

Some Notes on Daniel Chapter 8

In chapter eight, Daniel relates the second vision God gave to him. The vision concerns a portion of the overall period of time symbolized in the first vision; namely, regarding Medo-Persia and Greece. Reference is made also to the Antichrist of future time in the interpretation of the vision included in the chapter. Once more, animals are used for symbolism, but in place of the bear and leopard, employed in the first vision for the two kingdoms concerned, a two horned ram and a one-horned goat are used. In this vision also, a little horn appears; but it cannot represent the Antichrist, because it grows from one of four horns, which in turn have replaced the one notable horn of the goat, and this animal with these horns symbolizes Greece of ancient time. This little horn can represent only Antiochus Epiphanes, who served as one of the kings of the Syrian division of Alexander's empire. He is noted as a "little horn," in parallel with the "little horn" of the first vision, because he brought severe persecution on the Jewish people of Palestine in his day, after the pattern of what the Antichrist will do in his day yet future.

It should be noted also that the language used in this chapter reverts to Hebrew, rather than continuing in the Aramaic which has been used since 2:4.

A. THE GENERAL SETTING (vv. 1, 2)

As with the first vision, this second one also has an introduction, which gives the setting, particularly as to time and place.

1-2. In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar, a vision appeared to me, even to me Daniel, after the one which had appeared to me at the first. And I saw in the vision, and as I beheld, I was in Shushan the fortress which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was by the river Ulai.

- *In the third year:* The first vision having come in Belshazzar's first year, this one, in his third, came two years later - in 551 B.C., when Daniel was about sixty-nine years old. This vision, like the prior one, was given well before the events recorded in chapter five. [About twelve years before, see notes on 7:1]
- *A vision appeared:* The former vision came at night and was a form of dream-vision, but this one came in the daytime, with no mention of sleep or of being in bed.
- *Even to me Daniel:* These words stress the fact that Daniel received this vision also, and indicate that he felt himself honored that he should be given another such time of revelation. He apparently was surprised and thrilled that God should favor him so highly.
- *I saw in the vision:* This phrase, appearing twice in the verse, calls attention to two matters of which Daniel became aware as the vision began: first, that he was in Shushan, and second, that he was by the river Ulai. The vision has already begun at this point, but Daniel still gives background information, of which he became aware after its beginning.
- *And as I beheld, I was in Shushan the fortress:* Literally, "and it was when I saw that I was in Shushan the fortress." The wording favors the idea that Daniel was not actually in Shushan, but that he saw himself in the vision as being there. Shushan (called Susa by the Greeks) was a city about 230 miles east of Babylon and 120 miles north of the Persian Gulf. At the time of Daniel's vision, it was simply an important eastern city, but earlier it had been the capital of Elam, and after the time of Daniel's vision it was made one of the royal cities of the Medo-Persian empire by Cyrus (Neh. 1:1; Esth. 1:2). The word for "fortress" (*habirah* [הַבִּירָה]) may be translated "palace," but probably here it is used to depict the importance of the city as the former Elamite capital. It was in this city that the famous code of Hammurabi was found, and also where the beautiful Persian palace, constructed by Darius Hystaspes, where Esther served as queen, has been completely uncovered.
- *Province of Elam:* The history of Elam is not sufficiently clear to indicate whether it was a province of Babylon or of Media at this time. Some evidence exists that it had come under Median control about 596 B.C. The country of Elam had been a power to the east of Babylonia since before the time of Abraham. Assyria, however, had reduced it to the status of a province under her domain, during the reign of Ashurbanipal about 645 B.C., and it seems now to have had a similar relationship with either Babylonia or Media. The possibility exists, too, that it was not formally a province of any country, but that the term for "province" (*medinah* [מְדִינָה]) is used only generally, denoting simply a "district."
- *By the river Ullai:* The word for "river" (*uval* [אוּבַל]) used here is rare in the Tanach, found only in this chapter (vv. 2, 3, 6). The Ulai, known classically as the Eulaeus, is best identified with an artificial canal, about 900 feet

wide, which flowed between the Choaspes and the Coprates Rivers, passing close to Shushan on the northeast.

