

Day-Year Principle



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Exod. 34:22; Lev. 12:5; Num. 14:34; Deut. 16:10; Ezek. 4:5, 6; Dan. 8:17, 19, 26; 10:2, 3.*

Memory Text: “And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year” (*Ezekiel 4:6*).

As we saw, the parallel between Daniel 2, 7, and 8 shows how the judgment in Daniel 7, which leads to the second coming of Christ, is the same event as the cleansing of the sanctuary (obviously, the heavenly one) in Daniel 8:14. Also this event occurs sometime after the 1,260-year period of persecution (late eighteenth to early nineteenth century) yet before the Second Coming.

We saw, too, that the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8 was the only part of the vision not explained and that Gabriel came to Daniel in chapter 9 with that explanation, the 70-week prophecy, which was “cut off” from 2,300 days. This 70-week prophecy, rooted in Jesus, formed the basis for the 2,300-day prophecy; it also provided the starting date for the 2,300 days, which brought that prophecy to 1844, a date that fits perfectly with what we were shown in Daniel 7 and 8.

Thus, we have the essence of the 1844 prophecy, firmly rooted not only in massive world historical empires but in the cross.

For the next few weeks we'll look more closely at some of the topics we only touched on regarding 1844; as we do, we'll seek to answer the most obvious questions that could arise as we study this prophecy so crucial to Seventh-day Adventists.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 26.*

Prophetic Time

Over the past few weeks, we looked at three time prophecies: the “time, times, and the dividing of time” (*Dan. 7:25*); the “two thousand and three hundred days” (*Dan. 8:14*); and the “seventy weeks” (*Dan. 9:24*). We have worked on the premise that these were not to be taken as literal time but as prophetic time and that in each of these cases the days were to be interpreted as years.

Thus we were dealing with periods of hundreds, even thousands, of years rather than just periods of a few years if they were understood as literal time.

The question is, What justification do we have in making this assumption that these were not literal but prophetic times and that we should use the day-year principle while interpreting them?

In Daniel 8:17, 19, 26, Daniel is told in one way or another that the prophetic vision he was given was for the “end.” In fact, he was specifically told that the vision concerning “the evening and the morning” (the 2,300 days) would be “for many days” (*Dan. 8:26*). Why do these facts help prove that the time prophecy in Daniel 8 isn’t literal?

Read Daniel 7:24-27. The little-horn power, which arises from pagan Rome (a power that ended more than fifteen hundred years ago), will exist until the end of the final judgment that brings the end of the world. What evidence do we have here that the time prophecy in verse 25 should not be taken literally, as well?

Clearly within both Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 themselves, given the context in which they operate (massive world empires that, beginning in antiquity and culminating in the end of the world, cover thousands of years of history), it hardly makes sense that the major time prophecies in them would be literal; that is, in the case of Daniel 7 covering only three and a half years and in Daniel 8 about six years and three months (or 2,300 literal days). These time frames hardly do justice to the magnitude of the events depicted in the visions.

Once, though, the day-year principle is applied, the time prophecies make more sense, fitting in much better with the scale of events in which they are depicted.

What evidence do you see that we are living in “the end” that Daniel talked about? How should this realization impact how we live? What in our lives, if anything, reveals that we truly believe we are living in the “end”?

Daniel 9 and Prophetic Time

Review the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27. What internal evidence do we have that this can't be taken as literal time?

As we saw in an earlier lesson, regardless of the dates one used for the command to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem and for the ministry of Jesus, there were clearly more than seventy literal weeks between the two events. Taken literally, the prophecy becomes meaningless. How interesting, however, that if the day-year principle is applied, the prophecy works perfectly, bringing us right to Jesus. Thus, in a real sense, the ministry of Jesus, as revealed in Daniel 9, proves the validity of the day-year principle.

Some people, however, argue that the word for “weeks” in Daniel 9:24 means “weeks of years,” thus each of those weeks are seven years. Therefore, we have 70 “weeks of years,” which comes to 490 years.

The only problem, however, is that the word translated “weeks” in Daniel 9:24 never appears anywhere else in the Bible other than as “weeks.” It never means “weeks of years.”

Look up Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 12:5; Deuteronomy 16:10; and Daniel 10:2, 3, a few places in the Bible where that basic word translated “weeks” appears. What evidence within the texts themselves shows that a week, or weeks, was meant, as opposed to “weeks of years”?

