

Daniel

Chapter 8

Daniel's Vision of the Ram and the Goat

In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. 2 And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the citadel, which is in the province of Elam. And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai canal. 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. 9 Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. 10 It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. 11 It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. 12 And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" 14 And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."

8:1–12:13 These chapters are written in Hebrew. (CSB)

Hbr language resumes for the remainder of the Book. (TLSB)

Ch 8 Luth: "Daniel experiences a special vision. Unlike the former, this one pertains not to the whole world but to his own people, the Jews [Judeans]; it shows how they were to fare prior to the Roman empire and before the coming of Christ, namely, under the third empire, that of Alexander the Great. Once again the purpose is to console the Jews, that they may not despair amid the wretchedness that is to engulf them, as if Christ would leave them again and not come" (AE 35:300). (TLSB)

8:1 *third year.* About 551 B.C. The events of ch. 8 preceded those of ch. 5. (CSB)

vision. Here Daniel was awake and not dreaming (cf 2:19). (CSB)

Daniel tells us that this is his second vision, since it came "after the one that appeared to me previously" (8:1), that is, after chapter 7. (CC)

This vision came “in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar” (8:1), two years after Daniel 7, which was revealed “in the first year of King Belshazzar” (7:1). Since Daniel received his first vision in either 553–552 or, more likely, in 550–549, this vision was received in 551–550 or, more likely, 548–547. If the earlier date is accepted, it was around the time that Cyrus defeated his grandfather Astyages and began to reign over a united kingdom of Media and Persia. If the later date is correct, Daniel had this vision around the time that Cyrus defeated the Lydian king Croesus. This was Cyrus’ last major conquest before taking Babylon. Either of these dates might explain why this vision begins with a ram that represents Medo-Persia. (CC)

Unlike the revelations in Daniel 2 and 7, this vision does not begin with a symbol representing the Babylonian Empire. The reason could be that Babylon’s downfall, predicted in those earlier chapters, is certain. The Persians would soon turn their military might toward Babylon, which would fall to Cyrus in 539 BC, about a decade after the date of Daniel 8. Therefore, the Babylon Empire is no longer deserving of attention. The focus turns to those kingdoms that are closer to the arrival of God’s kingdom in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. (CC)

8:2 *Susa the capital* – Future capital of the Persian Empire (Est 1:2); 200 mi E of Babylon. (TLSB)

Elam. Between Babylon and Persia. (TLSB)

Ulai canal. Waterway near Susa. (TLSB)

Although some have read 8:2 as saying that Daniel was in Susa when he had his vision, the great majority of commentators follow the more natural reading of the text, which implies that in the vision he saw himself in Susa. Babylon ruled Susa for a while, but it eventually was taken by the Persians. It is not known which of these kingdoms ruled it when Daniel had his vision. Susa, however, is an important starting point for the vision, since it would become the winter capital of the Persian Empire. The opening verses of the vision are signaling the ascendancy of the Persians. The Ulai Canal ran near the city to the northeast. (CC)

8:3–14 Notes for these verses focus on the imagery as Daniel experienced it. The vision is interpreted in vv 20–26. (TLSB)

8:3 The ram represents the Medo-Persian empire (v. 20). The longer of his two horns reflects the predominant position of Persia. (CSB)

ram. Male sheep. (TLSB)

horns. Typically represent kings or kingdoms in Daniel’s visions (cf 7:24). (TLSB)

one was higher. Represents greater strength. (TLSB)

The image of the ram with two horns is rather simple for modern readers with knowledge of history to understand, even without Gabriel’s explanation (8:20). The ram is the Medo-Persian Empire, and the two horns are the Median and Persian kingdoms, which this empire included. The longer horn that came up second represents Persia, which dominated the Medo-Persian Empire. Before Cyrus came to the throne of Persia, the Medes had dominated the Persians. When Cyrus came to the throne he overthrew his Median grandfather Astyages and took over the united kingdoms of Media and Persia. Thus Cyrus and his successors are the longer, second horn that came up later and overshadowed the Median kingdom (the smaller but older horn). (CC)

