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AN EXAMINATION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST INTERPRETATION OF TWO TIME PROPHECIES IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL - THE 2300 DAYS OF DANIEL 8 AND THE 70 WEEKS OF DANIEL 9.

ASSUMPTION 11

**Only a little time elapsed between Daniel 8
and Daniel 9.**

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The Purpose of This Assumption

In the early apologetic works by the pioneers of the SDA church, a presentation of the relationship between Dn8 and Dn9 was apparently enhanced by arguing there was a short period of time between the two chapters. This was not done by William Miller, who believed there was about a 15-year gap between the two chapters. This argument crept in some point subsequent to Miller's preaching.

The Method of This Assumption

Miller's Position

Miller's position is the position held today by the bulk of scholars generally, and also by contemporary SDA scholars. Notice this statement from William Miller in 1836 concerning Gabriel's third visit to Daniel in Ch10:14:

This is the third time the angel Gabriel came to instruct Daniel. The first time was when Daniel had the vision of the he goat. Daniel viii 16. This was 553 years before Christ. The second time he came was when Daniel was praying for the deliverance of his people from their Babylonish captivity, fifteen years after the first visit, when he instructed them into the seventy weeks, and the crucifixion of the Messiah. (1836, p.63)¹

Even [John Dowling](#), Baptist pastor in Providence, Rhode Island, who wrote in 1840 against Miller's arguments, agreed with the Miller's time span between the visions

¹ Sylvester Bliss, editor of *The Herald* magazine, and biographer of William Miller, makes a comment on this topic in Miller's biography, but it is unclear from the context whether Bliss is giving his views or whether he is quoting Miller's views. It seems hard to think that Miller would take a 15-year gap between Dn8 and Dn9 in one document and a 3-year gap in another. It is most probable Bliss is giving us his own views here:

In the 8th chapter of Daniel is recorded a vision which was to extend to the cleansing of the sanctuary, and to continue 2300 days. Daniel had "sought for the meaning" of that vision, and a voice said; "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." Gabriel said to Daniel: "I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation; for at the time appointed, the end shall be;" and then proceeded to explain the symbols, but said nothing of their duration. At the close of the explanation Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; and he said he "was astonished at the vision, but none understood it."

Three years subsequent to that vision, Daniel – understanding "by books the number of years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem – set his face unto the Lord to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. (1853, pp.193-197)

when he said “the vision of the 2300 days, and the vision of the 70 weeks, were seen by Daniel at two separate times, 15 or 16 years apart....” (p.24)²

Somewhere along the line in the development of this argument, Miller’s position was forgotten, or it was dropped for a more expedient reasoning that tied the cognitive tension between Dn8 and Dn9 as one unit. But Miller was more correct even though it did not provide a strong link between the two time periods in the two chapters.

An interesting area of study on this assumption would be to ascertain how this short time frame was introduced if Miller did not espouse it.

Early SDA Positions.

From Smith:

So far, therefore, as the record of the eight chapters is concerned, Gabriel had not then fulfilled his mission.... Less than a year elapses, and the record of chapter 9 opens. For the vision of chapter 8 was in the third year of Belshazzar, which was the last of the Babylonian kingdom. The same year Cyrus took Babylon, and Darius ascended the throne, which would be his first year in which the vision of chapter 9 was given. We have now reached the year 538 B.C (Smith, 1898, pp 168-169).

...the burden of his petition [in Dn9] was in respect to the repairing of the desolations of the sanctuary, which lay in ruins. He had undoubtedly drawn the conclusion that the time when the end of the seventy years’ captivity came was the time for the cleansing of the sanctuary at the end of the 2300 days. Now he must be set right. This explains why at this particular time, *so soon after the previous vision*, instruction was sent to him. (Ibid, p.199, emphasis mine)

From E.G. White:

Daniel “fainted and was sick certain days.” “And I was astonished at the vision,” he says, “but none understood it.”

Yet God had bidden His messenger. “Make this man to understand the vision.” That commission must be fulfilled. In obedience to it, the angel, some time afterward, returned to Daniel, saying: “I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding...” (White, 1888, p. 325).