B. The Vision Proper (vv. 3–4)

8:3–4. I looked up, and there was a ram standing beside the canal. He had two horns. The two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer one came up last. I saw the ram charging to the west, the north, and the south. No animal could stand against him, and there was no rescue from his power. He did whatever he wanted and became great.

Though Daniel's vision as a whole continues through verse twenty six, the vision proper is confined to verses three to fourteen, with verses fifteen to twenty-six being given to interpretation.

- *A ram:* A ram, the first of the two symbolic animals of this vision, is now introduced. The verse implies that the ram was already present as Daniel first saw himself in vision by the river. Not far from him stood this animal, symbolizing the "kings of Media and Persia," (v. 20). "A ram" is literally "one ram," and the significance of the number is to make clear that what Daniel saw was a single ram, with the two horns now described. Ammianus Marcellinus, a fourth century historian, states that the Persian ruler bore the head of a ram as he stood at the head of the army.
- *It had two horns:* Rams normally have two horns, but these were unique. As Daniel watched, one began to grow later than the other and then became higher. The symbolism is clear from Medo-Persian history. Before Cyrus came to power, Media was already a major power, having, for instance helped Babylonia defeat Assyria in 612 B.C. Persia, on the other hand, was a small country at the time, lying to the south, holding less than 50,000 square miles. But Cyrus, on coming to power there, succeeded in gaining control over powerful Media to the north (c. 550 B.C.), and then making Persia the greater of the two. With these combined, he moved on to establish the vast Medo-Persian empire.
- *Westward and northward and southward:* Daniel observed as the ram began to push or butt with his head in three directions: west, north, and south. The symbolism is that Medo-Persia would similarly make conquest primarily in these three directions. The conquests of Cyrus and his successors were mainly to the west (Babylonia, Syria, Asia Minor) the direction noted first, with the later expansion northward (Armenia and the Caspian Sea region) and southward (Egypt and Ethiopia). Some conquest to the east was made, but not of the significance of those in the other directions.
- *No beast could stand:* Apparently Daniel now saw other animals, unnamed and undescribed, enter the vision and seek to hinder the ram, but none were able. The comparative ease with which Cyrus was able to conquer other nations is a matter of history. Having established himself as master of Persia and Media combined, he moved across northern Mesopotamia to Asia Minor almost unopposed. There he defeated the wealthy Croesus and then marched back east and against Babylon, which also was taken easily. All this was predicted through Isaiah (45:1-3) a century and a half earlier, when he stated that God "would make the crooked places straight" before this ruler.
- *He did as he pleased:* Because no beast could withstand the ram, and there was no one who could help any do this, the ram was able to push quite as he willed. The word for "became great" (הִגְדִּיל, *higdil*) may be translated "did great things," but the thought is still that by so doing he became great in power in the world of his day. Medo-Persia became the greatest empire in amount of territory controlled of all empires until its day.

8:5. As I was observing, a male goat appeared, coming from the west across the surface of the entire earth without touching the ground. The goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

- *A he-goat came:* The words translated "he-goat" mean literally "buck of the goats" (צִפְּיֵר־הָעִזִּים, *tzepir hā'izzim*). This animal, according to verse twenty one, symbolizes the "king of Greece." No particular king is in mind, for the same verse makes the "prominent horn" symbolic of the first king, Alexander. The goat itself is best taken as a representative of the country, over which a series of kings would rule. Compared with a ram, a he-goat has greater strength and agility, features significant in the symbolism.
- *From the west:* Greece lay to the west of Medo-Persia, and Alexander came from that direction as he moved into the Medo-Persian realm. The indication that he crossed the face of the whole earth accords with the vast amount of territory which he conquered for Greece, even more than Medo-Persia had controlled.

