DISCOVERING DANIEL

8
LESSON

WORKBOOK STUDY COMPANION · LESSON 8

The Ram *and the Goat*

DANIEL 8

Scripture written out in the NASB95, every question answered in one sentence, cross references, verse-by-verse commentary from three trusted teachers — and for each question, a point of critical thinking and a key question to carry into the week.

Amir Tsarfati
DISCOVERING DANIEL

John MacArthur
GRACE TO YOU

David Guzik
ENDURING WORD

PREPARED FOR ED & PAUL SMITH · BIBLE STUDY

01 CAPTURE THE SCENE

What do I see?

Using my Bible, working through Daniel 8 verse by verse. Some of this vision is hard to understand — it is fine to write down what I see before I grasp all of what it means.

1 What details does Daniel give to us about the ram (the Medo-Persian Empire) in Daniel 8:3-4?

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Daniel 8:3 NASB95

Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last.

Daniel 8:4 NASB95

I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself.

IN MY WORDS

I see a ram with two long horns of unequal length—the longer one coming up last—charging west, north, and south with no beast able to stand against him and no one able to rescue anyone from his power, doing exactly as he pleased and making himself great.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 8:20** Gabriel names him: “The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia.”

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati points out where the vision places Daniel—in Susa, the future Persian capital, watching the empire that will replace Babylon. God was showing him the next world power by name and by map while Babylon still looked permanent.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik observes that the ram was a recognized emblem of Persian rule, and the two uneven horns tell the story exactly: Media rose first, Persia rose later and rose higher.

CRITICAL THINKING

The shorter horn came up first and the longer horn came up last. That single detail is a prophecy inside a prophecy—Media was the senior partner when Daniel saw this, and Persia had not yet outgrown her. God dated an internal power shift before either kingdom knew it was coming. Notice too that the ram pushes west, north, and south, but never east: it never conquers the direction it came from.

KEY QUESTION

Where am I “butting” in my own strength, doing as I please, and calling the lack of resistance God’s approval?

2 What important fact does Daniel state about the goat (the Greek Empire) in verse 5?

P. 154

Daniel 8:5 NASB95

While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

IN MY WORDS

The goat came from the west and crossed the whole earth so fast that he never touched the ground, and he had one conspicuous horn between his eyes.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 8:21** "The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king."

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes the picture is speed, not size—the goat never touches the ground. Alexander covered thousands of miles in roughly a dozen years, and the vision captures that momentum in one line.

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur underscores the single horn: this is not a coalition but one man's will driving an empire, which is precisely why the empire could not survive his death.

CRITICAL THINKING

One horn between the eyes is the strength and the fatal weakness in the same image. An empire that moves at the speed of one man's ambition also stops at the speed of one man's funeral. Everything Greece gained in twelve years came apart within a generation because it had been built on a person rather than on a foundation.

KEY QUESTION

What am I building that would not survive me?

3 What does the goat do to the ram in verses 6-7?

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Daniel 8:6 NASB95

He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath.

Daniel 8:7 NASB95

I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.

IN MY WORDS

The goat rushed the ram in fury, struck him, shattered both of his horns, hurled him to the ground and trampled him—and there was no one to rescue the ram.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 11:3** "And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases."

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati marks the reversal: the ram from whose power no one could be rescued is now the one no one can rescue. The very sentence that described Persia's dominance is turned against Persia.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes the goat did not merely defeat the ram; he shattered both horns, ending Media and Persia together as a single power.

CRITICAL THINKING

Verse 4 said of the ram, “nor was there anyone to rescue from his power.” Verse 7 says, “there was none to rescue the ram from his power.” Scripture repeats the phrase on purpose. What a nation does to others eventually gets said about the nation itself, and the wording does not soften on the second reading.

KEY QUESTION

Am I treating anyone in a way I would not want repeated back to me when I am the weaker one?

4 What then happens to the goat in verses 8-9?

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Daniel 8:8 NASB95

Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

Daniel 8:9 NASB95

Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land.