8:4 *westward and northward southward* – Persia’s major conquests of Media, Babylon, Egypt, and Lydia are depicted by the ram pushing north, south, and west. It is significant that “no *beast* was able to stand in his way” (8:4). This is a signal that this vision will continue the imagery in the previous vision (Daniel 7), where animals represented kingdoms. (CC)

Because the ram had power over all other kingdoms, it could do what it pleased. The power of the Medo-Persian Empire was such that it was the unquestioned authority in the Near East for about two centuries (550–331 BC). This is why the ram “magnified himself” or “made himself great.” Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of Daniel show that the arrogance of a king was an ominous sign calling for divine punishment. The seeds of the fall of Medo-Persia were sown in its success. Therefore, the appearance of another animal to defeat the ram is already implied in this characterization. (CC)

8:5 The rapidly charging goat is Greece, and the prominent horn is Alexander the Great, “the first king” (v. 21). (CSB)

male goat. Worthy rival. Cf Mt 25:32 where people are compared to sheep and goats. Goats tend to be more curious and courageous than sheep. (TLSB)

from the west. Direction of Greece and Asia Minor. (TLSB)

without touching the ground. Emphasizes his rapid progress. *horn between his eyes.* Most unusual position. (TLSB)

While the meaning of the imagery of the ram may be obvious to many modern readers, it was not obvious to Daniel, since its fulfillment was about a decade in the future. Therefore, he tells us that he was “pondering” or “trying to discern” the vision of the ram. However, his thoughts were interrupted by a new creature: a goat. (CC)

This male goat came from the west. Its movement was so swift that it did not touch the ground. This swiftness corresponds to the wings of the leopard in 7:6 and serves to identify the goat in this vision with the leopard in the previous one. Therefore, the goat, like the third beast in chapter 7 and the third part of the statue in Daniel 2, represents the kingdom of Greece. (CC)

The goat had “a conspicuous horn between his eyes” (8:5). By noting that the horn was placed in the center of the forehead of the goat, Daniel is signaling to us that the horn is symbolically associated with the entire goat. This is in contrast to the two horns on the ram, each of which symbolize one part of the ram (8:3), or the one raised side of the bear in 7:5. Both of those were depictions of the Medo-Persian Empire, formed by the combination of Media and Persia (as well as other conquered territories). (CC)

8:7 *shattering his two horns.* Greece crushes Medo-Persia. (CSB)

Goats are more powerful and aggressive than sheep (Jer 50:8; Zech 10:3), so it is no accident that Daniel saw the goat defeating the ram. Without any allies to help the ram (8:7), the goat was favored to win any conflict between the two. (CC)

Once again, the goat is easy to interpret, even without Gabriel’s explanation (8:21). The goat comes from the west, representing the Greek invasion of the Near East by Alexander the Great, who is the goat’s single horn. The ram’s rage refers to the animosity of the Greeks against the Persians that was a result of Persian incursions into Europe, especially under Darius I (490 BC) and Xerxes I (480 BC). Alexander’s attacks on Asia began as a campaign to liberate the Greek cities in Anatolia from the Persians. (CC)

Both the description of the swiftness of the goat and of the ram's inability to stand up to the goat fit well the rise of Alexander's empire. None of the subjugated peoples of the Medo-Persian Empire offered significant aid to help it combat the Greeks (8:7). The Persians never won a major battle against Alexander. His three decisive victories at Granicus (334 BC), Issus (333 BC), and Arbela (331 BC) destroyed Persian dominance in only three years. (CC)

8:8 *the great horn was broken off.* The death of Alexander the Great at the height of his power (323 B.C.). (CSB)

Just as the ram elicited divine judgment when he "magnified himself" (8:4), so the even greater arrogance of the goat, which "magnified himself exceedingly" (8:8, using the same Hebrew verb as 8:4 plus an adverbial phrase), signals the imminent downfall of his single horn. Alexander died in Babylon in June 323 BC, at the height of his power. He had no mature male successor, and his two young sons, Alexander IV and Herakles, were subsequently murdered. (CC)

four conspicuous horns. "four heads". (CSB)

After several years of battles and contention, his empire was divided among four of his generals. Macedonia and Greece came under the control of Cassander. Thrace and Asia Minor were ruled by Lysimachus. Seleucus gained control of Syria and Mesopotamia, and Ptolemy ruled Egypt. These four became known as the Diadochi, the "successors." (CC)

