

THE IDENTITY OF THE LITTLE HORN IN DANIEL 8: ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES, ROME, OR THE ANTICHRIST?

Mark A. Hassler
Associate Professor of Old Testament
Virginia Beach Theological Seminary

Bible interpreters debate the identity of the little horn in Daniel 8. They even disagree on which verses in Daniel 8 pertain to the little horn. This article determines the pertinent verses by means of a structural and lexical analysis. It then compares the little horn to three primary candidates: Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Rome, and the antichrist. In light of the comparative analysis, the author evaluates the candidates in order to arrive at a conclusion concerning the little horn's identity.

* * * * *

Introduction

Daniel 8 presents the vision concerning the ram, goat, and little horn.¹ The ram symbolizes Medo-Persia, and the goat, Greece (vv. 20–21). Bible readers dispute the identity of the little horn. Preterists regard the little horn as the Seleucid tyrant Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 BC). Historicists, represented primarily by Seventh-day Adventist writers, advocate Rome. Futurists mainly opt for Antiochus IV, the antichrist, or a combination thereof. The hybrid views incorporate typology, prefiguration, or double fulfillment. Which verses of Daniel 8 describe the little horn, and to what or whom does the little horn refer?

Which Verses of Daniel 8 Depict the Little Horn?

En route to identifying the little horn, the interpreter must determine which verses pertain to him. Verses 9–14 relay the horn's actions and attitudes, while the interpretation portion of the chapter discusses a king (vv. 23–26). Structural and lexical factors indicate that both textual units depict the same sovereign, and thus, verses 23–26 interpret 9–14.

¹ Special thanks to Eugene Merrill for commenting upon the rough draft of this piece.

The literary structure of chapter 8 establishes the expectation that the king of verses 23–26 alludes to the little horn of verses 9–14. The chapter exhibits an orderly presentation of the symbols and their interpretation. The first part of the chapter describes the vision, and the last part gives the interpretation.

The interpretation of the symbols appear in order. The first symbol, the ram of verse 3, provides the first element to be interpreted (v. 20). The second major symbol, the goat of verses 5–8, follows as the second element to be interpreted (vv. 21–22). When the reader comes to the third major symbol, the proud little horn of verse 9, the expectation has been set as to where the interpretation might appear. One would expect it to appear immediately after the interpretation of the second symbol, and indeed it does. The table displays the orderly progression of the symbols and their interpretation.

Symbol	Interpretation
Ram (v. 3)	Medo-Persia (v. 20)
Two horns (v. 3)	Two kings (v. 20)
Goat (v. 5)	Greece (v. 21)
Large horn (v. 5)	First king (v. 21)
Four horns (v. 8)	Four kingdoms (v. 22)
Proud horn (v. 9)	Proud king (v. 23)

The vision and its interpretation unfold according to the identical pattern: ram → goat → horn. The systematic presentation of symbol and interpretation supports the notion that the proud king of verses 23–26 alludes to the proud king of verses 9–14.

When we examine the segments pertaining to the proud king, verses 9–14 and 23–26, we likewise find a corresponding pattern of presentation. Both the vision account and the interpretation account begin with a remark that relates the horn (king) to the preceding context (vv. 9, 23). And both accounts conclude with a statement about the 2,300 evenings and mornings (vv. 14, 26).

Lexically, the two textual units exhibit similarities and differences. On one hand, both units describe a king who “magnifies himself” (גדל) “against the Prince (שׂר)” and “performs” and “prosper” (עשה and צלח) and relates to “transgression” (פשע). On the other hand, the vision account uses cultic language, while the interpretation employs wisdom language, such as “skilled in intrigue” and “shrewdness” (vv. 23, 25).

In light of the structure and lexemes, the present writer concludes with Pröbstle that the two textual units “correspond to and supplement each other so that the vision of the horn benefits greatly from consideration of the corresponding angelic interpretation.”² By observing the literary organization of Daniel 8 and the verbal parallels of the two textual units, it becomes evident that the king of verses 23–26 constitutes the same individual as the horn of verses 9–14.