IN MY WORDS

At the very height of his strength the goat’s large horn was broken, four conspicuous horns came up in its place toward the four winds, and out of one of those four came a small horn that grew exceedingly great toward the south, the east, and the Beautiful Land—Israel.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 11:4** “But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants.”

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur reads “as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken” as the whole doctrine of human glory in nine words: the moment of maximum strength was the moment of removal, and God did not need an army to do it.

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati notes where the small horn is headed—south, east, and “the Beautiful Land.” Prophecy keeps bending back toward Israel, because Israel is where the enemy always aims.

CRITICAL THINKING

Read the sequence again: the horn was not broken because it had weakened but because it was mighty. Scripture puts the peak and the break in the same breath, with no season of decline between them. That is not how empires expect to end, and it is not how proud men expect to fall.

KEY QUESTION

If my strongest season is also my most dangerous one, what am I doing right now to stay small before God?

5 **By the time we reach verse 10, Daniel is taken further into the future. What do we see happen in the following verses, and what impressions do you get with regard to power and evil?** P. 157

Daniel 8:10 NASB95

It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down.

Daniel 8:11 NASB95

It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down.

Daniel 8:12 NASB95

And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.

a. **Verse 10**

IN MY WORDS

The horn grows all the way up to the host of heaven and throws down and tramples some of the host and the stars—evil that has stopped settling for people and is now reaching for what belongs to God.

CROSS REFERENCE **Revelation 12:4** "And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth."—the same reach, the same result.

b. **Verse 11**

IN MY WORDS

It magnifies itself to be equal with the Commander of the host, removes the regular sacrifice from Him, and throws down the place of His sanctuary—power that is no longer content to rule men and now wants God's seat and God's worship.

CROSS REFERENCE **Isaiah 14:13-14** "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God… I will make myself like the Most High."

c. **Verse 12**

IN MY WORDS

On account of transgression the host and the sacrifice are given over to the horn, and it flings truth to the ground, performs its will, and prospers—evil that is permitted for a season and looks, for that season, like it is winning.

CROSS REFERENCE **Isaiah 59:14** "Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands far away; For truth has stumbled in the street…"

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur points out the verbs move steadily upward—grew, magnified, removed, threw down. Evil never plateaus; left unchecked it climbs until it is reaching for the throne of God.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik draws attention to the passive "will be given over." The horn does not seize the sacrifice; it is handed to him. Even the worst persecution in the chapter is under permission.

CRITICAL THINKING

The most disturbing word in these three verses is “prosper.” Truth gets flung to the ground, and the one who threw it there does well. That is the honest picture Scripture gives of certain seasons, and it is why believers who expect evil to fail immediately are so easily shaken when it does not.

KEY QUESTION

Can I keep trusting God through a season in which evil is visibly prospering and truth is visibly losing?

6 Who do we meet in verse 16, and what does he say to Daniel in verse 19?

P. 159

Daniel 8:16 NASB95

And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, “Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision.”

Daniel 8:19 NASB95

He said, “Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.”

IN MY WORDS

We meet Gabriel, and he tells Daniel he is going to let him know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, because the vision pertains to the appointed time of the end.

CROSS REFERENCE **Luke 1:19** “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.”—the same messenger, sent again.

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati emphasizes “the appointed time of the end”—the vision reaches past Antiochus to a period God has already scheduled. Prophecy is not a forecast of what might happen; it is a report of what is set.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes that Daniel sought to understand and was given an interpreter. God rarely hands out understanding to the incurious, and He rarely withholds it from the hungry.

CRITICAL THINKING

Gabriel is named here, again in Daniel 9, and again in Luke 1 when he announces John and then Jesus. The same messenger who carries the seventy weeks carries the birth announcement of the One those weeks were counting toward. Heaven’s staffing is not random.

KEY QUESTION

When I do not understand what God is doing, do I ask—or do I quietly assume it is not for me?

7 What basic outline of history does Gabriel provide in verses 20-22?

P. 160

Daniel 8:20-21 NASB95

“The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king.”

Daniel 8:22 NASB95

“The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power.”

