

Daniel 11 and the Time Periods in Daniel 12

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Introduction

There is a futuristic type of interpretation of Dan 12 which insists that the time periods found in Dan 12:7, 11, and 12 should be treated as separate and distinct from the body of chap. 11, that they are separate and special prophecies for the end of time after Dan 11 has reached its fulfillment.¹

This is a variant, in another direction, of the way in which these dates are treated by preterist interpreters. Preterists say that the last verses of chap. 12 are an appendix which was added to the prophecy later. As the prophet (not Daniel) who wrote in 165 B.C. saw time stretching on and the kingdom that he expected not coming, he added on these extra dates in order to lengthen the time. Presumably he got to 1335 days and it still hadn't happened so he gave up (or he would have added still more dates as it got longer and longer).

While these two views treat the dates in Dan 12 quite differently in terms of their application, they are agreed upon the idea that this epilogue or appendix should be treated separately from the main body of the prophecy in Dan 11, both from a literary and a historical viewpoint. The argument presented here is that these dates are integral parts of the prophecy and belong with it and should be treated with the body of the prophecy of Dan 11, as that is where they belong best.

Relative Location of Dates

Within the Narrative

There are two main points to be made in this regard. The first is that it is not so unusual to have dates given after the main body of a prophecy in Daniel. At least as far as the apocalyptic portions of the book are concerned, that is where they logically and usually belong. There is a

reason for this. The prophet is shown some scenes in vision, of symbolic beasts or whatever. Then the angel interpreter explains to the prophet what he has seen. One cannot "see" dates or time periods, only actions, and then one must be told by some interpreter how long these things will go on or last and when they will stop.

This is the order of march in Dan 7. The prophet was shown a vision, described in vss. 1-14. Then the vision stops and the audition or explanation starts. This explanation goes through three cycles and the date, which is found in vs. 25, is present in the third and last cycle. In other words, the date was given after the vision and as a matter of fact it was also given toward the end of the explanation.

The same type of thing happens in Dan 8. The vision there covers vss. 1-12. Then after the vision ends Daniel listens to a conversation between two heavenly beings and he hears their dialogue of questions and answers back and forth. It is in the answer to the question of vs. 13 that the time period of vs. 14 is given. Daniel did not see the 2300 days. He overheard two angels talking about them and he heard them talking after the vision had ended. Once again the date comes after the vision.

There is an exception to this rule in Dan 9, but for good reason. The reason is that there is no vision there. The angel Gabriel appears to him there and points him back to the previous vision (Dan 9:23). Thus, what we really have here in Dan 9:24-27 is a continuation, long-delayed, of the explanation of the vision given in Dan 8:1-12. Seventh-day Adventists have long noted and emphasized this connection. Thus, when the prophecy starts right off with a time period in Dan 9:24 it does so as the explanation to a vision, a vision which was given earlier. Once again the location of the time periods can be nicely accounted for on the basis of the present model.

So when we come to the prophecy of Dan 11 and find the dates or times for some of its events given after the main body of the prophecy, this is not exceptional for Daniel's apocalyptic. It is a standard mode of operation for the interpreting angel, who has been sent to him previously. He is following the same pattern as before.

Verbal Links to Earlier Passages

The second point to notice about the time periods in Dan 12 is that they are inextricably tied to the prophecy of Dan 11 by the words used to express them. The context and even the content of these time periods ties them by means of a very specific vocabulary directly to events described in Dan 11. If linguistics means anything in the study of prophecy, and it must because words are the only way (apart from the vision) to convey thought or communicate propositional truth, then the links forged in the following manner are too tight to be broken. Dan 12 cannot be severed from Dan 11.

The time period in Dan 12:7 (the three and a half times) explains the persecution of Dan 11:32-35 and the time period in Dan 12:11 (the 1290 days) explains the taking away of the "daily" that is mentioned in Dan 11:31. These time periods in chap. 12 and the corresponding events in chap. 11 cannot be separated. The final date, in Dan 12:12 (1335 days), should also be linked with the above periods, even though it does not time the actions of the king of the North or the little horn. There is a progression from 1260 days (three and a half times) in 12:7, to 1290 days in 12:11, to 1335 days in 12:12. This progression links the three time periods not only to earlier passages but also to each other.

The 1290 days: Dan 11:31 / 12:11

Dan 11:31 and 12:11 are quoted side by side below. See text exhibit 1.

Text Exhibit 1
The Abomination of Desolation

<p style="text-align: center;">Dan 11:31</p> <p>"His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish [<i>w^ehēsîrû</i>] the daily sacrifice [<i>hattāmîd</i>]. Then they will set up [<i>w^enāt^enû</i>] the abomination [<i>haššiqqûš</i>] that causes desolation [<i>m^ešōmēm</i>]."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Dan 12:11</p> <p>"From the time that the daily sacrifice [<i>hattāmîd</i>] is abolished [<i>hûsar</i>] and the abomination [<i>šiqqûš</i>] that causes desolation [<i>šōmēm</i>] is set up [<i>w^elātēt</i>], there will be 1,290 days."</p>
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In text exhibit 1, involving only two verses of text, there are no fewer than five verbal parallels in the Hebrew. The force of these parallels is obscured somewhat by the fact that not all of the clauses occur in matching order. For convenience these parallel terms are brought together below. See table 1.