- *Without touching the ground:* The thought is that Alexander's conquest was with great speed; cf. the four wings of the leopard in 7:6.
- *A prominent horn:* This phrase is literally "a horn of vision" (קֶרֶן חֲזוֹת, *qeren chāzut*). Comparing this with the parallel phrase in verse twenty-one, "the great horn" (קֶרֶן חֲזוֹת, *qeren chāzut*), the thought of height, something easily seen, comes to mind, leading to the translation "prominent." As noted, the horn symbolizes Alexander the Great (cf. v. 21). Goats, like rams, normally have two horns; therefore this horn is unusual. The significance is that Alexander would be unusual, one of the great military strategists of history. He was born in 356 B.C., himself the son of a great conqueror, Philip of Macedon. His father had already united Greece with Macedonia and was planning to fight Persia, when he was murdered. Alexander was only twenty when he succeeded his father as king in 336 B.C., having been educated under the instruction of the famed Aristotle. He moved against the Persians a year and a half later, in 334 B.C.

6–7 He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and rushed at him with savage fury. I saw him approaching the ram, and infuriated with him, he struck the ram, shattering his two horns, and the ram was not strong enough to stand against him. The goat threw him to the ground and trampled him, and there was no one to rescue the ram from his power.

- *the two-horned ram:* Daniel observed the goat drawing near to the ram, as both were ready for combat. The words translated "two-horned" mean literally "the master of the two horns" (הָאֵיִל בְּעַל הַקְּרָנַיִם, *hā'ayil ba'al haqerānaim*), but in such a phrase *ba'al* is best taken as merely a word of relation. With about 35,000 troops, Alexander crossed the Hellespont, thereby coming immediately into Persian territory. Not far away was the Granicus River, which he found necessary to cross and where a large Persian force awaited him.
- *savage fury:* Daniel watched as the goat encountered the ram in combat. "The fury of his power" (בְּחֵמַת כֹּחַ) speaks of infuriated strength. The word for "fury" comes from a root meaning "to be hot." Hatred for the Persians had built up within the Greeks since the days of Cyrus, because of constant tension and quarreling. Normal strength becomes heightened when backed by emotional heat. With this, Alexander joined in battle at the Granicus in 334 B.C., and later in two other vital encounters.
- *No strength in the ram:* Daniel watched as the ram was bested by the goat, his two horns broken and his strength made to vanish. The Persian force at Granicus, as in the two later battles, was larger than Alexander's, but the Greeks won. This left the way clear for freeing Grecian cities of Asia Minor from their hated Persian masters, which was the next order of business. The following year witnessed the second of the major encounters, this time at Issus in the Taurus mountains. The Persian king himself, Darius III, had come to take command now, but the result was the same. Next followed the famous siege of Tyre and later the occupation of all Egypt. Alexander then led his troops on an extensive march all the way east to the Tigris, where, near the site of old Nineveh, he met the Persians for the third time, at the battle of Gaugemela (also called after Arbella), in the fall of 331 B.C. The Persians had assembled there a still larger host of troops, but once more to no avail; and this left the entire Medo-Persian holdings open before the young Grecian conqueror.
- *He cast him ... and trampled him:* Daniel saw the goat not only knock the ram to the ground, but then trample him with his sharp hooves. Alexander not only defeated the Persians these three times, but moved on to occupy all their land. He captured and sacked Shushan, Ecbatana, and Persepolis in turn, and then marched all the way to the Indus River and even across it, before turning south to the Indian Ocean and finally back to Babylon. The conquest and humiliation of Persia was complete.

8 Then the male goat became very great, but when he became powerful, the large horn was shattered. Four conspicuous horns came up in its place, pointing toward the four winds of heaven.

