

Statement: The title “King of the North” cannot apply to Rome in either its pagan or papal phase.

In Daniel chapter 11, Gabriel resumes his interpretation to Daniel of the vision of chapter 8 (see my paper, [“Hermeneutical Horses”](#)). Most Seventh-day Adventist expositors agree on the King of the North being the king who ruled the northern division of the Grecian Kingdom after the death of its first and greatest king, Alexander. Upon Greece’s conquest by Pagan Rome, however, our views on the identity of the King of the North diverge.

In Daniel chapter 7, the four heads of the leopard symbolize the divisions of the Grecian Kingdom after Alexander’s death. The portion of chapter 7 that interprets the dream gives us no further information on this 3rd beast or its divisions, and Daniel expresses no concern about these. Daniel does not question Gabriel about the leopard or its heads. His focus and questions concern the 4th beast, its 10 horns, and the little horn (Daniel 7:19,20).

In Daniel chapter 8, the four horns coming up on the he goat, after its notable horn is broken, symbolize the divisions of Greece.

Daniel 8:8

Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

Under Alexander, Greece did “according to his will” and “became great” (Daniel 8:4). “There was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand” (verse 7), but at the height of his power, when he waxed “very great,” his kingdom was “broken” and divided among four “notable ones” (verse 8).

The “great horn” of the vision was “notable” (Daniel 8:5); the four horns were also “notable” (verse 8). For some 40 years after Alexander’s death, his friends, family and generals fought to control his kingdom. The four generals that emerged as conquerors and divided Alexander’s kingdom were notable for their conquests, as Alexander was notable for his conquests.

These four horns came up “toward the four winds of heaven” (Daniel 8:8). Jeremiah describes the “four winds” as coming from “the four quarters of heaven” (Jer. 49:36). The four quarters are “the east, west, north, and south.” (1 Chron. 9:24).

Jeremiah 49:36

And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come.

1 Chronicles 9:24

In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south.

The four horns coming up toward the four quarters of heaven: the east, west, north, and south, are the king of the eastern portion of Alexander's kingdom, the king of the western portion of Alexander's kingdom, the king of the northern portion of Alexander's kingdom, and the king of the southern portion of Alexander's kingdom. Since Daniel 11 interprets chapter 8, the directional labels in chapter 11 refer to the same "four winds of heaven" as in chapter 8, not the direction from which Israel is attacked.

The four horns came up toward the four quarters of heaven. It was how Alexander's Greece would be divided. The four horns are Greek horns because they "stand up out of the nation" of Greece (Daniel 8:22), just as the ten horns of Daniel 7 are Roman horns because they arise "out of this kingdom" of Rome (Daniel 7:24).

Daniel 8:22

Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

When the four horns stand up, they do not retain the same power as Alexander held, but are inferior to Alexander in both might and territory. All the information we have concerning the four horns is from Gabriel's interpretation of the vision and from the vision itself, in which another horn arises after the four horns (Dan. 8:9).

Daniel 8:9

And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant *land*.

Five Horns

There are now five horns: the four divisions of Greece plus the Little Horn. Daniel 8:8 labels the first four horns according to the four cardinal directions of the compass: King of the North, King of the South, King of the East, and King of the West. Daniel 8:9 tells us that the Little Horn arises "out of one of them" (or out of one of the winds as some understand the verse) but does not tell us which one. The Little Horn conquers "toward the south, toward the east, and toward the pleasant land," and history and geography tell us the power that did this arose from the west.

Daniel chapter 2 represents Rome as legs of iron on an image whose form is terrible. Rome succeeds Greece, represented in the dream as the image's belly and thighs of brass.

Daniel chapter 7 pictures Rome as a dreadful and terrible beast that has ten horns and then another little horn, and it follows Greece, a leopard having four heads. In chapter 8, the Little Horn arises "out of one of them" (verse 9), "in the latter time of their kingdom" (verse 23). In Daniel 7, the Roman beast sprouts a little horn we identify as the papacy,

but in Daniel 8 the Little Horn represents Rome in both its pagan and papal phases, a “king of fierce countenance” (verse 23). It attacks Greece from the west. Fulfilling this prophecy, Rome won decisive battles in 168 and 148 B.C., both at Pydna, during the Third and Fourth Macedonian Wars.

In chapter 8 Rome, called the Little Horn in the vision, is called “a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences” during the interpretation.

Daniel 8:23

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.