² Martin Pröbstle, “Truth and Terror: A Text-Oriented Analysis of Daniel 8:9–14” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2006), 602.

Does the Little Horn Represent Antiochus IV Epiphanes?

Antiochus IV Epiphanes satisfies some expositors as the individual behind the image. Eleven points of comparison facilitate an evaluation of this designation.

First, the little horn persecutes the saints: "He will destroy mighty men and the holy people" (Dan 8:24). For about seven years Antiochus persecuted the Jews, beginning with the murder of the High Priest Onias III in 170 BC, and ending near his death in 163 BC. Antiochus slaughtered eighty-thousand people in Jerusalem within a three-day period (2 Macc 5:14). He terrorized the city and citizens of Jerusalem (1 Macc 1:29–32; Josephus *Ant.* 12.2.3–4). He fulfills the prediction according to Davis.³ Indeed, the persecution imposed by Antiochus serves as a primary reason why many scholars designate him as the fulfillment of the little horn.

Second, the little horn proudly "magnified *itself* to be equal with the Commander of the host" (Dan 8:11). Moreover, "He will even oppose the Prince of princes" (v. 25). By comparison, coins from the reign of Antiochus IV read, "King Antiochus, God manifest." This point of correspondence, for Butt, "adds additional weight to the idea that Antiochus Epiphanes IV is the little horn of Daniel's vision."⁴ On the other hand, this commonality is by no means conclusive, given that many rulers exude pride.

Third, the little horn begins small (v. 9). Antiochus, upon the assassination of Seleucus IV Philopator, usurped the throne from his nephew Demetrius I Soter (Appian *Syr.* 45). Antiochus' unusual ascension to authority mirrors the little horn's peculiar start, according to Miller: "Antiochus would have an insignificant beginning. Although his nephew, son of his older brother Seleucus IV, was the rightful heir to the throne, Antiochus gained this position through bribery and flattery."⁵ Again, this explanation has some merit and deserves consideration.

Fourth, the little horn "will be broken without human agency" (Dan 8:25). Natural causes killed Antiochus.⁶ Moore equates the two characters based upon their means of death.⁷ For other expositors, however, the little horn's demise seems supernatural, while Antiochus' death appears merely providential.⁸

Fifth, the little horn originates "Out of one of them" (v. 9). This raises a significant interpretive issue: What is the grammatical antecedent of "them"? Does the little horn originate from one of the "four conspicuous horns" (i.e., one of the four Greek successors of Alexander the Great) or from one of the "four winds of the sky" (i.e., one of the four directions of the compass)? Young assumes the former option: "this

³ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Message of Daniel: His kingdom cannot fail*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 111.

⁴ Kyle Butt, "The Prophecy of Daniel 8," *Bible and Spade* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 62.

⁵ Steven R. Miller, *Daniel*, New American Commentary 18 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 225.

⁶ 1 Macc 6:1–16; 2 Macc 9:1–28; Josephus *Ant.* 12.9.1; Polybius *Hist.* 31.11; Appian, *Syr.* 66; Diodorus *Hist.* 31.18.

⁷ G. F. Moore, "Daniel viii. 9–14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 15, no. 1/2 (1896): 194.

⁸ John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 117.

horn grows out of one of the four horns.”⁹ Antiochus certainly meets the criterion of being a Greek lord who lives after the Diadochi chronologically. On the other hand, the current writer espouses the latter option based on three lines of argumentation.¹⁰ (a) “Winds” is the closest grammatical antecedent to “them.” (b) The little horn “comes forth” (צא) from its place, whereas the other horns of verses 3 and 8 “come up” (עלה). The contrast in verb choice suggests a geographical origin, as reinforced by the geographical references in verse 9 (south, east, beautiful land). (c) The literary structure of the vision informs the interpretation. The descriptions of the three main players (the ram, goat, and little horn) unfold according to a set pattern: geographic origin → conquests → demise.¹¹ Given that the ram originates “before/east” (לפני) of the canal (v. 3), and the goat originates from the west (v. 5), the reader would expect the segment about the little horn to follow suit by beginning with a statement of geographic origin. Such an interpretation would obviously leave the little horn unattached to a creature, which sometimes happens in Scriptural symbolism (e.g., Zech 1:18–19). The little horn does not need to be Grecian.