- *Became very great:* This is the same phrase as used regarding the ram in verse four, except for the addition of "very." It could be translated "did very great things," but the thought would still be that the goat became very great, so as to be able to do them. The addition of the adverb "very" (מְאֹד, *me'od*) is apparently meant to indicate that the he-goat became greater than the ram.
- *large horn was shattered:* Daniel does not state what happened in the vision to cause the great horn to be broken, but this detail is not needed to see the intended symbolism. Alexander died when he had just subjected all Medo-Persia to himself. On returning to Babylon from the east, he was taken with a severe fever, and in June, 323 B.C., died at the age of thirty-two. He had left his home country over eleven years before, and

apparently never returned. He was taken in death, a young military genius, cut off at the height of achievement and power.

- *Four conspicuous horns*: The word “conspicuous” is the same as that used in verse five, but it is used here without the preceding construct word “horn.” Its use appears to be adverbial, giving the literal translation: “there came up prominently four in its place.” This development is symbolic of the dividing of Alexander’s vast holdings between four of his generals: Cassander receiving Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus, Thrace and much of Asia Minor; Seleucus, Syria and vast regions to the east; and Ptolemy, Egypt. For a while a fifth, Antigonus, held territory in Asia Minor, but in 301 B.C. he was overthrown. It should be noted that the imagery employed in the vision does not imply, correctly, that Alexander himself divided the empire. He did not; the fourfold division came rather as a result of extensive fighting among the generals during twenty-two years.
- *The four winds*: Reference is to the four directions: Cassander to the west, Lysimachus to the north, Seleucus to the east, and Ptolemy to the south.

9 From one of them a little horn emerged and grew extensively toward the south and the east and toward the beautiful land.

- *a little horn*: All the horns which Daniel saw grow on the he-goat grew contrary to nature: the one horn, then four horns in its place, and afterward another horn apparently growing out of one of the four. The symbolism of this single horn is clear. From one of the divisions would emerge a king of unusual significance, of which Daniel was now to take note. The king symbolized is commonly and correctly identified as Antiochus Epiphanes, who became the eighth ruler over the domain of Seleucus, reigning from 175 to 164 B.C. He is brought into the vision because of his exploits against the Jews in Palestine—exploits which correspond to the symbolic descriptions of this horn in the following verses.
- *emerged*: Literally, “went out from littleness.” The thought is that the horn emerged from a state of being small, then grew larger as Daniel watched. This is the same idea as that which was expressed in 7:8, 24-26 regarding the “little horn” of Daniel’s first vision. The Hebrew word used for “littleness” here (מִצְרִיחַ, *mitzirāh*) is the same word as the one used in the Aramaic there (זַיְרָה, *zeiērāh*), though in a different construction. The two kings symbolized are not the same, however, for in the first vision it was the Antichrist, still to appear in the future, and here it is Antiochus Epiphanes of ancient history. The reason for symbolizing both as a little horn is that the one prefigures the other. Antiochus Epiphanes is sometimes called the antichrist of the Old Testament; that is, the one who brought suffering to the Jews in his day, in the pattern of what the real Antichrist will do during the Great Tribulation (compare 7: 24-26 and 9: 27 with 8: 10-13). From what Antiochus did to Jews in his day, therefore, one may know the general pattern of what the Antichrist will do to them in the future.
- *became very great*: Antiochus Epiphanes ascended the throne following the murder of his brother, the former king, Seleucus Philopator. The son of Seleucus, named Demetrius, the rightful heir to the throne, still lived, but he was held as hostage in Rome. Antiochus succeeded in obtaining the throne largely through flattery and bribery, as indicated in 11: 21 (which see). Thus his beginning was small, since he was not even the rightful heir. When once crowned, however, he assumed the name Epiphanes, meaning “illustrious,” by which he sought to attract attention and admiration to himself. Being extremely proud, his own self-estimate always outweighed his accomplishments; but still he did make significant conquests, which were of sufficient importance to warrant the description that he “became very great.”
- *south ... east ... beautiful land*: The conquests of Antiochus were mainly in respect to the areas here indicated. As to the south, he made gains against Egypt (cf. 1Macc 1:16–19); as to the east, he campaigned in Mesopotamia, particularly Armenia; (cf. 1Macc 3:21–37) and as to the “glorious land” (Palestine), he came to exercise full domination over the land of the Jews. The word for “the beautiful land” means literally “the glory” (הַצֵּבִי, *hatzevi*), but the identification with Palestine is clear both from a comparison with 11:16, 41, where the full term (אֶרֶץ הַצֵּבִי, *’eret hatzevi*) is used, and also from the fact that one could expect this form of designation to refer to God’s chosen land. Geographically, Palestine lay between the other two areas of Antiochus’ conquests. Palestine had been an object of dispute between the dynasties of Ptolemy and Seleucus since the day of the division, but was now under the rule of the Seleucids. It was taken from the Ptolemies in a series of battles between Antiochus III, father of Antiochus Epiphanes, and Ptolemy V in the years 202- 198 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes now sought to force new religious and civic ways upon the Jews.