IN MY WORDS

Gabriel names it plainly: the ram is Media and Persia, the goat is Greece, the large horn is Greece’s first king, and the four horns are four kingdoms that will arise from his nation but never with his power.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 2:21** “It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings.”

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur notes how unusual this is—prophecy that identifies the nations in advance. This is why critics have worked so hard to date Daniel late; the alternative is a God who tells history before it happens.

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati points to the phrase “although not with his power.” The four successors inherited the territory but not the man. Empire can be divided; greatness cannot be handed out.

CRITICAL THINKING

Gabriel gave the interpretation before the history happened, and every piece of it landed—Media and Persia, Greece, its first king, and the four kingdoms that followed him. That is worth sitting with before we reach the parts of Daniel that are still future. The track record of the fulfilled portion is the reason to trust the unfulfilled portion.

KEY QUESTION

Do I actually trust the promises of God I cannot yet see as much as I trust the ones I can verify?

8 In verses 23-25, we’re introduced to “a king…having fierce features.” Briefly, what are we told about this king?

P. 162

Daniel 8:23-24 NASB95

“In the latter period of their rule, When the transgressors have run their course, A king will arise, Insolent and skilled in intrigue. His power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people.”

Daniel 8:25 NASB95

“And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify himself in his heart, And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency.”

IN MY WORDS

He is insolent and skilled in intrigue, mighty but not by his own power, a destroyer to an extraordinary degree who makes deceit succeed, strikes people while they are at ease, magnifies himself in his heart, opposes the Prince of princes—and is broken without human agency.

CROSS REFERENCE **2 Thessalonians 2:8** “Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.”

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati reads Antiochus IV here as the near fulfillment and the Antichrist as the far one—the same profile, the same hatred for the Jewish people, the same contempt for the sanctuary, on a far larger stage.

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur fixes on "but not by his own power." This is not merely a gifted tyrant; he is energized from outside himself, which is why purely moral or political explanations of such men always fall short.

CRITICAL THINKING

"He will destroy many while they are at ease." The damage is done not in the middle of a war but in the middle of a calm. Comfort is the cover this kind of evil prefers, which is why Scripture keeps telling believers to stay alert during peaceful stretches and not only during obvious crisis.

KEY QUESTION

What has crept into my life during a season when I felt safe enough to stop watching?

9 What was Daniel told to do with the vision, and why (verse 26)?

P. 164

Daniel 8:26 NASB95

"The vision of the evenings and mornings Which has been told is true; But keep the vision secret, For it pertains to many days in the future."

IN MY WORDS

He was told the vision was true but to keep it secret, because it pertained to many days in the future.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 12:4** "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time."

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes the order of the two statements—first "it is true," then "keep it secret." Daniel was not told to doubt it; he was told to store it. Sealing protects a message for a later reader; it does not cancel it.

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati observes that what Daniel was told to seal, John was told to leave open: "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near" (Revelation 22:10). The clock had moved.

CRITICAL THINKING

Daniel received a message he was not permitted to use, aimed at people who would not be born for centuries. Obedience here meant carrying something faithfully with no return on it in his lifetime. Most of what God asks of us pays out later than we would like, and some of it pays out to somebody else entirely.

KEY QUESTION

Am I willing to be faithful with something whose fruit I will never personally see?

10 What was Daniel's physical and mental response to the vision (verse 27)?

P. 165

Daniel 8:27 NASB95

Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it.

IN MY WORDS

Physically it left him exhausted and sick for days, and mentally it left him astounded with no one to explain it—yet he got up again and carried on the king's business.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 7:28** "As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur notes Daniel did not treat prophecy as a hobby. Seeing what was coming on his people cost him his health for days, which says something about how casually we can handle the same material.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik highlights the last move of the chapter: he got up again and carried on the king's business. Revelation did not excuse him from his job. He grieved, and then he went to work.

CRITICAL THINKING

Notice what Daniel did not do. He did not resign his post, start a movement, or spend the rest of his life decoding what he had just been told to seal. He went back to ordinary work while carrying an extraordinary burden. That combination—deeply shaken and still faithful in the daily assignment—is one of the hardest things in the book to imitate.