Sixth, the little horn defeats his enemies in the south, east, and beautiful land (Dan 8:9). To the south Antiochus launched an Egyptian campaign (170–168 BC). Initially he prevailed in Lower Egypt, but he evacuated the country when the Roman forces of Gaius Popillius Laenas thwarted his attack upon Alexandria.¹² His incomplete triumphs hardly seem “exceedingly great” (v. 9). Antiochus’ two-year eastern campaign largely succeeded in Armenia, Babylonia, Media, and Persia. But he died during the campaign and retreated shamefully from the botched invasions of Elymais and Persepolis.¹³ His eastern expansion pales in comparison to that of his predecessor, Antiochus III the Great, who reached India (1 Macc 8:6–8). The beautiful land of Palestine already belonged to Antiochus IV when he assumed the throne. Antiochus III had already secured it from the Ptolemies (Josephus *Ant.* 12.3.3–4). Antiochus IV persecuted the Jews, causing the Jews to revolt and overthrew their Syrian oppressors (1 Macc 1:20–62; 2 Macc 5–6; Josephus *Ant.* 12.5.3–4). Antiochus did not conquer the beautiful land; he lost control of it. Shea’s chapter, “Why Antiochus IV Is Not the Little Horn of Daniel 8,” traces the military history and rightly concludes, “the net results of what Antiochus accomplished in these three geographical spheres was rather negligible and even negative in some cases.”¹⁴

Seventh, the little horn accumulates more territory than the ram. The ram, goat, and little horn each “magnify/enlarge” (גדל) their territory—the latter two more so than the former. The ram magnifies himself westward, northward, and southward (Dan 8:4). The goat magnifies himself “exceedingly” (מאד) toward the east (vv. 5,

⁹ Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 170.

¹⁰ Gerhard Pfandl, *Daniel: The Seer of Babylon* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 78.

¹¹ Holger Gzella, *Cosmic Battle and Political Conflict: Studies in Verbal Syntax and Contextual Interpretation of Daniel 8*, *Biblica et Orientalia* 47 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2003), 122.

¹² 1 Macc 1:16–19; Josephus *Ant.* 12.5.2; Livy *Hist.* 45.12; Polybius *Hist.* 29.27.

¹³ 1 Macc 3:31, 37; 6:1–4, 56; 2 Macc 9:1–2; Josephus *Ant.* 12.9.1; Appian *Syr.* 45; Polybius *Hist.* 31.11.

¹⁴ William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, rev. ed., ed. Frank B. Holbrook, *Daniel and Revelation Committee Series* 1 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1992), 46.

8). The little horn magnifies himself “excessively” (תָּרַף) toward the south, east, and beautiful land (v. 9). Antiochus cannot be the little horn because he amassed less country than the ram. As Shea reasons, “Antiochus IV should have exceeded the Persian and Greek Empires in greatness. Obviously, this was not the case, since he ruled only one portion of the Grecian Empire with but little success.”¹⁵

Eighth, the little horn emerges “In the latter period of their rule” (v. 23). Antiochus IV did not live during the latter period of the Seleucid Kingdom, but near the middle.¹⁶ The Seleucid Dynasty endured from 311 to 65 BC, while Antiochus IV reigned from 175 to 164 BC. Antiochus served as the eighth of more than twenty rulers in the Seleucid Empire. If Daniel had envisioned Antiochus, he should have placed him in “the middle period of their rule.” To alleviate the tension Steinmann interprets “the latter period” as “the second half.”¹⁷