The four new horns of the goat, representing four rulers with dominion in four different areas ("toward the four winds of heaven," 8:8), match the four wings and four heads of the leopard in 7:6, which likewise represents the Greek Empire. It is also represented by the empire of the mighty king that is broken and scattered to the four winds of heaven in 11:4. All three represent the Greek dominance of the Near East as first established by Alexander. (CC)

8:9 *out of one of them* – The small horn in Daniel 8 symbolizes Antiochus IV, who took the surname Epiphanes, Greek for "divine manifestation" (reflected by Epiphany, the name for the season of the church year that celebrates the revelation of God in Christ to all peoples). During his reign, coins were stamped ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΣ ΘΕΟΣ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΗΣ, "King Antiochus, God Manifest." This arrogance is especially pictured in 8:11, as he magnified himself against "the Prince of the army," God himself (especially God the Son), and sought to take away the sacrifice, defile God's temple, and destroy God's truth. Just as the arrogance of the Persians and Alexander was depicted by the way they "magnified" themselves (8:4, 8), so also Antiochus is depicted as the most arrogant of all. (CC)

came a little horn – Daniel observed that the horn "began small, but it became very large" (8:9). Antiochus was not the heir to the throne that had been occupied by his brother, Seleucus IV. However, after his brother's death, he usurped the throne from his nephew through bribery and flattery. During his reign, he attacked Egypt (1 Macc 1:16–19) in the south; Persia (1 Macc 3:31; 6:1, 5, 56; 2 Macc 9:1–2), Parthia, and Armenia in the east; and Palestine (1 Macc 1:20–62; 2 Maccabees 5–6). Daniel calls Palestine, "the beautiful [land]" (Dan 8:9), a term he will use again (11:16, 41; cf. 11:45), and which had previously been used by his older contemporary prophet in exile, Ezekiel (Ezek 20:6, 15). (CC)

glorious land. Israel, the Promised Land. (TLSB)

8:10 Daniel envisioned the little horn trampling on the stars it had thrown down. (TLSB)

It grew great. Cf 11:36. (TLSB)

some of the host and some of star – Daniel’s prophecy does not list Antiochus’ military campaigns in chronological order. Instead, he names the attack on “the beautiful [land]” last (Dan 8:9) so that he can continue by focusing on the king’s atrocities toward the Jews in and around Jerusalem. The little horn magnified itself and attacked “the army of heaven . . . and some of the stars” (8:10). Some commentators take these two synonymous terms to be angels, gods, or astral bodies, while others see them as mythic. However, the interpretation given to Daniel later in the vision identifies them as “the people of the saints” (8:24). This accords with passages where Israel is called “the Lord’s army” (Ex 7:4; 12:41). Moreover, “heaven” in this passage may be a circumlocution for God, as it is in 4:26. This would make “the army of heaven” equivalent to “the army of God.” In Daniel, God is often explicitly called “the King of heaven” (4:37), “the Lord of heaven” (5:23), or “the God of heaven” (2:18–19, 37, 44). Nebuchadnezzar had confessed that God “does as he wishes with the army of heaven [אַרְמֵי שָׁמַיִם]” (4:32). (CC)

host of heaven. God’s angelic army, which it defiled. (TLSB)

The “stars” (Dan 8:10) can also represent God’s people. This draws on the imagery of God’s promise to Abraham that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars in heaven (Gen 15:5; 22:17). God also promises through Daniel that “those who bring many to righteousness [will shine] like the stars forever and ever” (Dan 12:3). (CC)

Like much of the imagery in Daniel’s visions, the casting down of the stars is used again in Revelation. There Satan is a dragon who sweeps one third of the stars down from heaven (Rev 12:4). (CC)

trampled on them – The trampling of the army of God aptly describes the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus. He sacked the temple in Jerusalem (1 Macc 1:20–24). He forbade under penalty of death practices commanded in the Law of Moses (1 Macc 1:41–51) and forced Jews to adopt Greek customs and religious practices (2 Macc 6:1–11). However, Antiochus’ outrage was not simply against the Jewish people, but also against “the Prince of the army” (Dan 8:11), God himself. Israel was God’s army (Ex 7:4; 12:41), so he is the Prince of his army. Later in the vision he is identified as “the Prince of princes” (8:25). (CC)

