

• *The difficult days of the Greek empire*

The persecution in the third kingdom will be short and sharp

• *Persecution in the days of Antiochus*

• *6 years?*

• *3 years?*

• *For a period even shorter than expected*

Daniel is being given a vision which will help God's people as they live through the difficult days of the Greek empire.

The persecution in the third kingdom will be short and sharp. He hears one angel speaking to another. ¹³*How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled, the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host of God's people that will be trampled underfoot?* The other angel replies, ¹⁴*It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.*^a

The time of persecution in the days of Antiochus (who is referred to here although of course there is no name) would last 2,300 evenings and mornings. What does this mean? Some think it is quite literal and that the persecution of Antiochus lasted six years and 110 days. Or (if the year is counted as 360 days) six years and 140 days.

Others – and I agree with them – think that 2,300 evenings and mornings means 1,150 days. The words have in mind (as always in these prophetic visions) the temple with its two daily sacrifices, morning and evening. This would be 3 years 55 days or (counted with a 360-day year) 3 years 70 days. The height of Antiochus's persecution seems to have lasted from 167 BC till his sudden death at the end of 164 BC. The figure does not seem to have any obvious symbolism in it and this might suggest that it is a literal figure and that the persecution did last for 1,150 days – maybe to the nearest fifty. Since it is three years and part of a year, it is also close to the traditional 'short and sharp' persecution, the 'time, times and half-a-time' that was mentioned in Daniel 7:25. Yet one cannot precisely prove that Antiochus's persecution lasted exactly 1,150 days.

Personally I think that it is deliberately a figure chosen at random to be shorter than the traditional three-and-a-half years. It would then mean 'for a period even shorter than expected'. The figure is difficult but the main point is clear. The persecution would be severe but short.

Daniel is given special help

• *The chastening will not go on for ever*

• *The kingdom of God will come*

• *Help to understand the vision*

Daniel is given special help. Daniel is eagerly watching the vision, trying to understand it. Gabriel the angel appears¹ and is told by another angel to help Daniel to understand². Daniel's contact with a supernatural being overwhelms him³ but he is encouraged to continue listening. The vision concerns the far distant future⁴. Daniel is physically overwhelmed but is given angelic help⁵. The angel explains that this period when Israel is dominated by gentile powers is a 'time of wrath' – a time when Israel is being chastened for its long-continued idolatry and sin. Yet, says the angel, 'The end will be at the appointed time.' The chastening will not go on forever. The kingdom of God will come.

Then help in understanding the vision is given. The two-horned ram represents the kings of Media and Persia¹. The goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king – whom we know as Alexander the Great². The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent the four Greek kingdoms that followed after the days of Alexander. They never had the power that Alexander the Great had³.

1 8:15
2 8:16
3 8:17
4 8:18
5 8:18

1 8:20

2 8:21
3 8:22

The angel gives some explanation of the Greek 'little horn'

• Antiochus

• Daniel must preserve his visions for people in the distant future – including us

• Exhaustion

• God moves slowly to achieve his will in the history of the world but the kingdom of God is coming

The angel gives some explanation of the Greek 'little horn'. There would come (he says) a rebellion against God and against godliness. The rebellion would have a leader, 'a stern-faced king, and a crafty man'¹. He will become supernaturally strong in his influence. He will cause remarkable devastation and destruction in the land and yet will be highly successful. Strong and holy people who oppose him will be destroyed². He encourages deceit and he will be full of pride³. Many believers would temporarily fall badly at this time. When they felt secure, the 'little horn' would destroy them by leading them into sin and compromise. He would act as though he were God, taking his stand against 'the Prince of princes', God himself. Then, supernaturally, he would be destroyed. At the end of 164 BC Antiochus suddenly died.

The angel says: ²⁶*The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.* Daniel must preserve his visions, for when the things he is predicting begin to happen, people will need the prophecies of Daniel. The vision must be carefully preserved for people in the distant future (now including us!) would need the vision¹. After this amazing revelation Daniel is exhausted and ill. He is prostrate for several days. But he still has work to do in the Babylonian civil service. He says, ²⁷*Then I got up and went about the king's business.* Yet as he gets on with his work he is still thinking of the vision he has received. He says: *I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.*

God moves slowly to achieve his will in the history of the world. The sins of his people get judged and disciplined by the pagan empires of the world. Days of immense adversity from 'little horns' may come. Yet eventually periods of chastening end, and God's kingdom carries on. Oppressors and deceivers are eventually put down. God does not let his church get destroyed. Life has to go on despite what we may learn. The important aspect of the whole matter is: the kingdom of God is coming. No 'little horns' can stop it.

Note

a. The Hebrew seems to say, 'And he said to me'. But there are dozens of places in the Old Testament where the me/him endings are confused (y/w in Hebrew) and the sense is likely to be, 'And he said to him'.

1 8:23

2 8:24

3 8:25

1 8:26



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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