10 It grew as high as the heavenly host, made some of the stars and some of the host fall to the earth, and trampled them.

- *heavenly host* – The manner in which Antiochus became great in respect to Palestine is now presented. The symbolism shows the goat somehow pressing even against the host of heaven, meaning the stars (Jer. 33: 22). How this may have been depicted in the vision is not described, but the significance is clear. The host of heaven, or stars, refers to the people of God (cf. 12:3; Gen. 15:5; 22:17; Ex. 12:41), and the symbolism is that Antiochus would oppress God’s people, the Jews, in their land (cf. v. 24).
- *made some of the stars and some of the host fall to the earth* – Further detail is now given. The goat was seen to cast some of the host down to the earth. “Stars” likely explains the identity of the “host,” making “and” to carry the thought of “even.” Reference is to the large number of Jews whom Antiochus put to death because of their resistance to his unfair regulations.
- *Trampled them:* Daniel saw the goat now trample the stars with his feet, symbolizing the degree of persecution which Antiochus effected on the Jews. His desire was to force them to become Grecian in their thinking and ways. The Jews resisted and were made to suffer for it. Two passages from 1Maccabees, where the most detail is given, provide an indication of how Antiochus “trampled” the people.

And after two years’ time the king [Antiochus] sent his chief collector of tribute unto the cities of Judah; and he came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude. And he spake words of peace unto them, in deceit; and they gave him credence. And he fell suddenly upon the city, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel. And when he had taken the spoils of the city, he set it on fire, and pulled down the houses and the walls thereof round about. And the women and the children took they captive, and took possession of the cattle (1: 29-32).

And many of the people were gathered unto them, every one that forsook the law; and they committed evils in the land, and drove the Israelites into hiding places, wherever they could find a refuge. And on the fifteenth day of the month Cheseleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they built an abomination of desolation upon the altar, and built altars in the cities of Judah round about. And they burnt incense at the doors of their houses, and in the streets. And having rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire. And where was found with any a book of the covenant, or if any found pleasure in the law, the king’s commandment was that they should put him to death. Thus did they according to their might unto the Israelites every month, to as many as were found in the cities. And on the twenty-fifth day of the month they sacrificed upon the altar, which was upon the altar of burnt offering. And, according to the commandment, they put to death women that had caused their children to be circumcised. And they hanged the infants about their necks, and plundered their houses, and slew them that had circumcised them (1: 52-61)

11 It made itself great, even up to the Prince of the host; and by him the regular ceremonial observances were taken away and the place of his sanctuary was cast away.