8:11 *great as the Prince* – The term “Prince” is used to focus especially upon the second person of the Trinity. Josh 5:14–15 uses an extended form of the phrase here, “the Prince of the army” (שָׂרֵה־הַצִּבְיָא, Dan 8:11), to refer to “the Prince of the army of Yahweh” (שָׂרֵה־צִבְיָא־יְהוָה), a divine figure who commands Joshua to remove his sandals because his presence hallows the ground, just as Yahweh commanded Moses from the burning bush (Ex 3:5). That Prince who manifested himself on earth to facilitate Israel’s divinely mandated warfare is traditionally identified as the preincarnate Christ, the Word not yet made flesh. He is also called “the Prince of peace” in the famous messianic prophecy of Is 9:6–7. (CC)

taken away. Morning and evening sacrifices were stopped in the Jerusalem temple. (TLSB)

The identification of the “Prince” here too as the preincarnate Christ fits the context of the temple and sacrifice. He is the one to whom the daily sacrifice was offered until it was removed (“from whom the continual sacrifice was taken,” Dan 8:11), and the temple is called “the place of his sanctuary” (8:11). This is an implicit affirmation that in the OT era, the Jerusalem temple (to be rebuilt) along with its sacrifices (to be reinstated) represented Christ and anticipated his own perfect, all-availing sacrifice and his resurrection as the new temple (Jn 2:18–22). (CC)

On the fifteenth day of Kislev in the one hundred forty-fifth year of the Seleucid era (December 6, 167 BC), Antiochus specifically defied Israel’s God by erecting “a detested thing of desolation [βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως] on the altar” of the temple (1 Macc 1:54). Most likely this was an idol to Zeus (cf. 2 Macc 6:1–2) made to resemble Antiochus himself. Thus the continual sacrifice was taken away from the Prince

of the army. Since the continual sacrifice on the altar signified the once-for-all, all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ that paid for the sins of all people at all times, the abolishing of this sacrifice was a direct offense against Christ. (CC)

sanctuary was overthrown – The attack on God is seen in the removing of the sacrifices God had commanded and the throwing down of the sanctuary (Dan 8:11). Antiochus not only forbade sacrifices to Israel’s God (1 Macc 1:44–46), but on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev (December 16), he also defiled the altar with the first pagan sacrifices (1 Macc 1:59), which probably included pigs (1 Macc 1:47; cf. 2 Macc 6:4). (CC)

8:12 *truth thrown to the ground* – Daniel then tells his readers that God’s people (“the army”) and the continual sacrifice will be given over to the little horn, who will “throw truth to the ground” (8:12). The specific truth in view here is the Law of Moses. Not only were Jews forbidden to practice their faith according to the strictures of the Pentateuch (1 Macc 1:41–51; 2 Macc 6:1, 6), but any scrolls of the Torah were destroyed, and anyone found in possession of the Torah was executed (1 Macc 1:56–57). Yahweh reveals himself in his Torah to be a God “abounding in grace and truth” (Ex 34:6; cf. Gen 24:27; 32:10), the same “truth” to be embodied and fully revealed in the incarnate Messiah (Jn 1:14, 17; 14:6). (CC)

Daniel makes it clear to his readers that Antiochus will be successful in this persecution—at least for a while: “during the transgression,” he “will succeed in doing this” (8:12). Thus 8:12 depicts Antiochus’ initial success in his time of “transgression”—defying God, defiling the Jerusalem temple and its sacrifices, and persecuting the Jews. (CC)

Some Judeans joined in these transgressions of God’s truth. (TLSB)

8:13 *a holy one*. An angel. (CSB)

Daniel heard two angels talking. (TLSB)

how long. First question of those who face suffering (cf Ps 74:10). (TLSB)

8:14 *2,300 evenings and mornings*. Unclear whether number is literal or symbolic. If literal, the time period would be less than seven years, seven being a symbolic number. In any case, the period of distress would end, and the sanctuary would be restored. (TLSB)