In Daniel 10:2, 3 the same word appears as in Daniel 9:24, and it obviously doesn't mean “weeks of years.” (Daniel fasted 3 weeks of years, or 21 years?) Also, even if one accepted the error that the word in Daniel 9:24 means “weeks of years,” a week of years is still seven years, the same number of years as if you used the day-year principle. Thus, the day-year principle is so ingrained in the prophecy that a scholarly concoction devised to get rid of the principle only affirms it instead!

Notice how long the time periods we're dealing with are: 490 years, 1,260 years, 2,300 years. How should these long time periods help us understand what *patience* means and how we need to trust God when things don't happen as quickly as we would like?

Seventy Weeks and 2,300 Days

As we've seen, the 70-week prophecy makes no sense if taken literally. Once the day-year principle is applied, it brings us right to Jesus. Thus, the prophecy itself demands the day-year principle.

Daniel 9:24-27 demands the day-year principle. Now, because this prophecy was “cut off” from the 2,300-day prophecy, what does that tell us about the day-year principle and the 2,300 days?

The 70-week prophecy comes to 490 years. The 2,300 days, if literal, come to a little more than six years. Could 490 years be “cut off” from a little more than six years? Of course not. From 2,300 years? Of course. Hence here's more evidence that the day-year principle must be applied to the 2,300-day prophecy, as well. It makes no sense to apply the principle to the 70 weeks, which is only part of the 2,300 days, and not apply it to the 2,300 days, as well.

No wonder Adventists haven't been the only ones to use the day-year principle for the 2,300 days. One of the greatest Jewish scholars, Rashi (A.D. 1040–1105), translated Daniel 8:14 as, “And he said unto me, Unto 2,300 years . . .” Not only is this idea not an Adventist innovation, it has been used by other scholars on these same prophecies long before us.

Look up Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5, 6. Though in and of themselves not proving the day-year principle, what evidence do they give for it?

Look up these texts, all found early in the Bible (*Gen. 5:14, 5:23, 9:29*). What link do they show between days and years in the Bible?

As we look at all these time prophecies, great prophetic periods that have all come and gone, what should this tell us about how we use the few precious moments allotted to us in life? What changes might you need to make in your own use of time?

More Proof

Read the question in Daniel 8:13 again. When you do, you realize that the word *concerning* does not appear in the Hebrew, nor does Hebrew grammar allow for it. Thus, the question isn't just about the activity of the little horn. Instead, the question is about everything depicted in the chapter, which includes the vision about the ram and the goat (Media-Persia and Greece), as well as the activity of the little horn (pagan and papal Rome). A literal translation would read, "How long the vision, the daily, and the transgression of desolation to give the sanctuary and the host a trampling." In other words, the question lists everything that happened in the vision. In fact, the word for "vision" in verse 13 is *hazon*, which, as we saw earlier, deals with the ram and the goat and the little horn; that is, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

The question, then, could be paraphrased like this, *How long will all these things, from the rise of Media-Persia, the rise of Greece, and finally to Rome's attack on Christ's heavenly ministry, be allowed to go on?*

Read the literal translation of the text given above. Why does this show that the 2,300 days cannot be taken as literal time? If literal, how could it cover all the events depicted in the question?

The point should be obvious: The 2,300 days must cover all the events depicted in the vision of Daniel 8; that is, Media-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the sanctuary cleansed. A literal 2,300-day period of time does not even begin to cover one of those kingdoms, much less all. On the other hand, with the day-year principle, the problem is instantly solved. Twenty-three hundred years, rather than a little more than six, cover the events in question.

If you read again the question in Daniel 8, it deals with long periods of history that involve persecution, apostasy, suffering, all within a long time frame (see vs. 23-25). In the end, though, what happens? And not only are we told what happens, through these prophecies we are told when they will happen. Why should these texts give us the hope that regardless of present circumstances, God will end it all and bring all things to His glory? How should this realization give you strength and courage to remain faithful regardless of your circumstances?

Day-Year Principle

Skim over the vision and the interpretation in Daniel 7. Why do all those symbols help us understand why the time element in the vision should be symbolic, as well?

Daniel 7 is a chapter filled with all sorts of symbols, or images, that are not to be taken literally. Thus, why should we take the prophetic time given in it as literal, when almost everything else is symbolic?