KEY QUESTION

When God stirs me deeply, do I return to my ordinary duties, or do I use the stirring as a reason to neglect them?

02 ANALYZE THE MESSAGE

What does it say and mean?

Using both my Bible and my copy of Discovering Daniel.

1 **In Daniel 8:4, we read this about the Medo-Persian Empire: "I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will." What does this reveal to us about the nature and power of the Medo-Persian Empire?** P. 166

Daniel 8:4 NASB95

I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself.

IN MY WORDS

It was an empire that expanded in every direction it chose, met nothing on earth that could stop it or rescue its victims, answered to nothing but its own will—and used that freedom to make itself great.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 5:19** The same unchecked will described of Babylon: "whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive."

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes that "did as he pleased" is Scripture's standard description of unaccountable power—the same phrase returns for Alexander in Daniel 11:3 and for the final king in Daniel 11:36.

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati points out how large this actually was: the Achaemenid Persian Empire was the biggest the world had yet seen, and to everyone alive at the time it looked permanent.

CRITICAL THINKING

The last clause is the one that matters: "and magnified himself." The conquests are only the setting; the sin is the self-exaltation. Scripture consistently treats unchecked power as dangerous not mainly because of what it does to the conquered but because of what it does to the conqueror.

KEY QUESTION

In the areas where nobody can tell me no, who is actually holding me accountable?

2 **In Daniel 8:5, we're told this about the Greek Empire: The goat "attacked the ram…There was no power in the ram to withstand him…and there was no one that could deliver the ram." What do we learn here about the Medo-Persian Empire and the subsequent Greek Empire?** P. 167

Daniel 8:7 NASB95

I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.

IN MY WORDS

We learn that the empire nobody could withstand met an empire it could not withstand—the invincible power turned out to be only the strongest one so far, and Greece inherited the very description Persia had worn.

CROSS REFERENCE **Psalm 75:6-7** "For not from the east, nor from the west, Nor from the desert comes exaltation; But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another."

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur observes that both empires are described with the identical vocabulary of dominance, which is exactly the point—world powers are interchangeable in God's account of history.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes that the language of no one to deliver is used of both, and both eventually needed a deliverer they did not have.

CRITICAL THINKING

The workbook cites verse 5, but the wording it quotes belongs to the account in verses 6-7—worth noticing, because the two do different jobs. Verse 5 tells how fast Greece came; verses 6-7 tell how completely Persia fell. Speed and totality are two different threats, and Daniel records both.

KEY QUESTION

What am I currently treating as too big to fail?

3 According to Daniel 8, what then suddenly happened to the Greek Empire?

P. 168

Daniel 8:8 NASB95

Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

Daniel 8:22 NASB95

"The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power."

IN MY WORDS

At the peak of its strength its large horn was suddenly broken—Alexander died young—and four kingdoms rose in its place under lesser men who never held his power.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 11:4** "But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants."

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati notes that Alexander conquered the known world and then could not conquer a fever. What followed his death was not orderly succession but chaos, and the empire was divided among his generals.

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur reads this as God's commentary on human achievement—the man who had taken the world was removed in his early thirties, and his kingdom was parceled out like an estate.

CRITICAL THINKING

Four kingdoms rose "although not with his power." The empire kept the borders and lost the thing that made it an empire. That is usually what happens to what we build: the structure outlives us, the life in it does not, and the people who inherit it wonder why it no longer works.

KEY QUESTION

Am I pouring myself into something that will still have life in it when I am gone?

4 **What do we learn here about the seemingly most invincible world powers? Why is this important for us to keep in mind today?** P. 169

Daniel 4:35 NASB95

"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"

IN MY WORDS

I learn that no world power is actually invincible—each one rises by God's permission and falls on His schedule—and that matters today because I am tempted to read the headlines as though whoever is strong right now will be strong forever.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 2:21** "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings."