There were two daily sacrifices for the continual burnt offering (9:21; Ex 29:38–42), representing the atonement required for Israel as a whole. The 2,300 evenings and mornings probably refer to the number of sacrifices consecutively offered on 1,150 days, the interval between the desecration of the Lord’s altar and its re-consecration by Judas Maccabeus on Kislev 25, 165 B.C. The pagan altar set up by Antiochus on Kislev 25, 168, was apparently installed almost two months after the Lord’s altar was removed, accounting for the difference between 1,095 days (an exact three years) and the 1,150 specified here. (CC)

Another approach is to interpret the 2,300 evenings and mornings as 2,300 evening and morning sacrifices, which would take place over 1,150 days, since one evening sacrifice and one morning sacrifice were performed each day. This would explain the unusual syntax of “evening, morning” in 8:14. Moreover, this is confirmed by 8:26, which calls this, literally, “the vision of *the* evening and *the* morning.” In addition, the vision is about (13–8:11) *הַקְרָבָה הַיּוֹמִית*, which is the term for “the continual sacrifice” offered twice daily. (CC)

Since this falls slightly short of 1,150 days, some critical scholars suggest that this was an attempt at genuine prophecy by a Judean author writing about 165 BC and that his prediction was close, but not

exact. However, 1 Macc 1:41–53 suggests that Antiochus’ order banning sacrifices to Israel’s God was in force *before* the desecration of the altar on 15 Kislev (December 6; 1 Macc 1:54). If the sacrifices were stopped forty-four days earlier, on 28 Tishri (October 22), then the prediction is exact. (CC)

However, we should keep in mind that OT prophecies concerning time periods are usually given in round numbers. Abraham was told that his descendants would live in Egypt for four hundred years (Gen 15:13), but the actual time was four hundred thirty years (Ex 12:40–41). In a similar way, Jeremiah prophesied that the captivity would last for seventy years (Jer 25:11–12; 29:10). However, the captivity lasted from 605 BC, when the first wave of Judean exiles was taken captive and subsequently hauled to Babylon, to the first return of the exiles in 538 BC, or almost 68 years. (CC)

Prophecy is intended to demonstrate God’s governance of history for his gracious purposes and thus strengthen faith in him. It is not intended to promote a shallow, deterministic understanding of God’s accounting of time. Therefore, the time of the cessation of the evening and morning sacrifices probably was *approximately* 1,150 days. It most certainly included the period from the desecration of the altar until its rededication, and perhaps it included a few weeks before the desecration. (CC)

8:1–14 In the vision of a ram and a male goat, God assures His people that His sanctuary will be restored. When trouble comes into our lives, no matter what its source, we may also ask, “How long?” Whether our time of suffering is long or short, we know that God hears our prayers and will help us according to His timetable. • Heavenly Father, comfort me with the assurance that Your love surrounds me every moment of my life. Amen. (TLSB)

The Interpretation of the Vision

15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, “Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.” 17 So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, “Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.” 18 And when he had spoken to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand up. 19 He said, “Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end. 20 As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. 22 As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power. 23 And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise. 24 His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. 25 By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken—but by no human hand. 26 The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.” 7 And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days. Then I rose and went about the king's business, but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it.

8:16 *Gabriel* – God addresses the angel by name, “Gabriel” (8:16), the first time an angel is named in the Scriptures. The name itself, גַּבְרִיֶּל, *Gabriel*, forms a play on the noun for “a man,” גִּבּוֹר, *geber*, describing the angel’s appearance in 8:15. The noun גִּבּוֹר denotes a “man as strong” in contrast to women and children, “non-combatants whom he is to defend.” It is also related to the noun גִּבּוֹר, “warrior.” Therefore, “Gabriel” probably means “God is my warrior.” Gabriel is named again in 9:21, and he is the angel sent for the annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:11–19) and the annunciation of the

incarnation of God the Son by the Virgin Mary (Lk 1:26–33). His primary function seems to be the delivery of the most important messages from God, confirming that the voice Daniel heard emanating from the canal was God’s. (CC)