- *even up to the Prince of the host:* Now some specific anti-Jewish matters are cited. The verbal form of “made itself great” (הִגְדִּיל, *higdil*) is the same as in verses four and eight, where it is rendered “became great” but the context calls here for this changed translation. It is true that the word for “even . . . against” (וְעַד, *ve’ad*) carries the idea of extent, “even to”; but to magnify oneself “even to” the Prince means basically “even against.” The subject in mind cannot be the horn, but the person, Antiochus. “The Prince” must be God Himself, and not merely some earthly representative, such as the high priest Onias (as some hold); because verse twenty-five identifies him as “Prince of princes.” “The host” refers to the Jews, whose Prince was God.
- *By him the regular ceremonial observances:* The way in which Antiochus magnified himself is now indicated. “By him” (מִמֶּנּוּ, *mimenu*), referring to Antiochus as agent, is preferable to “from him,” referring to God as being deprived. It would be strange to speak of God as being deprived of sacrifices by a human being. The word for “regular ceremonial observances” (תָּמִיד, *tamid*) means literally “continuousness,” used also in 8:12, 13; 11:31; 12:11. The context in each instance points clearly to the idea of something which was continuous in action involving the Temple; and that could only be the regular ceremonial observances. All that Antiochus ordered was brought to an end. Another passage from 1 Maccabees (1 :41-50) reveals the fulfillment of this prophetic

statement.

And the king [Antiochus] wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be as one people, and every one should abandon his customs. And all the heathen agreed to the commandment of the king. Yea, many of the Israelites found pleasure in his religion, and sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the sabbath. And the kings sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, that they should follow the foreign customs of the land, and keep burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and drink offerings out of the sanctuary; and that they should profane sabbaths and festival days; and pollute sanctuary and priests; build altars, and groves, and idol temples, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean animals; that they should also leave their sons uncircumcised, make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation: to the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. And whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he should die. [2Macc 6:1–11]

- *place of his sanctuary*: The word for “place” (מְכוּן, *mechōn*), from the verb כָּוַן (*kān*) meaning “to stand,” is used specifically elsewhere of the place (habitation, dwelling) of God (Ex. 15:17; 1 Kings 8: 13, 39, 43); and is best so taken here. Though evidence is lacking that Antiochus actually destroyed the Temple as a building, he did desecrate it terribly, as another quotation (1: 20-24) shows—a passage which immediately follows a statement regarding his conquest in Egypt.

And after that Antiochus had smitten Egypt, he returned in the hundred forty and third year; and he went up against Israel, and he went up against Jerusalem with a great multitude. And he entered in arrogance into the sanctuary, and took the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof, and the table of the shewbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials, and the censers of gold, and the vail, and the crowns, and the golden ornaments that were on the front of the temple; and he scaled the gold off. And he took the silver and the gold, and the precious vessels; and he took the hidden treasures which he found. And having taken all, he departed into his land. And he made a massacre, and spoke very arrogantly. (1Macc 1:39-40)

12 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.

- *the host*: The same word (אָוָה, *tzāva'*) is used here as in verse eleven, and reference must be to the Jews again. Since, unlike its use in verse eleven, it is used here without the article, this reference may be to only a part of the total nation, whereas then it was to all. Historically, Antiochus did kill many thousands, but not all.
- *along with the regular sacrifice*: The word for “regular sacrifice” is the same as in verse eleven (which see). The word for “along with” is the preposition אַל, *al*, normally meaning “upon.” It can also mean “with” in the sense of one thing accompanying another, and is best so taken here. The thought is that, as Antiochus was permitted by God to take away the regular ceremonial observances, as indicated in verse eleven, so he was permitted to take a host of the Jewish people.
- *of transgression*: The Hebrew phrase can be rendered as here, “of transgression,” meaning transgression by Antiochus, or “because of transgression,” meaning transgression by the Jews, for which God permitted this carnage. Either makes good sense, but the former must be preferred because the same word for “transgression” (עֲשָׂה, *pesha'*) is used in verse thirteen clearly for the actions of Antiochus. What he did, in slaughtering Jews and forcing such changes in the Mosaic ordinances, constituted, indeed, great transgression in the sight of God.
- *fling truth to the ground*: Truth always lies in what God says and does. The true religion was found in God's revelation, as set forth particularly in the Mosaic legislation. This revelation Antiochus was casting to the ground, and he attempted to substitute the false religion of Greece.
- *He acted and prospered*: The thought is that Antiochus really did these shocking things, and still prospered in it. The Jewish people, no doubt, wondered why God should let him continue doing them and apparently prosper.