Ninth, the little horn reigns during “the time of the end” (v. 17). The end, for Collins, came at the end of the temple desecration by Antiochus.¹⁸ Young thinks it marked “the end of the OT period and the ushering in of the new.”¹⁹ In the OT, the other four uses of “the time of the end” all appear in one vision within close proximity (11:35, 40; 12:4, 9). These four uses, bound together chronologically by “at that time” (12:1), point to a distant era when a resurrection takes place (v. 2).²⁰ LaRondelle stays on target: “Daniel’s ‘time of the end’ does not take its point of reference from the first advent of Christ but from Christ’s second advent, because at that time the establishment of God’s kingdom and the resurrection of the dead takes place.”²¹ In addition, the “time of the end” cannot refer to the end of Antiochus because the Greek Empire endured for more than a century after his death.

Tenth, the little horn relates to the 2,300 evenings and mornings (8:11–14). Evening and morning together most naturally refer to one normal day, yielding 2,300 days. Antiochus’ interruption of the Jewish sacrifices did not last 2,300 days, but approximately 1,080 days (1 Macc 1:54; 4:52–54). Consequently, “Innumerable explanations have been attempted to make the 2,300 days coincide with the history of Antiochus Epiphanes,” Walvoord observes.²² A popular solution involves regarding

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁶ William H. Shea, *Daniel 7–12: Prophecies of the End Time*, Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise: Pacific, 1996), 97.

¹⁷ Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture*, Continental Commentaries (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2008), 415.

¹⁸ John J. Collins, “The Meaning of ‘the End’ in the Book of Daniel,” in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins; Presented to John Strugnell on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, John J. Collins, and Thomas H. Tobin. College Theology Society Resources in Religion 5 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 94.

¹⁹ Young, *Daniel*, 176.

²⁰ Gerhard Pfandl, “Daniel’s ‘Time of the End,’” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 143–44.

²¹ Hans K. LaRondelle, *How To Understand The End-Time Prophecies Of The Bible: A Biblical-Contextual Approach*, rev. ed. (Bradenton, FL: First Impressions, 2007), 360.

²² John F. Walvoord, *Daniel*, rev. and ed. Charles H. Dyer and Philip E. Rawley. John Walvoord Prophecy Commentaries (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 234.

the evenings and mornings as sacrifices.²³ Evening and morning, then, allude to the daily sacrifice (דָּמָה) just mentioned in the context (Dan 8:11–13). Since the sacrifice ascends morning and evening (Exod 29:38–42), a time span of 1,150 days results. Exegetes gravitate toward this approach because 1,150 days approximates the 1,080 days (\approx three years) of temple desecration under Antiochus. Because no time period fits precisely, proponents usually advance this interpretation with caution.²⁴

For three reasons the 2,300 evenings and mornings do not signal 2,300 sacrifices. (a) The comparable formula in Genesis 1 sets a precedent for how to interpret the evenings and mornings (“there was evening and there was morning”). According to Keil, “A Hebrew reader could not possibly understand the period of time 2300 evening-mornings of 2300 half days or 1150 whole days, because evening and morning at the creation constituted not the half but the whole day.”²⁵ (b) Whenever the OT writers discuss the quotidian offerings, “morning” always precedes “evening” in the phraseology, and never the reverse.²⁶ Schwantes recognizes this modality: “‘Burnt offerings morning and evening’ becomes a stereotyped phrase which finds no exception in the biblical literature.”²⁷ Hartman overlooks this point when he declares, “since the twenty-four-hour day began for the Jews in the evening, the evening sacrifices are mentioned before the morning sacrifices.”²⁸ (c) Verse 14 reads “2,300 evenings *and* mornings” and not “2,300 evenings and 2,300 mornings.” The fact that the number appears only once establishes morning and evening as a unit. As Keil explains, “When the Hebrews wish to express separately day and night, . . . the number of both is expressed. They say, e.g. forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7:4, 12; Ex. 24:18; 1 Kings 19:8), and three days and three nights (Jonah 2:1; Matt. 12:40).”²⁹

Ultimately, whether one favors 2,300 days or 1,150 days, “there is no historical epoch mentioned in the book of Maccabees or in Josephus regarding Antiochus IV which corresponds with either set of figures.”³⁰ Since “attempts to correlate it with specific historical events have not been very persuasive,” Newsom concludes, “It thus remains likely that 2,300 has its significance in relation to some symbolic calculation, but it is no longer possible to decipher the system.”³¹ The interpreter need

²³ Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein, vol. 7, *Daniel–Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 103.