Table 1
Summary of Hebrew Parallels for
Dan 11:31 and 12:11

Dan 11:31	Dan 12:11	Root	Gloss
<i>w^ehēsîrû</i>	<i>hûsar</i>	* <i>swr</i>	"turn aside"
<i>hattāmîd</i>	<i>hattāmîd</i>	* <i>tāmîd</i>	"continual"
<i>w^enāt^enû</i>	<i>w^elātēt</i>	* <i>ntn</i>	"give"
<i>haššiqqûš</i>	<i>šiqqûš</i>	* <i>šiqqûš</i>	"abomination"
<i>m^ešōmēm</i>	<i>šōmēm</i>	* <i>smm</i>	"be apalled, desolated"

The two main differences between Dan 11:31 and 12:11 are that the one passage shows who does the things mentioned, while the other shows the time when he does them.

The 1260 days: Dan 11:32-35 / 12:7-10

The next comparison involves two longer passages of four verses each. Selected clauses are quoted below. Again not all of the clauses occur in the same order so they are numbered to show the correspondences more clearly. See text exhibit 2.

Text Exhibit 2
The Great Persecution

Dan 11:32-35	Dan 12:7-10
1 "those who have violated [maršî'ê] the covenant" (vs. 32)	
2 "Those who are wise [ûmaškîlê] will instruct many [yâbînû]." (vs. 33)	
3 "Some of the wise [hammaškîlîm] will stumble so that they may be refined [lîsrôp]	
4 "purified [ûl ^e bārêr]"	4 "Many will be purified [yitbār ^a rû],"
5 "and made spotless [w ^e lalbēn]"	5 "made spotless [w ^e yitlabb ^e nû]"
	3 "and refined [w ^e yissār ^e pû]," (vs. 10)
6 "until the time of the end" (vs. 35)	
	1 "but the wicked [r ^e šā'îm] will continue to be wicked [w ^e hiršî'û]"
	2a "None of the wicked [r ^e šā'îm] will understand [w ^e lō ^o yâbînû],"
	2b "but those who are wise [w ^e hammaškîlîm] will understand [yâbînû]" (vs. 10)

Six verbal parallels are documented in text exhibit 2. In Dan 11:32-35 five of these terms are used once and one is used twice. In Dan 12:7-10 four terms are used once, one is used twice, and one is used three times. See table 2.

Table 2
Summary of Hebrew Parallels for
Dan 11:32-35 and 12:7-10

Dan 11:32-35	Dan 12:7-10	Root	Gloss
<i>maršî'ê</i>	<i>r^ošā'îm</i> <i>w^hiršî'û</i> <i>r^ošā'îm</i>	*rš ^c	"act wickedly"
<i>ûmaškîlê</i> <i>hammaškîlîm</i>	<i>w^hammaškîlîm</i>	*škl	"have insight"
<i>yābînû</i>	<i>yābînû</i> <i>w^lô' yābînû</i>	*byn	"understand"
<i>lîsrôp</i>	<i>w^cyissār^cpû</i>	*srp	"refine"
<i>ûl^bbārēr</i>	<i>yitbār^arû</i>	*brr	"cleanse"
<i>w^oalbên</i>	<i>w^cyitlabb^cnû</i>	*lbn	"make white"

The 1335 days

The angel says nothing more about the 1335 days than to pronounce a blessing on those alive at the end of that period. So lexical parallels such as the ones that link the three and a half times (1260 days) and the 1290 days to events already described in chap. 11 are unavailable. No one has argued, however, that the 1335 days are to be set off from the 1290 days. All schools of interpretation agree at least on this much, that the time periods of chap. 12 must be studied together with each other. Thus, if it can be shown that on lexical evidence two of those periods are indissolubly linked to chap. 11, what has really been demonstrated is that the class of passages which includes the two periods in question are so linked. In regard to the third passage no further demonstration is necessary.

One reason why the 1335 days do not have their own set of parallels with Dan 11 may be that have already been related to earlier passages through their association with the other two time periods. They add nothing new but bind together what has already been presented in regard to the 1260 and 1290 days.²

Conclusion

Based on the verbal parallels documented above one would have to conclude that Dan 11:31 and 12:11 are talking about the same defilement and that Dan 11:32-35 and 12:7-10 are talking about the same persecution.

Therefore the date for the persecution in Dan 12:7 should be applied to the description of the persecution in Dan 11:32-35 and the date for the taking away of the "daily" in Dan 12:11 should be applied to the description of that event in Dan 11:31. Notice that both events mentioned take place before the time of the end in Dan 11:35b and 40.

In view of the structural and lexical evidence presented here, neither the futurist nor the preterist views which separate the time periods of Dan 12 from the events of Dan 11 can be correct. The time periods and the events they date cannot in any way be separated from each other.

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.

¹William H. Shea, M.D., Ph.D., taught Old Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist theological seminary at Andrews University from 1972 to 1986. He is now with the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and presides over the church's extension school at Jerusalem. The present paper is a reworked version of excursus 2 ("Daniel 11 and the Time Periods in Daniel 12") and the back page ("Parallels Between the Content of Daniel 11 and the Dates in Daniel 12") from an earlier unpublished paper entitled "Daniel 11." I would like to thank Dr. Shea for allowing me to use these materials here. Copyright (c) 2004 by Frank W. Hardy, Ph.D.

²See Hardy, "The Question of Dan 8:13," *Historicism* No. 22/Apr 90, p. 107.