13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?”

- *Then I heard:* With these words Daniel returns to describing the vision proper. In verses eleven and twelve, he has described the activities of Antiochus as symbolized in the vision. Daniel heard two beings speaking, who apparently had not been in the vision before. They spoke about the activities of Antiochus, rather than about the horn itself. It may be that the two animals, the ram and goat, had faded from view as Daniel continued to look. The suggestion of some that the main speaker here is Gabriel (v. 16) is probably not correct, since the word for “one” in the phrase “one speaking” is indefinite in its designation, meaning “a certain one,” or even “a so-and- so.”
- *holy one... another holy one:* The two beings are simply called “holy ones .” The designation could refer to earthly saints as well as angels, but the latter must be in view here because of the knowledge displayed relative to the vision-knowledge brought certainly from God. The first one is the main speaker, being depicted in the act of speaking when interrupted by the second. He may have been enlarging on the meaning of the vision, particularly as to Antiochus’ actions, prior to this point in the vision.
- *How long will the vision:* A paraphrase of this question reads: “How much time will elapse in the fulfillment of the destruction symbolized by the vision?” This question was probably much in Daniel’s mind as well. An indication had been given concerning the duration of the Antichrist’s persecution of God’s people in the first vision (7: 25), and now an opportunity was provided for indicating the same, relative to Antiochus’ perverted efforts.
- *The regular sacrifice... the transgression:* The word for “regular sacrifice” is the same as in verse eleven (which see). In this and the next element, the angel became more specific as to his question. The two parts of this element are to be taken together, with the first set off from the second for the sake of emphasis. Put more fully, the angel asked how long the transgression that brought desolation on the regular ceremonial observances would last. The word for “horror” (שָׁמַיִם, *shomeim*) is a participle depicting Antiochus’ transgressing activities in progress.
- *Sanctuary and host to be trampled:* The “sanctuary” is the Temple and the “host” the Jewish people once again. The word for “to be trampled” (מִרְמָס, *mirmās*) is a derivative of the verb used in verse ten, thus referring to the same basic idea. Antiochus wrought enormous havoc to the Temple and among the people.

14 He said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.”

- *He said to me:* The main versions (Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate) have “to him,” rather than “to me,” as in the Hebrew. Since both the second angel and Daniel very likely heard the reply, the question as to which reading is best is relatively unimportant.
- *Unto two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings:* The angel’s answer is a definite number of time units called “evening-mornings” (עֶרֶב בֹּקֶר, *’erev bōqer*), literally, “evening morning.” Some expositors take the expression to mean 2,300 evenings and mornings totaled together, equaling only 1,150 full days. They find supporting evidence in the mention in the immediate context of regular offerings and the fact that the regular burnt-offerings came every evening and morning, asserting that the true intent is to designate 2,300 occasions of burnt-offerings. The commentary on verse eleven has shown, however, that all ceremonial observances are in view in the context, and not merely the regular offerings. These expositors also find evidence in the three-and-one-half-year figure of 7:25 showing that a period of 1,150 days is approximately that long (actually, 110 days short); but it has already been seen, when discussing Daniel’s first vision, that the time period of 7: 25 refers to the activities of the Antichrist, whereas here Antiochus Epiphanes is concerned. Moreover, that two half-days are intended by the expression is not likely, in view of the order of mention: evening-morning, rather than morning- evening. The order of evening-morning suggests that part of the twenty-four-hour period at which one full day closes and a new one begins—a part which comes only once every twenty-four hours. Twenty-three hundred of these parts would mean the elapse of 2,300 full days. This manner of designating days is used only here in the Bible, but may have been suggested by the language of Genesis 1, where a similar phrase seems to carry basically the same idea.