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur points out the recurring lesson of Daniel: God is not reacting to history, He is administering it. Nations are instruments, and instruments get set down.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes the pastoral use of this—Daniel's first readers were an exiled minority living under a superpower, and the vision told them the superpower had an expiration date.

CRITICAL THINKING

Set the two statements side by side: the ram "did as he pleased" in Daniel 8:4, and God "does according to His will" in Daniel 4:35. Both sound absolute inside their own sentence, but only one of them is still true a chapter later. Human sovereignty is always a short-term lease on language that belongs to God.

KEY QUESTION

Does the news genuinely frighten me—and if so, what does that reveal about who I think is actually in charge?

5 **In Daniel 8:23-25, we read about the wicked ruler Antiochus IV, who foreshadows the final world dictator, the Antichrist. Read these verses again with this in mind: Here, we see Antiochus's transgressions against and contempt for (1) the Jewish people and (2) God. What specific acts did this evil madman carry out against the Jews and God?** P. 171

Daniel 8:24 NASB95

"His power will be mighty, but not by his own power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform his will; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people."

Daniel 8:11-12 NASB95

It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.

IN MY WORDS

Against the Jewish people he destroyed to an extraordinary degree, destroyed mighty men and the holy people, and struck many while they were at ease; against God he removed the regular sacrifice, threw down the place of the sanctuary, flung truth to the ground, magnified himself as God's equal, and opposed the Prince of princes.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 11:31** "Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation."

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati notes the pattern that runs from Antiochus to the Antichrist—attack the people, defile the temple, stop the worship, demand the worship. It is one script, run twice.

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur observes that the attack on the sacrifice is an attack on the gospel in shadow form: stop the sacrifice and you have removed the only picture of atonement the people had.

CRITICAL THINKING

Every act on this list is aimed at worship, not merely at people. He did not simply persecute Jews; he went after the sacrifice, the sanctuary, and the truth—the three things that connected them to God. Persecution that only wanted to hurt would have stopped at bodies. This wanted the relationship.

KEY QUESTION

What has been quietly interrupting my worship—and have I been treating that as a small thing?

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6 **In Daniel 8:25, we're told Antiochus—and this will be true of the Antichrist as well—would "be broken without human means" (emphasis added). Ultimately, who will destroy Antiochus and the Antichrist?** P. 173

Daniel 8:25 NASB95

"And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; And he will magnify himself in his heart, And he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency."

IN MY WORDS

God Himself will—no army, coalition, or assassin gets the credit, because the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of princes, is the one who ends him.

CROSS REFERENCE **2 Thessalonians 2:8** "whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming."

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati emphasizes that the one the Antichrist opposes is the one who ends him—the Prince of princes is not a bystander in his own war.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik connects “without human agency” to the stone in Daniel 2 “cut out without hands.” The same idea, the same point: the decisive blow in history is not struck by men.

CRITICAL THINKING

“Without human agency” cuts in a direction we rarely consider. It is comfort, but it is also a limit on us. The final answer to the world’s worst evil is not a better army, a better election, or a better strategy—which means our assignment in the meantime is faithfulness, not rescue.

KEY QUESTION

Am I exhausting myself trying to fix something God has already said He will finish Himself?

03 COMPARE THIS PASSAGE WITH THE REST OF SCRIPTURE

How is it supported elsewhere in the Bible?

Letting Scripture interpret Scripture.

1 **What specific points do the following passages make about God's sovereignty over people, including human kings and the extent of their rule?** P. 174

Job 14:5 NASB95

"Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass."

Psalm 75:6-7 NASB95

For not from the east, nor from the west, Nor from the desert comes exaltation; But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another.

Daniel 2:21 NASB95

"It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding."

Daniel 4:35 NASB95

"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"

Acts 17:26 NASB95

and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

a. **Job 14:5**

IN MY WORDS

My days are already determined and God has set limits I cannot pass—the length of a life is decided, not negotiated.

CROSS REFERENCE **Psalm 139:16** "And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them."

b. **Psalm 75:6-7**

IN MY WORDS

Exaltation does not come from any direction on the compass; God is the Judge, and He is the one who puts down one and exalts another.