²⁴ Steinmann, *Daniel*, 406.

²⁵ C. F. Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, vol. 9, *Daniel*, trans. M. G. Easton (repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 693–94.

²⁶ Exod 29:39; Num 28:4; 2 Kgs 16:15; 1 Chr 16:40; 23:30; 2 Chr 2:4; 13:11; 31:3; Ezra 3:3.

²⁷ Siegfried J. Schwantes, “‘Ereb Boqer of Daniel 8:14 Re-examined,” in *Symposium on Daniel: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 2 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1986), 469.

²⁸ Louis F. Hartman, “A New Translation with Notes and Commentary on Chapters 1–9,” in *The Book of Daniel*, by Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Li Lella, Anchor Bible 23 (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 227.

²⁹ Keil, *Daniel*, 693.

³⁰ Gerhard F. Hasel, “The ‘Little Horn,’ the Heavenly Sanctuary, and the Time of the End: A Study of Daniel 8:9–14,” in *Symposium on Daniel*, 432.

³¹ Carol A. Newsom, *Daniel: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 267.

not resort to “symbolic calculation.” Another solution accommodates 2,300 days, as discussed momentarily.

Eleventh, the little horn desecrates the sanctuary and interrupts the sacrifices (Dan 8:11–14). Antiochus indeed interrupted the sacrifices (1 Macc 1:41–50). No evidence exists that he destroyed the sanctuary building, but he did rob and defile it (1 Macc 1:20–24, 54–55, 59). Young states, “1 Macc. 1:44–47 describes the fulfillment of this prophecy, . . . Apparently Antiochus did not actually tear down the temple, although evidently he desecrated it.”³²

A different interpretation merits consideration. The desecration of the sanctuary and the abolition of the sacrifices transpire in connection with the “transgression/abomination that desolates” (Dan 8:11–13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Since the abomination of desolation awaited a future fulfillment in the time of Jesus (Matt 24:15), this rules out a second-century BC fulfillment by Antiochus. Gulley argues persuasively against Antiochus as the fulfillment based upon the authority of the NT:

Almost universally Antiochus is believed to be the desolater of the sanctuary, referred to in Dan 8:11–13; 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11, but Christ referred to this desolater as still future in His day. He said, “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand” (Matt 24:15). We must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, and particularly when Christ gives specific guidance and urges that understanding be sought in this matter. There could be no clearer refutation of a second century BC interpretation.³³

Indeed, the Antiochus interpretation already existed in early sources as the LXX and the Book of Maccabees.³⁴ LaRondelle cites the Antiochus interpretation of Daniel 8 as a classic example of a prophecy that expositors misinterpret by imposing contemporary circumstances:

Another danger is to allow current events to explain Bible prophecy, or to read some dramatic historical event back into biblical prophecy. A typical example is the apocryphal book of Maccabees, written by a Palestinian Jew in about 100 B.C. He assumed that the desecration of Jerusalem’s temple by Antiochus IV was the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy of a coming “abomination of desolation” on the Jewish altar (Dan. 8:11–13; 11:31; 1 Macc. 1:52–55; Josephus, Ant. Jud. 10:11, 7).³⁵

³² Young, *Daniel*, 172.

³³ Norman R. Gulley, “Why the Danielic Little Horn is Not Antiochus IV Epiphanes,” in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1997), 193.

³⁴ William H. Shea, “Early Development of the Antiochus Epiphanes Interpretation,” in *Symposium on Daniel*, 260–61.