From Branson

Several years before, in, vision, Daniel heard from the lips of Gabriel the announcement that at the end of a 2300-day period the sanctuary would be cleansed... For two long years he studied and prayed. Then the answer came. When it did come, it shone with the glory of God (Branson, 1933, p 288).

And this from Haskell:

...the Roman kingdom, which grew out of one of the four horns, would destroy the people of God, and would even stand up against the Prince of princes Himself when he should come to the earth. This last view was more than Daniel could endure. When he saw that this power would even take the life of the Prince of princes, he fainted; and when Ga-

² This is page 24 of my A4 printed copy of the electronic version available at <http://ex-sda.com/dowling.htm>

briel said, “The vision of the evening and the morning which was told was true,” he found it was useless to proceed, as Daniel was not able to comprehend. (Haskell footnotes: “Dn8:20-27”)

Daniel was sick for some days, but soon began to pray for a full explanation of the vision. We have this prayer recorded; it is not long. When he began to pray, God in heaven commissioned Gabriel to go and answer the prophet’s prayer, and before he had finished praying the angel touched him.[footnote:Dn9:1-23] (Haskell, 1914, p.190)

A few months only expired between the vision of chapter eight and the events which the first part of chapter nine records. (Haskell, 1995, p.118)

It was the close proximity in Daniel’s book between Dn8: 27 and Dn9: 2 that was used as a textual link to the “undisclosed” beginning date of Dn8: 14. These two texts follow each other for the reader of the book of Daniel and the reference in Dn9:2 to Daniel’s search for understanding over a matter in the book of Jeremiah was said to be a reference to his search for the details supposedly left unexplained in Dn8. The close proximity between these two texts helped them to create this link.

Today this argument has even less weight now that we know it was more than a decade between Dn8 and Dn9:

...this prophecy [Dn9] was given to Daniel in the first year of Darius the Mede (539 B.C) and the preceding prophecy [Dn8] was given to him in the third year of Belshazzar (ca 549)...(Shea, 1981,p.239).

Actually thirteen active years (551-538 B.B.) elapsed between chapters 8 and 9... In the interim Balthazar's corrupt kingship had coasted to its close, Babylon had fallen to a Medo-Persian army led by Darius the Mede (probably Gubaru, or Gobryas), and king Cyrus the Great had entered the city in triumph. Darius was now serving as vassal king of Babylon under king Cyrus and would continue a little over a year, from October 539 to his death in November 538 (Maxwell, 1981, vol. 1, p.195)

The Problems with the Method of this Assumption

The Dating of the First Year of Darius

The major issue in this assumption is the identity of the two time periods in Dn 8:1 and Dn9:1. Daniel 8 occurred “in the third year of king Belshazzar,” whereas Daniel 9:1 occurred during “the first year of Darius the son of Ahaseurus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.” (KJV)

The Belshazzar of Dn8 is the same person by the same name in chapter 5. The son of Nabonidus, he was the last king of the Babylonian empire. Yet this information, now taken for granted, was not known in the late nineteenth century. Conclusive research on the Nabonidus Chronicle had by the 1920s proven the last son of Nabonidus had been entrusted with the kingship. (Nichol, 1976, p.807).

The text in Dn9:2,3 says it was during the first year of Darius’ reign that Daniel was searching for an answer to a question of the length of the captivity from the book of Jeremiah. It is this searching by Daniel that Adventists use to create a link to Dn8.

The vision of Dn8 is precisely located in 551 AD. (Maxwell, 1981, p.155.) But when does the first year of Darius the Mede occur? Until recent archaeology had made progress on this issue, scholars were just guessing in the dark. There was no evidence of Darius the Mede at all in the annals of history. Some critical scholars denied his existence

completely; others took a range of views arguing that Darius existed under a different name.

One choice was Astyages, the last ruler of the Median empire before Cyrus became emperor (585 BC – 539 BC). This would create a problem Dn9:1 even after Dn8. A second choice was Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. This is unlikely because Dn5: 30,31 declares Darius to be 62 years old when Babylon was overthrown (539 BC). A third choice could have been Gobryas, which many SDA and non-SDA scholars support (Maxwell included). This choice places Dn9:1 at 539 BC. A fourth choice, favoured by the SDA Bible Commentary, was that of Cyaxares II. This would place the date of Dn9:1 at 539 BC: In Shea's article in The Sanctuary and the Atonement quoted above, he does not identify in common history the identity of Darius in Dn9:1 in order to establish the date he proposes.

