

SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF THE 2,300 DAYS

Introduction In our study of the Ram, the He-goat and the Little Horn of Daniel 8 (Lesson 26), we traced the rise of the great counterfeit system of worship which Satan has used to pervert and obscure the Heavenly Priesthood of Christ. We learned how the angel Gabriel came to Daniel at God's command and explained every detail of the vision **except the time period, "the 2,300 days"** of v 14.

The purpose of this lesson is to discover whether the mystery of the 2,300 days was ever solved.

Discussion 1.—WAS THE EXPLANATION OF THE VISION OF DANIEL 8 EVER COMPLETED?

Did Gabriel ever come back?

Yes. Daniel 9 records how, some time later, in answer to the prophet's prayer (vv 3-19), Gabriel returned (vv 20, 21) and instructed Daniel to recall the former vision (vv 22, 23). He then resumed his explanation precisely at the point where he had broken off—with the time-element of the former vision. The very first thing Gabriel mentioned when he returned was time (Dan. 9: 24), and it was the time period—"the 2,300 days"—that had been left unexplained in Daniel 8. These facts show that the vision of Daniel 9 is the continuation and completion of the vision of Daniel 8.

2.—ARE THE 2,300 DAYS LITERAL OR SYMBOLIC?

They are obviously symbolic, for this reason: Three verses in Daniel 8 state that this prophecy would reach into the distant future (v 17: "the time of the end"; v 19: "the last end of the indignation"; v 26: "for many days"). Moffatt renders v 17: "the vision concerns the crisis at the close", and v 26: "the vision relates to the far future."

If 2,300 literal days had been intended, they would amount to about 6½ years only, which would not even reach from Daniel's day to the beginning of the Christian era, let alone to the time of the end! It is evident, therefore, that the 2,300 days must be understood as symbolic or prophetic days which, when interpreted according to the "day-for-a-year" principle (Num. 14: 34; Ezek. 4: 6), represent 2,300 years.

3.—WHEN DO THE 2,300 DAYS BEGIN?

In Dan. 9: 24 Gabriel said that "70 weeks (490 years) were to be "determined" upon Daniel's people. "Determined" means "cut off", "measured off", or "appointed". This "cutting off" must be from some longer period of time, and the only such period referred to in this vision is the 2,300 days, which means that the two periods must have a common starting point.

The starting point for the "70 weeks" is specifically given as: "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (v 25). This event must also mark the beginning of the 2,300 days. The "commandment" referred to is a clearly established historical landmark—the restoration decree of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, which was made in 457 B.C. (Ezra 6: 14; 7: 11-26).

(See Chart No. 36—The Seventy Weeks Diagram)

Having established the starting-point, the rest is simple arithmetic. 2,300 full years, reckoned from the beginning of 457 B.C., extend to the end of A.D. 1843. However, inasmuch as the decree of Artaxerxes did not go into full effect until the autumn of 457 B.C. (i.e. ½-way through the year), 2,300 full years reach beyond the end of 1843, to the autumn of A.D. 1844.

(See Chart No. 37—God's Prophetic Yardstick)

4.—WHICH SANCTUARY WAS INTENDED—THE EARTHLY OR THE HEAVENLY?

The "Sanctuary" of Dan. 8: 14 must refer to the Heavenly Sanctuary, for in 1844 the Earthly Sanctuary no longer existed. It had lain desolate for almost 1,800 years. Disowned and abandoned by Christ (Matt. 23: 37, 38); desecrated by God Himself at the super-