³⁵ LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 345.

It appears that the writer of Maccabees read Antiochus into Daniel. One example of this comes from the use of Dan 8:10 in 2 Macc 9:10.³⁶ Daniel reads, “It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to earth.” According to Maccabees, Antiochus IV “thought he could touch the stars of heaven.”

Overall, many of the eleven factors mentioned above negate the possibility that Antiochus IV fulfilled Daniel 8. Thus the reader can entertain the notion that another power meets the requirements of the biblical data.

Does the Little Horn Represent Rome?

The discontinuities between the little horn and Antiochus IV spur historicists to seek another power as the referent of the little horn. Some such interpreters propose the kingdom of Rome, as played out through human and church history.³⁷ The context of Daniel 7–8 allows for a kingdom rather than a king, according to Süring: “a close study of Dan 7:7, 24 and 8:3, 5, 21–22 reveals that the word *qrn* is used with the interchangeable meaning of ‘king(s)’/‘kingdoms,’ and it appears that the term ‘king(s)’ is used in the sense of a ruling house or dynasty, rather than as designating an individual.”³⁸ In agreement Shea contends that “The only place among these symbols where one can clearly point to the identification of a horn as an individual king is in the case of Alexander” (8:21).³⁹

Historicists convert the 2,300 days to years by means of their day-year principle (Num 14:34; Ezek 4:6). This yields a time span from 457 BC (Artaxerxes’ decree) to AD 1844, although some variation exists among scholars.⁴⁰ Thus when Gabriel reveals that “the vision pertains to the time of the end” (Dan 8:17), he alludes to the time span of the entire vision—the period of the ram, goat, and little horn—based upon the technical use of “vision” (רִיבִּי) in the chapter.⁴¹

On the other hand, the present writer holds that Gabriel’s mention of the vision in verse 17 refers solely to the most recent panel of the vision (vv. 9–14), called “the vision about the regular sacrifice” (v. 13) and “the vision about the evenings and mornings” (v. 26). The technical use of “the time of the end” (קֵץ תְּמֹת) in the OT bears this out. Thus the animal fight between the ram and the goat transpired (relatively) near the time of composition, while the little horn prophecy awaits a remote eschatological fulfillment. With that in mind the reader may consider a distant monarch as a candidate for the little horn.

³⁶ Young, *Daniel*, 171.

³⁷ Samuel Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel 8: Interpretations from 1700 to 1800*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 14 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1987), 408–13.

³⁸ Margit L. Süring, “The Horn-Motifs of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 22, no. 3 (Autumn 1984): 339.

³⁹ Shea, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 44.

⁴⁰ William H. Shea, “Supplementary Evidence in Support of 547 B.C. as the Starting Date for the 2300 Day-Years of Daniel 8:14,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 89.

⁴¹ Hasel, “Daniel 8:9–14,” 433–36.

Does the Little Horn Represent the Antichrist?

Some futurists advocate the view that the prediction concerning the little horn of Daniel 8 points to a distant eschatological monarch known as the antichrist. Support for this hypothesis comes by way of linguistic and conceptual parallels between the little horn and other guises in the book that arguably depict this individual. These guises include the little horn of Daniel 7, the coming prince of 9:26–27, and the despicable person of chapters 11–12. The following discussion compares these characters and evaluates their commonalities in order to determine whether they depict the same individual.

The Little Horn of Daniel 7

Daniel 7 records the vision of the four vile kingdoms that succumb to the indestructible kingdom. Chapters 2 and 7 both exhibit a 4 + 1 pattern, a bipartite second kingdom, and a ten-king aspect of the fourth kingdom. The fourth kingdom exists (at least in part) during the eschaton because of factors like the usage of “time, times, and half a time” (7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14). Far and away the fourth kingdom receives more attention than the first three kingdoms combined. Much of the attention goes to the little horn with the big mouth.

