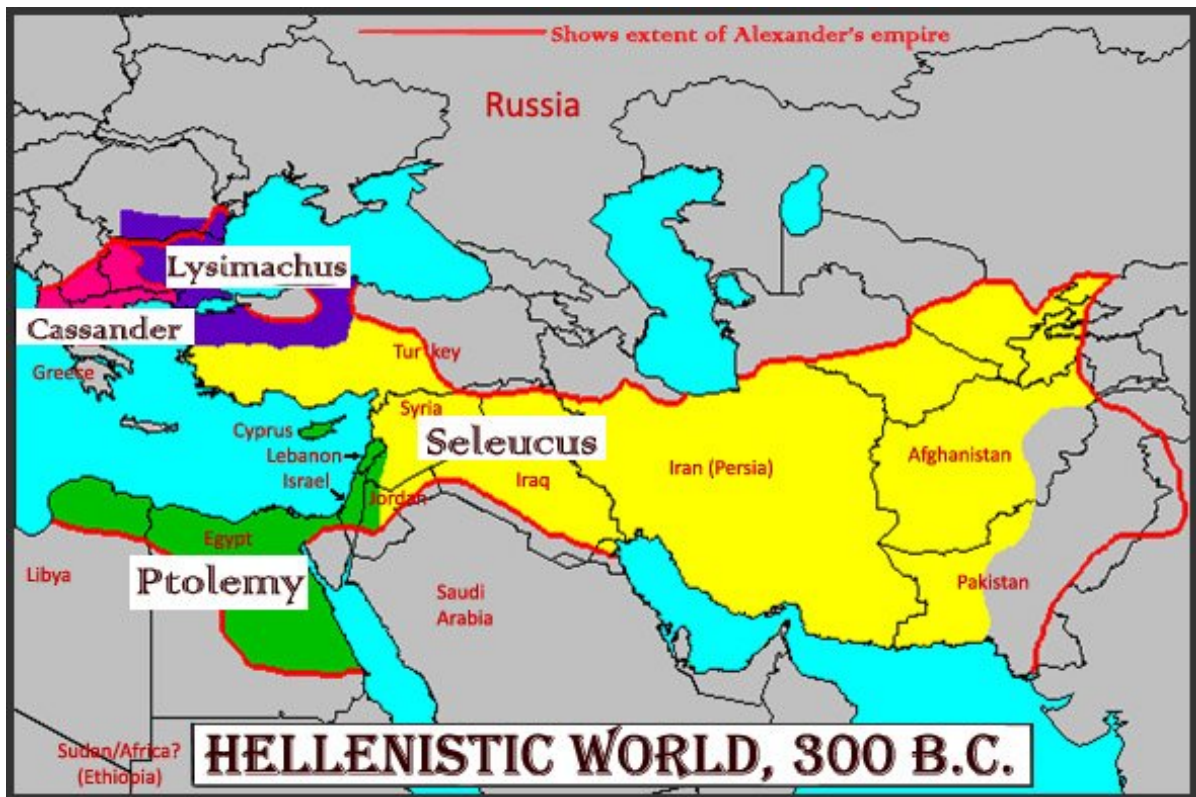
In some way or another, every detail in Bible prophecy has meaning. For here we have another peculiar detail and accurate prediction: Alexander's untimely death from a fever at the early age of 33, at the height of his power and conquest, "when he was strong".

And instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. (8:8)

Then “*four conspicuous horns*” arose from Alexander’s fragmented empire - again an accurate portrayal of what happened. And further ahead, Gabriel adds the small detail: “*but not with his power.*” (8:22) That is, the “*four conspicuous horns*” would no longer rule under the administration of Alexander but would establish their own powerful dynasties/empires.

By 301 B.C. the Greek empire was carved up into four territories under four Greek generals, and even to “*the four winds*”, or the four compass directions (more or less). (See map below.) Again, this corresponds to the “*leopard beast*” with its “*four heads*” feature that Daniel saw in vision two years earlier. (7:6) And it corresponds to what Gabriel told Daniel about 14 years later:

And as soon as he [Alexander] has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these. (11:4)



South: Egypt, Israel under Ptolemy
West: Greece, Macedonia under Cassander
North: Asia Minor (NW Turkey), Thrace under Lysimachus
East: Syria, Babylon, Persia under Seleucus

Continue to: [Part 1b \(The Little Horn\)](#)