Read Daniel 8. In the same vein as the last question, what evidence do we have that the time period here should be viewed as symbolic, not literal, as well?

Daniel 8 is no more about flying goats (*vs. 5*) than Daniel 7 was about beasts with iron teeth (*vs. 7*). Instead, these were symbolic; in the same way, the time periods given were symbolic, as well.

In fact, of the three time periods we've been looking at—the “time, times, and the dividing of time” (*Dan. 7:25*); the “two thousand and three hundred days” (*Dan. 8:14*); and the “seventy weeks” (*Dan. 9:24*)—none is written in the common way that time is expressed. For example, instead of saying 2,300 days, why didn't Gabriel say that the sanctuary would be cleansed in “six years, three months, and twenty days”? In 2 Samuel 5:5, the text says that the king “reigned over Judah seven years and six months” as opposed to 2,700 days. It's the same with the two other time prophecies: None is expressed in the common way that time is expressed.

Read Luke 4:25 and James 5:17. Compare them with Daniel 7:25. Which ones were dealing with literal time, and how was that literal time expressed in contrast with the one expressing prophetic time?

Given what we've studied, why is the day-year principle so important to us as Adventists? What would happen to our whole prophetic foundation were this principle thrown out?

Further Study: Scholars also have shown evidence for the link between days and years in Hebrew poetry, where days are used in parallel to years, showing a semantic link between the two time periods:

“Are thy **days** as the days of man?
Are thy **years** as man’s days.” —Job 10:5

“**Days** should speak, and multitude of **years**
should teach wisdom.” —Job 32:7

“I have considered the **days** of old, the
years of ancient times.”—Psalm 77:5

In each of these cases, days and years were saying basically the same thing; that is, they were different words used to convey the same idea. Though these parallels don’t prove, in and of themselves, the day-year principle, they do show that in the Hebrew mind, days and years were linked.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** As a class, go over this week’s lesson until everyone is grounded in the validity of the day-year principle.
- 2** As a class, answer this question: Why does the Bible employ so many symbols? What might be the reason for the use of symbols?
- 3** What other evidence can one find in the Bible for the day-year principle?
- 4** Think about this: We have been here almost two thousand years since the death of Christ. How do these time prophecies, as understood through the day-year principle, help us realize that we are indeed living near the end and that we shouldn’t expect another two thousand years to pass before Christ returns? That is, how do these prophecies help us understand where we are in the history of the world and why we should know that Christ’s coming is near?

Jeofelo's Change of Plans

Jeanne Zachary

Jeofelo was determined to lead a better life than his parents. They had worked hard to feed their five children, and life in the Philippines was difficult for them. Jeofelo studied hard and did well in school. While in high school he joined a Christian youth group. A visiting church leader noticed his energy and alertness and invited him to participate in church services and to consider training to become a clergy.

Jeofelo accepted the invitation and enrolled in a seminary. When he finally graduated, he basked in the pride of his family. Over the next four years he served several congregations.

One day he visited an optometrist to get a new pair of glasses. The young optometrist impressed him with her kindness. He wanted to get to know her better.

Jeofelo learned that the young optometrist was a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, but he did not care. He was determined to marry her. Finally she accepted, provided she would be free to retain her faith. The couple agreed that they each would retain their beliefs; their children would worship with their mother.

A friend gave Jeofelo a book called *From Sabbath to Sunday*. But he was determined not to read it.

One day while riding his motorcycle, he collided with a farm vehicle and was seriously injured. He spent weeks in the hospital and two months at home. While recovering, he saw the book lying on a shelf. With little else to do, he began reading it. He was impressed with the careful scholarship and began to check each point with the Bible. Finally he had to admit that Saturday was truly the Sabbath of the Lord. But he refused to follow what he had learned. He had worked too long and too hard to earn his clergy title.

Within the next two years Jeofelo wrecked two more vehicles. After the third accident he concluded that God was protecting him for a reason. He picked up his Bible and let it fall open. His eyes fell on Matthew 16:26: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (NIV).

Convinced that God was speaking to him, he asked his wife to call her pastor and invite him to study with him. Within a few months he gave up his title and accepted his position as a child of God.

Jeofelo is studying to become a Bible teacher; Jeanne Zachary lives in California.