8:17 *Son of man*. A term used 93 times in Ezekiel, emphasizing the prophet’s humanity as he was addressed by the transcendent God (see note on Ps 8:4). Da 7:13 and 8:17 are the only other places where the phrase is used as a title in the OT. Jesus’ frequent use of the phrase in referring to himself showed that he was the eschatological figure spoken of in Da 7:13. (CSB)

Unidentified human voice spoke from Ulai canal. (TLSB)

time of the end – Gabriel reveals to Daniel that the vision “concerns the time of the end” (8:17). This phrase must be interpreted according to the context of the vision in which it occurs. Here the construct phrase זְמַן־אֲחֵרִית , “the time of the end,” is not intended to be taken in an absolute sense as if the vision is only about the final eschatological events preceding the return of Christ. Instead, Daniel is told that the vision’s emphasis is on the time period spoken of earlier at the end of this vision, the 2,300 evenings and mornings (8:14). This is confirmed in 8:19, where this time period is called “the latter part of [God’s] indignant anger” and “the appointed time of the end.” It is also confirmed in 8:26, where the Daniel’s vision is called “the vision of the evenings and the mornings.” In terms of history, the vision of chapter 8 focuses on the persecution inflicted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century BC, although in some ways he foreshadows the Antichrist’s persecution throughout the church age, which intensifies before Christ’s return. (CC)

8:17 *fell on my face*. Result of being overcome by fear. (TLSB)

son of man. Emphasizing Daniel’s human weakness. (TLSB)

time of the end. End of the distress caused by Antiochus IV. (TLSB)

8:18 *deep sleep*. He lost consciousness as a result of his visionary experience. (TLSB)

face to the ground – Daniel’s reaction is to fall into a deep sleep and lie prone on the ground facedown, demonstrating his terror as a sinner and his unworthiness to be in God’s presence, as he also does in 10:9 (cf. Is 6:5). (CC)

touched me – However, that posture was not appropriate for him as he would receive the divine revelation. Gabriel touches him and makes him stand (similar to 10:10). In Ezekiel’s prophetic call, the Spirit entered him and enabled him to stand and receive the divine Word (Ezek 2:1–3). The touch represented the conferral of forgiveness and strength to carry out the prophetic role. The mouths of Isaiah (6:7) and Jeremiah (1:9) were touched to enable their ministry of preaching. Daniel is not called to be a preacher, but a seer and author (7:1; 8:26; 12:4). (CC)

To strengthen him (cf 1Ki 19:5, 7). (TLSB)

8:19 Gabriel revealed to Daniel that the period of wrath experienced by God’s people would indeed end. (TLSB)

the indignation. The noun אֲדִינָת , “indignant anger” (8:19), denotes furious judgment in a strong reaction to human sin. With the possible exception of Hos 7:16, it always refers to God’s wrath. The indignant anger that God would have at Antiochus is not only a sign of his wrath against the king’s sins but also the result of his zeal for defending and saving his people. This is confirmed by Gabriel’s use of

the term מְזִמָּה, “appointed time” (8:19), which indicates that God would not ignore the evil oppressor or his people’s suffering, but would bring both to an end at a time that he has already determined. The same implication is in other Daniel verses with מְזִמָּה, “appointed time” (11:27, 29, 35; 12:7). Speaking eschatologically, Jesus affirms the same thing about God’s administration of history for the sake of the elect (Mt 24:22; cf. Lk 18:7; 2 Pet 3:1–10). (CC)

God had determined the time. (TLSB)

8:20–22 Cf vv 3–8. In the vision of ch 7, the kings/kingdoms were never named by the heavenly interpreter. Here Daniel receives more specific insight about his vision. (TLSB)

8:21 Refers to Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), commander of the Gk army that conquered Persia. (TLSB)

8:22 After Alexander’s death, his empire split into four parts: Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt. (TLSB)

8:23–25 A description of Antiochus IV and his rise to power by intrigue and deceit (he was not the rightful successor to the Seleucid throne). (CSB)

8:23 *transgressors have reached their limit.* Period of turmoil following Alexander’s death when his generals vied for power. (TLSB)

bold face. Refers to Antiochus IV, the little horn, who displayed insolence and defiance (vv 9–10). He titled himself Epiphanes, “god manifest.” His rule points forward to the rule of Antichrist. (TLSB)

understands riddles. Smart and clever. (TLSB)