The little horns of chapters 7 and 8 exhibit multiple commonalities. Both individuals share the same symbol—a horn (7:8; 8:9). Both live after the height of Grecian rule and during the end time (7:25; 8:17). Both begin small and become great (7:8, 20; 8:9). Both possess the power of perception (7:8; 8:23). Both exude hubris and blasphemy (7:8, 11, 20, 25; 8:11, 25). Both conquer and destroy (7:8, 20–21, 24; 8:9, 24–25). Both persecute the saints (7:21, 25; 8:24). Both suffer a supernatural demise as expressed grammatically by divine passives (7:26; 8:25).⁴² Both receive the most attention in their respective visions.⁴³ Both appear as the final malevolent power in the literary structure of the visions.

The extensive overlap suggests that chapters 7 and 8 describe the same ruler. As Shea puts it, “when two powers represented by the same prophetic symbol arise and carry out the same kinds of action in the same time slot in the flow of the visions, the probabilities appear to be on the side of those commentators who have identified them as the same historical entity.”⁴⁴ According to Doukhan, “Everything that happens to the little horn of chapter 7 has its counterpart in the little horn of chapter 8. Indeed, the little horn of chapter 8 and the little horn of chapter 7 are undoubtedly the same.”⁴⁵

For Greidanus, a key difference between the little horns pertains to their origin: the horn of chapter 7 comes from the *fourth* regime, whereas the horn of chapter 8

⁴² Cp. Pfandl, *Daniel*, 77.

⁴³ Paul A. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters: A Literary-Critical Study of Daniel 7 and 8*, Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series 20 (Toronto: Porter, 1985), 11.

⁴⁴ Shea, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 38.

⁴⁵ Jacques B. Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End*, rev. ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1989), 25.

emerges from the *third* empire.⁴⁶ But 8:8–9 does not necessitate that the little horn originate from the third kingdom, as demonstrated earlier.

The Coming Prince of Daniel 9:26–27

In Daniel 9, the prophet prays to Yahweh concerning the seventy-year captivity of the Israelites, and Gabriel responds by granting him special revelation concerning the seventy periods of seven that await the Israelites and Jerusalem. The Babylonian exile had lasted seventy years because the Israelites violated the sabbatical-year principle for 490 years (Lev 25:2–5; 26:34–35, 43; 2 Chron 36:21; Dan 9:2). When the end of the seventy years drew near, Gabriel revealed to Daniel another 490-year period of testing—a period of “seventy sevens” (Dan 9:24). This period would consist of “seven sevens,” plus “sixty-two sevens,” plus “one seven” (vv. 25–27). The final period of seven awaits a yet future fulfillment because all six goals of verse 24 have not yet come to fruition.⁴⁷

During the final period of seven, the coming prince emerges onto the scene. The prince represents the same ruler as the little horn of chapter 8, as confirmed by three specific points of correspondence. Namely, this individual lives in the end time (8:17; 9:26–27), he stops the sacrifices (8:11–13; 9:27), and he pertains to “the transgression/abomination that desolates (שַׁמָּה)” (8:13; 9:27). The vision of the coming prince develops the vision of the little horn by revealing the start time for the abolition of the sacrifices and the transgression/abomination that desolates. These atrocities begin “in the middle of the week/period of seven.” Davies rightly recognizes the eradication of the sacrifices in chapter 8 as “an event which dominates the remaining visions.”⁴⁸

The Despicable Person of Daniel 11–12

In stride with the prior visions of the book, the vision of Daniel 11–12 unfolds in a predictable manner. It treats the worldly empires in order: the second empire of Persia, the third empire of Greece, and the fourth empire with its expanded discussion of the little horn. Indeed, chapter 11 equates the little horn with the “despicable person” (11:21).