How are 2,300 days to be fitted into the history here concerned? The answer is that this amount of time was the duration of Antiochus’ period of oppression of the Jews. Historical data available are insufficient for a

precise reckoning to the very day, but an approximation is definitely possible. The closing point of this period is indicated in the verse to have been the restoration of the Temple. The date when this was accomplished, under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus, was December 25, 165 B.C., according to Barnes, who refers to Prideaux.¹ Figuring back from this date 2,300 days brings one to September 6, 171 B.C.; which should be, then, the day when an event occurred that was of sufficient significance to mark it as the beginning of Antiochus' anti-Jewish atrocities. Though the nature of that event is not known, what is clear is that the year 171 B.C. did see the beginning of these atrocities, and such an event could easily have occurred on that date. Until 171 B.C., peaceful relations had existed between Antiochus and the Jews. But beginning that year, a series of events transpired, involving particularly the Jewish high priesthood, which prompted severe measures by Antiochus. Earlier, the pious high priest, Onias III, had been removed from office and replaced by his wicked brother, Jason, because Jason had bribed Antiochus for the position. Then, in the year 172 B.C., another brother, Menelaus, succeeded in replacing Jason, by promising a still larger bribe. In 171 B.C. Menelaus had murdered the good Onias III, who had rebuked him for giving away and selling many of the gold utensils of the Temple. Menelaus had sought in this way to pay the large promised bribe. As a result, the anger of the Jews was stirred against both Menelaus and his accomplice, an officer of Antiochus, and this in turn prompted Antiochus to bring the reprisals (See 2Macc 4:7–50). From this point on, oppression of the Jews and desecration of the Mosaic ordinances by Antiochus became progressively more severe and continued until the climax six years later, when the Temple was restored.

It should be noted further that some expositors hold that the time when Antiochus gave orders for the erection of the idol altar in the Temple, truly desecrating it (on December 15, 168 B.C.), was the beginning point for this 2,300-day period. This view conflicts with the one set forth above and leaves only three years and ten days until the Temple's restoration. Arguing against it, also, is the fact that the vision itself speaks first of Antiochus attacking the "host of heaven" (v. 10), meaning, as observed, the Jewish people themselves, before the taking away of the regular ceremonial observances (v. 11). This makes likely the thought that the 2,300-day period is to be reckoned as having begun at that same point rather than only at the interruption of Temple activities.²

- *Then shall the sanctuary be restored:* The word for "sanctuary" (שְׁדֵרָה, *qodesh*) means something or someone holy. Here it is commonly and correctly taken to refer to the Temple, the holy place, because the Temple was the center of interest for Antiochus' anti-Jewish activities. Its restoration to normalcy would be the most significant indication of a cessation of these activities. The word for "be restored" (נִצְדָּק, *nitzeddaq*) means literally "be justified." The thought is that all that the Temple stood for, after the period of sacrilegious desecration, would be vindicated as true and right, in contrast to all that Antiochus had been advocating. The indication of such vindication would be the restoration of its Mosaic ceremonies.

¹ Barnes's Commentary on Daniel, II, p. 115. Prideaux, an outstanding eighteenth-century historian, wrote *The Old and New Testaments Connected in the History of the Jews*: cf. vol. III, pp. 265-68). It should be noted that not all anti-Jewish activities of the Syrians ceased on this date. Some continued, in fact, during four more years, well after the death of Antiochus, until the defeat of the Syrian general, Niconao. These were sporadic, however, and the most likely date for the termination of the 2,300 days is December 25, 165 B.C.

² It may be noted further that it was on the basis of this 2,300 day period that Seventh Day Adventists, taking a day for a year, arrived at the date of 1884 for the return of Christ. For a discussion of this view, cf. A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 144ff.