8:24 *great.* Cf vv 9, 11, 25. (TLSB)

destroy mighty men ... saints. Antiochus IV destroyed his political enemies as well as some of God’s holy people. He exalted himself, seeking to usurp God’s place in the lives of His people. (TLSB)

succeed – The wicked king would succeed in doing this (Dan 8:24) for a while. Antiochus’ deceit came to the fore two years later when he sent his tribute collector with a large military force to Jerusalem and its people (1 Macc 1:29). He “spoke to them peaceful words in deceit, and they believed him” (ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς λόγους εἰρηνικούς ἐν δόλῳ καὶ ἐνεπίστευσαν αὐτῷ, 1 Macc 1:30). But then he “attacked the city suddenly ... and destroyed many people of Israel” (ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐξάπινα ... καὶ ἀπώλεσεν λαὸν πολὺν ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ, 1 Macc 1:30). In this way, Antiochus fulfilled the prophecy “through his cunning, he will ... cause deception to succeed by his power” and “destroy many who are at ease” (Dan 8:25) (CC)

8:25 *he shall even rise up.* Antiochus IV committed blasphemous acts. As happened during the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, God’s temple would again be defiled by pagans (1Macc 1:45–47, 59). Antiochus IV used the temple for worship of Zeus (Dn 11:31; 2Macc 6:2). (TLSB)

Prince of princes. God. (CSB)

shall destroy many...no human hand. † See 2:34. Antiochus died in 164 B.C. at Tabae in Persia through illness or accident; God “destroyed” him. (CSB)

Antiochus IV died in late 164 BC while campaigning in Persia; he reportedly lost his mind. So God ended his reign of terror (11:45). (TLSB)

8:26 *vision of the evenings and the mornings.* There will be a period of time before the end comes. (TLSB)

seal up. Daniel's vision was not for his own day but for the comfort of the saints at the time of Antiochus IV. (TLSB)

Despite its hopeful message, Daniel is told to “close up” (the imperative סָדַד) the vision because its fulfillment is many days away from Daniel's time (8:26). The identical imperative is used in this way again in 12:4, where the context indicates that it refers to physically rolling up the scroll that contains the written record of the revelation and sealing it to prevent unauthorized opening. The Hebrew verb carries the connotation of prohibiting the use of an item so that it can be kept from use or kept safe or protected from abuse. The passive participle in 12:9 has the corresponding meaning, “closed up.” (CC)

The purpose of this closing of the vision is so that the wise—those who have faith in God—will be able to understand and use Daniel's vision, but others will not. See 12:10, and compare Jesus' explanation of his use of parables (Mt 13:10–17). (CC)

8:27 *overcome ... sick ... appalled.* Daniel grieved over what his people would have to suffer in future years. (TLSB)

Daniel's reaction to the vision is similar to the toll the previous vision took on him (7:15, 28). However, his reaction here is more extreme, perhaps because he understood that this vision predicted severe persecution against his people. (CC)

went about the king's business – When Daniel recovered, he went about the king's business. Daniel may have been serving the royal court in a reduced capacity due to his advanced age. (CC)

appalled by the vision – Daniel not only was appalled by the vision, since it predicted dire times ahead, but he admits that he did not understand it. This is not to be taken in the absolute sense that he understood nothing about the vision. Instead, it probably indicates that he did not understand how it would be fulfilled in future history. While it is possible to obtain a good understanding of the past, it is much harder to understand what the future will be like. Daniel was telling us that the vision was closed up for him at this time (8:26). It is now open to us, mainly because we can look at it in hindsight, which is always easier than trying to view the future with foresight. (CC)

8:15–27 The angel Gabriel explains Daniel's vision. The wars between Persia and Greece will lead finally to the emergence of Antiochus IV, who will defy God and His people. But Daniel is assured that God has appointed this evil ruler's end. Today, we also face a wicked foe, Satan, who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour us (1Pt 5:8). Yet his end is also guaranteed because Christ died to “destroy the one who has the power of death” (Heb 2:14). Take comfort in Christ's victory. • Lord Jesus, thank You for defeating Satan and assuring us that we also will be conquerors through Christ. Amen.