This is not to say that because there is a “long” period of time between the chapters, the message of the chapters cannot be connected, or that one explains the other. Hasel has rightly pointed out that “the lengths of time between the revelation itself and its interpretation can also differ” (1974, p 22)

The point of this discussion is just to highlight the fact that in the early development of the SDA explanation of the relationship between Dn8 and Dn9, this was one of the assumptions used – an assumption, which has since been shown to be incorrect.

Yet in spite of this knowledge, some Adventists will continue to espouse the concept of the short time span between Dn 8 and Dn9, as has the Questions on Doctrine:

This revelation [Dn8] profoundly affected the prophet and, as noted, might well have been the cause of his illness. Chapter 8 closes with certain questions still unanswered. Later, as Daniel meditated on the vision and its relationship to the condition of his people, he pleaded earnestly with God for the termination of Israel's captivity and their return to Palestine. His prayer brought a speedy answer, for Gabriel was sent to bring him comfort and to unfold the plan of God more fully. (Seventh-day Adventists, 1957, pp.269f.)

As can be seen from the above quote, the authors of this work want us to see Daniel thinking about the “unanswered questions” from the vision in Dn8 - questions that in their mind obviously relate to the 2300 day starting point. They try to tie the two chapters together by saying, “...as Daniel meditated on the vision [in Dn8] and its relationship to the condition of his people, he pleaded earnestly with God for the termination of Israel's captivity and their return to Palestine.” Of course there is no explicit evidence that Daniel was doing this at all. It is just asserted. Daniel 9 gives no indication in the opening verses that the vision of chapter 8 is under consideration at the time. He specifically only mentions the writings of Jeremiah and we should take that statement at face value. He was *not* considering the vision of chapter 8.

The word “later” has been carefully chosen in the above statement of Questions on Doctrine to placate both sides of the camp in Adventism on this issue. The word fails to commit to a definite time between the two visions. This was important back in the 1950s with those who stood by a close proximity between the two visions. The SDA literature portrays two views. There were those who stood by the writings of U. Smith et al, who argued for a short time span between Dn8 and Dn9. Others who were in SDA theological circles, took the position indicated in non-Adventist material, that the time span between the chapters was much longer. Failing in trying to give a definitive short period for the intermission between Dn8 and Dn9, QOD then tries another tack – by trying to

preserve the cognitive tension in the prophet's mind – when they state “his prayer brought a *speedy* answer.” As if anyone could believe that a ten-fifteen year break between revelations is a “speedy” answer!! Imagine if, in Dn2, when Daniel prayed for an answer, he received a “speedy” answer a decade later!! Nothing would have saved the heads of those people under threat of extermination from the king!! To reason that Dn9 was “speedy” in God's timetable is irrelevant. The argument being developed is that it was speedy in the sense that the content of the message in Daniel's vision in ch8 was uppermost in Daniel's mind, could not be sustained if the delay is a decade. Yet this is what the authors of QOD want us to believe. The choice of the word “speedy” is deceptive and misleading. It has no basis in fact.

The second important concession in the statement above indicates that it was not *that* later that Daniel had forgotten the vision of Dn8. They portray him as still thinking on the vision, so the time frame is implicated as within the term of Daniel's recent memory. Time has not passed that far that other matters have crowded in and moved the vision of Dn8 to the back of his memory. Needless to say, this position is incorrect for the same reason as stated above - it is just asserted with no supporting evidence. . Daniel 9 gives no indication in the opening verses that the vision of chapter 8 is under consideration at the time.

The Conclusion

- There is a period of over a decade and a half between Dn8 and Dn9, and this mitigates against the arguments introduced by those arguing for a short time frame between Dn 8 and Dn9.
- Daniel's “searching” in Dn9: 1,2 is not necessarily linked to his search for understanding the 2300-day period. The proximity in time between these two experiences cannot be used to link the time periods in both chapters since there is no proximity. Many things would occupy his mind over the period of a decade and a half.

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