

areas and in different periods of time, authorities differ as to whether the temple service was reestablished in 165 or 164 B.C. Whichever it was, it can give a date for the end of the 1150 or 2300 days, but there is at present no way to determine the exact time when the desecration should be considered as beginning. Antiochus' persecution of the Jewish religion did not start with one decisive act but with various steps instituted over a period of time. Probably those who saw the temple service reestablished could recognize some particular point as having been the beginning of "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." It is doubtful, however, that anyone could be sure, ahead of time, as to which of several incidents would be the one that would begin the 1150 or 2300 days. Believers in the Scripture would know that the persecution would continue for several years. They would be sure that in the end God would enable His people to reestablish the full temple worship but would not be able to predict the exact time when their efforts would succeed.

In this regard the prediction is similar to most Bible predictions in which time is involved. They are intended to lead God's people to serve Him with patient perseverance and they sometimes give a general idea of the length of time that a crisis will exist. They are rarely so stated as to make it possible to know exactly how or when God will accomplish His purposes, though sometimes, as here, they enable God's people to look back afterwards and see how precisely the prophecy has been fulfilled. This principle should be kept in mind when we look at the chronological statements in chapter 9 and in chapter 12. After he finished his interpretation, Gabriel said: "Seal up the vision for it concerns the distant future." Daniel was not to make the vision public immediately, but simply to include it in his book. By the time it became available to others its first part would already have been fulfilled, for the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (pictured by the ram in vv. 3-4) occurred before Daniel received the next vision (ch. 9).