The little horn of chapter 8 and the despicable person of chapters 11–12 constitute one and the same person based on the following commonalities. He desecrates the sanctuary, terminates the sacrifices, and sets up the transgression/abomination of desolation (8:11–13; 11:31; 12:11). He rules as a “king” (8:23; 11:27, 36). He is the only person in the book said to practice “trickery/deception,” מְרִמָּה (8:25; 11:23). He conquers the south and the beautiful land (8:9; 11:25, 41–42). He destroys “many” (8:25; 11:44). He “prosperes,” צִלַּח (8:12, 24; 11:36). He exalts himself (גָּדַל) above the

⁴⁶ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 257–58.

⁴⁷ Paul D. Feinberg, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24–27,” in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 212.

⁴⁸ Philip R. Davies, “Eschatology in the Book of Daniel,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17 (1980): 36.

gods and the God of gods (8:11, 25; 11:36–37). He starts small: “a rather small horn which grew” (8:9) and “a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kinship has not been conferred . . . and will seize the kingdom by intrigue” (11:21). He lives during “the time of the end,” עַתְּ קֵץ (8:19; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9). He lives during “the appointed time” (מוֹעֵד) of “the end,” קֵץ (8:19; 11:27, 29, 35). He lives during a time of “ease/security,” שְׁלוֹמָה (8:25; 11:21, 24). He lives during the final period of “indignation” (זַעַם) and fosters “indignation” (זַעַם) against the covenant (8:19; 11:30, 36). Such excessive and sometimes exclusive overlap signals that the writer envisions one and the same tyrant.⁴⁹

We can ascertain the timing of the despicable person by observing the timing of his contemporaries, “those who have insight” (11:33, 35; 12:3, 10). They live near the time of a distant future resurrection (12:2). This group possesses and provides “understanding,” and they help many become “refined” and “purged” and “purified.” An additional factor sets the despicable person in an eschatological context. The stoppage of the Jewish sacrifices and the start of the abomination of desolation in 12:11 remains yet future, and since 12:11 merely repeats 11:31, the fulfilment of 11:31 must remain yet future.

The vision of 12:11–12, just like the visions of 8:11–14 and 9:27, uses the cessation of the sacrifices and the activation of the abomination of desolation as a starting point for counting time. These atrocities function as a benchmark for counting time in the Book of Daniel. Twice in the book someone asks, “how long” will particular events endure (8:13–14; 12:6–12)? Both answers incorporate a specific number of days, as counted from the same chronological benchmark. The 2,300 days, the 1,290 days, and the 1,335 days all begin at the middle of the seventieth seven.

According to 12:12, the indestructible kingdom begins 1,335 days after the sacrifices cease at the midpoint of the seventieth seven.⁵⁰ Since the 2,300 days also commence when the sacrifices stop, that places the restoration of the holy area 965 days after the start of the enduring empire. During that time, an individual named Branch, with assistance from his followers, will build a new temple (Zech 6:12–15), the magnificent temple of Ezekiel 40–48.

From Pember's perspective, the 2,520 days (seven years) of the tribulation will be cut short to 2,300 days, because “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved” (Matt 24:22). In a subsequent publication he changes his view so that the 2,300 days begin 220 days into the tribulation period, and end at the culmination of the tribulation.⁵¹ These variations, however, do not account as well for the interrelatedness of the visions in Daniel 7–12.

⁴⁹ For the opinion that 11:21–35 pictures Antiochus IV, see Andrew E. Steinmann, “Is the Antichrist in Daniel 11?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162, no. 646 (April–June 2005): 203.

⁵⁰ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 327–29.

⁵¹ G. H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies concerning the Gentiles, the Jews, and the Church of God* (1887; repr., London: Conley & Schoettle, 1984), 105; G. H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries concerning Israel and the Church* (1909; repr., London: Conley & Schoettle, 1984), 311.

Conclusion

The little horn of Daniel 8:9–14 constitutes the same individual as the king of verses 23–26. He emerges as a distant eschatological dictator known also as the little horn of chapter 7, the coming prince of 9:26–27, and the despicable person of chapters 11–12. The NT calls him the antichrist. In no way does the little horn point to Antiochus IV Epiphanes or Rome. The incongruities between the little horn, Antiochus, and Rome bolster this conclusion.