CROSS REFERENCE **1 Samuel 2:7** "The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts."

c. **Daniel 2:21**

IN MY WORDS

God controls the calendar of history—He changes the times and the epochs, and He is the one who removes kings and establishes kings.

CROSS REFERENCE **Proverbs 21:1** "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."

d. **Daniel 4:35**

IN MY WORDS

Everyone on earth is accounted as nothing beside Him; He does according to His will in heaven and on earth, and no one can ward off His hand or question Him.

CROSS REFERENCE **Isaiah 46:10** "My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure…"

e. **Acts 17:26**

IN MY WORDS

God made every nation from one man and personally determined both the eras they would occupy and the boundaries they would hold.

CROSS REFERENCE **Deuteronomy 32:8** "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance… He set the boundaries of the peoples."

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur ties these together: God's sovereignty is not a general disposition toward history but a specific authority over dates, borders, and individual careers.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes that Acts 17:26 takes the rise and fall of empires Daniel watched and applies it to every nation that has ever existed—including the one I live in.

CRITICAL THINKING

Put the five together and notice the range of what God is said to determine: the length of a life, the promotion of a man, the succession of kings, the outcome of His own will, and the eras and borders of nations. That covers the largest thing in this chapter and the smallest thing in my week. The same hand that set the boundary of the Persian Empire set the number of my months.

KEY QUESTION

If God has set the boundaries of nations and the number of my days, what am I still trying to control that was never mine?

2 With regard to God's sovereignty over our lives and the time He grants to us, what encouragement can we receive from these passages?

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Psalm 73:23-24 NASB95

Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. With Your counsel You will guide me, And afterward receive me to glory.

Isaiah 41:13 NASB95

"For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you.'"

Isaiah 46:4 NASB95

Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will bear you! I have done it, and I will carry you; And I will bear you and I will deliver you.

Hebrews 13:5 NASB95

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"

a. Psalm 73:23-24

IN MY WORDS

Even when I am envious and confused about the wicked, I am still continually with God, He has taken hold of my right hand, and He will guide me with His counsel now and receive me to glory afterward.

CROSS REFERENCE **Psalm 73:26** "My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

b. Isaiah 41:13

IN MY WORDS

The Lord Himself upholds my right hand and speaks directly to my fear: "Do not fear, I will help you."

CROSS REFERENCE **Isaiah 41:10** "Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God… Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

c. Isaiah 46:4

IN MY WORDS

God does not change as I age—He carries me into old age and gray hair, and the God who made me is the God still bearing me at the end.

CROSS REFERENCE **Psalm 71:18** "And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation…"

d. Hebrews 13:5

IN MY WORDS

Contentment rests on a promise rather than on circumstances: He Himself has said He will never desert me and never forsake me.

CROSS REFERENCE **Deuteronomy 31:6** "The LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes the repeated image of the right hand—in Psalm 73 and Isaiah 41 God is not merely nearby, He has taken hold. The grip is His, not mine.

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati observes that the God who schedules empires also schedules gray hair. Sovereignty that only operated at the level of nations would be no comfort at all.

CRITICAL THINKING

Every one of these four promises is about presence rather than exemption. Not one of them says the trouble will be removed; all of them say I will not be dropped. That distinction is the difference between a faith that survives Daniel 8 and one that quietly resents God for not preventing it.

KEY QUESTION

Have I been asking God to change my circumstances when what He has actually promised me is Himself?

04 EXECUTE

How does this affect my life?

Taking Daniel 8 off the page and into the week.

1 **One of the challenges of living in a fallen world is that so often, we see the wicked prosper, while the righteous face struggles. Life seems so unjust.** P. 176

Psalm 73:3-6 NASB95

For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pains in their death, And their body is fat. They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like mankind. Therefore pride is their necklace; The garment of violence covers them.

Psalm 73:7-9 NASB95

Their eye bulges from fatness; The imaginations of their heart run riot. They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue parades through the earth.

