

The Concluding Explanation in Daniel 8:15-17

Copyright (c) 2010 by Frank W. Hardy, Ph.D.

(15) While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man. (16) And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision."

(17) As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. "Son of man," he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end." (Dan 8:15-17)

Introduction

The eighth chapter of Daniel divides roughly in half. There is a section early in the chapter which introduces a symbolic ram (vss. 3-4) and one later on which explains that the ram represents Medo-Persia (vs. 20). There is an early section in the chapter which introduces a shaggy goat (vss. 5-8) and a later one which explains that the goat represents Greece (vs. 21-22).¹ There is also a pair of sections introducing and commenting further on the little horn (vss. 9-12, 23-25). To which half of the chapter do vss. 15-17 belong? Do they bring the first half to an end or introduce the second half? In this paper I argue that they belong to the first half and serve as a conclusion, bringing that portion of the chapter to an end. See table below.

Table
Outline of Verses Within Dan 8

Part 1		Part 2	
Vss.	Content	Vss.	Content
1-2	Intro.	18	Intro.
		19	Time
3-4	Ram	20	Ram
5-8	Goat	21-22	Goat
9-12	Horn	23-25	Horn
13-14	Time	26	Time
15-17	Concl.	27	Concl.

Verses 15-17 Conclude an Earlier Section

The passage at the end of Dan 8 which corresponds to vss. 15-17 is vs. 27--the last verse in the chapter. Verse 27 closes the second half of Dan 8 just as vss. 15-17 close the first half. They share a common theme as well as a comparable location. The one passage is an exhortation to understand and the other is an admission on Daniel's part that he does not begin to understand.

I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding. (Dan 8:27)

Below I pass over the general introduction, the sections on the Persian ram, and those on the Greek goat without further comment. The remaining sections (those dealing with the little horn and the 2300 day time prophecy) are quoted and discussed.

The little horn

The historical entity that would follow the Greek empire of Alexander and his successors (symbolized by the shaggy goat) is introduced in vss. 9-12.

Out of one of them came a little horn; it grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land. (10) It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. (11) It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low. (12) Because of rebellion, the host [of the saints] and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground. (Dan 8:9-12)

The above passage in the first part of the chapter corresponds to vss. 23-25 in the last part.

"In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. (24) He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. (25) He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power." (Dan 8:23-25)

The 2300 day time prophecy

A timeframe for the vision, the Prince's "daily" ministry in heaven, and the little horn's attempt to rival that ministry on earth is given in vss. 13-14.

Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled—the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?"

(14) He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated." (Dan 8:13-14)

The above passage in the first part of the chapter corresponds to vs. 26 in the last part.

"The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future." (Dan 8:26)

In vs. 14 and again in vs. 26 (above) there is a reference to the 2300 "evenings and mornings" (Hebrew *‘ereb bôqer*, lit. "evening morning," in context "evening-mornings"). In the one

verse this time period is introduced and in the other it is certified as being genuine. An additional piece of information given in vs. 26 is that the 2300 "evening-mornings" have to do with the distant future. At this point we know how long a time the angel has in mind ("2,300 evenings and mornings," vs. 14) and when this period would end ("the distant future," vs. 26). But we do not know when it would begin.

Discussion

Each part of the vision is explained in turn--first the ram, then the goat, next the little horn, and finally the timeframe for the horn's activity. The latter information is repeated three times--in vss. 17 ("the vision concerns the time of the end"), 19 ("the vision concerns the appointed time of the end"), and 26 ("it concerns the distant future").

The above passages do not teach that the 2300 "evening-mornings" would begin in the distant future from Daniel's point of view. Instead they extend into the distant future from whatever starting point. But if the period is a long one, it could end in the distant future if only because of its great duration.

The angel's focus throughout is on the end of the period. This is clear from his expression *ʿad-mātay* "until when" (literal gloss) in vs. 13. The period he has just described pertains to the distant future because it lasts so long, i.e., because of its ending point, not because of its beginning point, about which he says nothing in chap. 8.

The period in question cannot be 2300 literal days. That would amount to little more than six years and the thought of bringing the temple to full completion in so little time would be cause for joy rather than consternation. As we next go over into chap. 9, each day of the seventy weeks represents a year.² The same principles of interpretation must be applied to both chapters. It is by doing this that we learn the beginning point for the 2300 days.

Conclusion

There is no way to interpret the 2300 evening-mornings or any other time prophecy without a starting point and, in the present case, there is no way to get one from Dan 8. There we learn only that the prophecy lasts a long time, but we cannot know when it ends because we do not know when it begins. The angel is not finished with his explanation when he leaves Daniel in vs. 27 but the prophet has heard all he can benefit from hearing.

I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding. (Dan 8:27)

The end of the chapter is not the end of the discussion. The angel allows Daniel to ponder this much and then returns in chap. 9 to finish his earlier remarks about the 2300 days. To do this he introduces yet another time period--the seventy weeks.³ From this second time prophecy we deduce a starting point for the first. The prophecies of Dan 8 and Dan 9 are a matched pair. It is imperative that we study them together.

Note: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.

¹Note that the goat is called "the king of Greece" but that the large horn between his eyes is "the first king." This must mean that "the king of Greece" includes the first king and those that follow. Thus, "king of Greece" should be understood in the sense "kingdom of Greece"--not in the sense of land, but in the sense of a kingly line. Leadership is in view, but not just one leader. The entire line of Greek kings, whose influence was to be fragmented and associated with four different points of rule at first, must be included in the goat symbol. The goat does not refer exclusively to Alexander, but to Alexander and his successors as well.

²See Hardy, "The Day-Year Principle in Dan 9:24-27," *Historicism* No. 3/Jul 85, pp. 37-50.

³Three papers on Dan 9 will appear in *Historicism* over the next few issues: see Hardy, "Semitic Roots That Mean Both 'Cut' and 'Decide'," to appear in No. 24/Oct 90; "The Six Events of Dan 9:24," to appear in No. 26/Apr 91; and "The End of the Seventy Weeks," to appear in No. 27/ Jul 91.