That the king of fierce countenance stands up in the latter time of the kingdom ruled by four horns, when “transgressors are come to the full,” is significant, because it indicates the timing of the rise of the new king. It is generally when transgressors are come to the full, closing a kingdom’s probation, that another kingdom arises. On the night of Belshazzar’s feast, the cup of Babylon became full, and the next prophesied kingdom, the Medes and Persians, took the city and began to rule.

In Daniel 11:1, Gabriel announces that in the first year of Darius the Mede, he had “stood to confirm and to strengthen him.” But Daniel 10:20 predicted that “the prince of Grecia” would come when Gabriel would have “gone forth” from the side of the Medo-Persian kings. Greece would conquer Medo-Persia and become the focus of the prophecy, and when in their turn the transgressors of the divided Greek kingdom had come to the full, Rome would be next on the scene. In the vision, it is not until the latter end of the Greek divisions that Rome stands up as the next kingdom.

By the time this Little Horn stands up, only the King of the South and the King of the North remain of the four horns of Greece. They geographically occupy the northern and southern divisions of Alexander’s Greece. It is in the “latter time” of the Greek horns, when they are coming to their end, that Rome, the Little Horn, arises as a “king of fierce countenance.”

This king waxes “exceeding great” toward the south, toward the east, and toward the pleasant or glorious land (Daniel 8:9). Advancing eastward, Rome annexed the Seleucid Empire, the Greek King of the North, and by 63 B.C. made it a Roman province. Israel, the pleasant or glorious land, was brought under Rome’s control in that same year. Egypt, the Greek King of the South, was made a Roman province in 30 B.C. These are the conquests referenced in Daniel 8:9.

It is significant that Rome, the Little Horn, waxed “exceeding great,” while Alexander’s Greece was only “very great,” and the four divisions of Alexander’s Greek Empire stood “not in his power,” but were even less powerful than Alexander (Daniel 8:22).

Symbolic View

Those who take a more symbolic view of the final verses of Daniel 11 consider the King of the North to be a title conferred initially on Nebuchadnezzar and then to each succeeding world power until Papal Rome. The King of the North is understood to be the Papacy in Daniel 11:40.

This is not how Gabriel interprets the identity of the King of the North in Daniel 11. Other than the first verse of Daniel 8 that mentions the year of Daniel's vision, Babylon is not mentioned anywhere from chapter 8 to the end of the book of Daniel. Babylon has come and gone. The vision of Daniel 8 begins with Medo-Persia and ends with Rome.

Gabriel interprets the King of the North as a division of Greece. The King of the North is of Greek origin and not of Babylonian origin and therefore it is not consistent to associate the King of the North in Daniel 11 with Babylon. Gabriel should have the last word on who the King of the North is since he is the one tasked by God to make Daniel understand the symbols of the chapter 8 vision. We should not then overwrite Gabriel's interpretation of who the King of the North is by appealing to the King of the North as associated with Babylon, a power that has no part in the vision or the interpretation.

Summary

To sum this up, Rome cannot be the King of the North for at least the following reasons.

1. Rome is a fifth horn, called the Little Horn. It does not assume the identity of any of the four Greek horns, and therefore Rome is not the King of the North.
2. It is at the "latter end" of the Kings of the North and South (Daniel 8:23), that the Little Horn arises. Since the King of the North is coming to its end when Rome stands up, Rome cannot be the King of the North.
3. Rome came against the King of the North in Daniel 11:16. Rome did not come against itself; therefore, Rome is not the King of the North.
4. Rome waxed "exceeding great" (Daniel 8:9). Alexander's Greece was inferior to Rome in that it waxed only "very great" (Daniel 8:8). The King of the North was inferior to Alexander and never attained the his full power (Daniel 8:22), but was simply one of his kingdom's four divisions. The King of the North was, then, greatly inferior to Rome and therefore, Rome is not the King of the North.
5. Gabriel defines who the King of the North is, a division of Alexander's Greece. It is Gabriel who declares the "truth" of the vision's symbols (Daniel 11:2). We should allow Gabriel's interpretation to stand instead of overwriting his Greek definition with a Babylonian one.

Constantine the Great did not rule over the territory of Babylon.

Theodoric the Great did not rule over the territory of Babylon.

Pope Leo the Great did not rule over the territory of Babylon.

Pope Gregory the Great did not rule over the territory of Babylon.

Just because Seleucid kings launched attacks from territory once occupied by Babylon doesn't make them the King of the North. Germany launched attacks on Allies from within France did not make Germany French.

I don't believe that Alexander the Great had this title during his lifetime but was deemed such by historians after his death.