Psalm 73:18-19 NASB95

Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!

a. **Read Psalm 73:3-9. In what ways do evil people seem to do well, and how are their attitudes described?**

IN MY WORDS

They seem healthy, comfortable, and untouched by the troubles that wear everyone else down—and their attitude is arrogance: pride worn like a necklace, violence worn like clothing, mocking speech, and mouths set against the heavens themselves.

CROSS REFERENCE **Psalm 73:9** "They have set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue parades through the earth."

b. **But what is the eventual destiny of the wicked, according to verses 18-19?**

IN MY WORDS

God has set them in slippery places and casts them down to destruction—they are destroyed in a moment and utterly swept away by sudden terrors.

CROSS REFERENCE **Daniel 8:25** "But he will be broken without human agency."—the same sudden, God-authored end.

c. **In verses 27 and 28, what contrast do we see between those who reject God and those who embrace Him?**

IN MY WORDS

Those who are far from God perish, while for the one who draws near, the nearness of God is his good—one group ends in destruction, the other ends in refuge and testimony.

CROSS REFERENCE **Psalm 73:28** "But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works."

d. In light of the above, what long-term attitudes should we have about the prosperity of the wicked and the struggles faced by the righteous?

IN MY WORDS

I should stop measuring justice by the current scoreboard, refuse envy as the trap it is, and hold the long view—because their prosperity is temporary footing and my struggle is not the end of my story.

CROSS REFERENCE **Psalm 37:1-2** "Do not fret because of evildoers… For they will wither quickly like the grass."

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur points out that Asaph's perspective changed not when his circumstances changed but when he came into the sanctuary of God (Psalm 73:17). Worship, not explanation, corrected his eyes.

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes the honesty of the psalm—it does not scold the reader for noticing that the wicked prosper. It admits the problem in full before it answers it.

CRITICAL THINKING

Asaph did not get new information in the sanctuary; he got a new endpoint. The facts about the wicked stayed exactly the same, but he began measuring them against "afterward" instead of against today. Envy is almost always a math error about when the accounting closes.

KEY QUESTION

Whose life am I quietly envious of—and would I still envy it if I could see the end of it?

2 Bible prophecy tells us that both Antiochus IV and the Antichrist will persecute God's people. And even today, as we draw closer to the end times, it is becoming more difficult than ever to live as Christians in a world that has no moral or spiritual compass. With that in mind, what helpful wisdom do we gain from the following passages? P. 177

Matthew 5:10-12 NASB95

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:44 NASB95

"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,"

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NASB95

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Timothy 1:12 NASB95

For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

1 Peter 3:17 NASB95

For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

a. **Matthew 5:10-12**

> **IN MY WORDS**
> Persecution for the sake of righteousness is not a sign God has left me—it is called blessed, it puts me in the company of the prophets, and the reward is in heaven rather than here.

CROSS REFERENCE **1 Peter 4:14** "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

b. **Matthew 5:44**

> **IN MY WORDS**
> I am told to love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me—which takes the hatred out of my hands and puts those people in God's.

CROSS REFERENCE **Romans 12:19** "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God…"

c. **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

> **IN MY WORDS**
> God's grace is sufficient for whatever comes, His power is actually perfected in my weakness, and the pressure I want removed is the very place His strength shows up.

CROSS REFERENCE **2 Corinthians 4:7** "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves…"

d. **2 Timothy 1:12**

> **IN MY WORDS**
> I can suffer without shame because I know whom I have believed and am convinced He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

CROSS REFERENCE **Jude 24** "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy."

e. **1 Peter 3:17**

> **IN MY WORDS**
> If I am going to suffer, it is better to suffer for doing what is right than for doing what is wrong—so my job is to make sure the reason I am suffering is a good one.

CROSS REFERENCE **1 Peter 4:15-16** "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer… but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed…"

Amir Tsarfati DISCOVERING DANIEL

Tsarfati notes that Jesus assumed persecution rather than raised it as a possibility—the Beatitude is written to people who will experience it, not to people who might.

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur observes that Paul's answer to the thorn was not removal but sufficiency, and grace that is "sufficient" is measured out for the actual weight, not for the weight we wish we had.

CRITICAL THINKING

Look at what these five passages do not offer: not one of them promises escape, and not one of them promises an explanation. What they promise is blessing, sufficient grace, a God who guards what I have entrusted to Him, and a command to pray for the persecutor. Scripture prepares believers for pressure by changing what they expect, not by changing what happens.

KEY QUESTION

Am I praying for anyone who has actually hurt me—or only about them?

3 In 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, the apostle Paul wrote these wonderful words. How are you encouraged by this passage? And what are some ways we can remind ourselves to take our eyes off our momentary afflictions and keep them focused on the things that are eternal?

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2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NASB95

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

IN MY WORDS

I am encouraged that my trouble is not wasted but is actually producing an eternal weight of glory, and I keep my eyes on the eternal by staying in the Word daily, worshiping with God's people, praying through the trial instead of around it, remembering past deliverances, and deliberately naming what is temporary when I am tempted to treat it as permanent.

CROSS REFERENCE **Romans 8:18** "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

David Guzik ENDURING WORD

Guzik notes Paul's scale: he weighs affliction against glory and calls the affliction light—not because it was small, but because of what sat on the other side of the scale.

John MacArthur GRACE TO YOU

MacArthur observes the verb: affliction is "producing" glory. Suffering is not merely endured on the way to reward; it is doing something in the believer that nothing else does.

CRITICAL THINKING

Paul calls his affliction "momentary" and "light"—the same man who was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and imprisoned. He was not minimizing what he went through; he was comparing it to something so much heavier that the comparison rearranged his vocabulary. The problem with my afflictions is rarely their weight; it is that I keep weighing them by themselves.

KEY QUESTION

What am I currently treating as permanent that Scripture calls momentary?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

The Medo-Persian Empire is gone. The Greek Empire is gone. Antiochus IV is gone. Every prophecy Daniel was given about those kingdoms and those men has already been fulfilled, and fulfilled with such precision that critics have worked very hard to argue Daniel must have been written after the fact. That is the striking thing about this chapter: most of it is history now, and it happened exactly the way Gabriel said it would.

But not all of it. Gabriel told Daniel the vision pertained to "the appointed time of the end," and the profile of the king in verses 23-25 reaches past Antiochus to someone still ahead of us. Daniel 9:27 describes a ruler who will "make a firm covenant with the many for one week" and then, "in the middle of the week," put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering — the seven-year treaty broken at the halfway point. Daniel 11:36 says he "will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods." Revelation 13 describes the same figure and tells us where the power comes from — the dragon gives it to him. That is why Daniel 8:24 says his might is "not by his own power."

And yet the same passages that describe his power also fence it in. Revelation 13:5 gives him forty-two months, and verse 7 says authority "was given to him" — the passive voice again, the same as Daniel 8:12. Just as God permitted Satan to go only so far with Job, this ruler is permitted, and permission has an expiration date written on it. Daniel watched a courtroom in chapter 7 and a battlefield in chapter 8, and in both the verdict was already entered.

Daniel was told to keep this vision secret because it pertained to many days in the future. John was told the opposite: "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near" (Revelation 22:10). What Daniel sealed, Revelation opens. We are reading with a hindsight Daniel did not have and a nearness John did not have to wait for.

So the chapter closes where every chapter of Daniel closes. Nebuchadnezzar came and went. Medo-Persia came and went. Greece came and went. The last one will come and go too — broken without human agency, by the Prince of princes he dared to oppose. The kingdoms of men are loud and they are brief. The kingdom of God endures.

He will even oppose the Prince of princes, But he will be broken without human agency.

DANIEL 8:25

Daniel saw the strongest men of the next four centuries, and it left him exhausted and sick for days. Then he got up again and carried on the king's business — working for an empire he had just watched fall in a vision. That is the posture this chapter asks for. Not panic, because the outcome is already fixed. Not indifference, because the cost is real. Just faithful people carrying what they have seen, doing today's ordinary work, waiting on the God who breaks empires without lifting a human hand.

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