

# 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”?**

**Key Text:** *Ezekiel 4:6*

### Teachers Aims:

1. To help class participants understand the application of the day-year principle in prophecy.
2. To confirm the relationship between the day-year principle and the time prophecies in Daniel.

### Lesson Outline:

#### I. The Application of the Day-Year Principle (*Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:5, 6*)

- A. Once 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.
- B. Without the day-year principle application, the time prophecies in Daniel would yield neither accurate predictions nor a correct understanding of events.

#### II. Prophetic Time (*Dan. 9:24-27*)

- A. The 70-week time prophecy in Daniel 9:24—which takes us directly to the ministry of Christ—proves the validity of the day-year principle.
- B. The long-range time prophecies in Daniel should help us to understand the meaning of patience as we wait for the promised things of God.

**Summary:** The day-year principle is rock solid. Because this principle has its roots in the Bible, it is the God-given means for helping us interpret prophecy.

## COMMENTARY

In last week's study we applied to both the 70 weeks and the 2,300 days the principle that in apocalyptic prophecy a day represents a year. Using this principle, and recognizing that Gabriel told Daniel that the 70 weeks shall begin with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (457 B.C.), we arrived at the conclusion that the 70 weeks (490 years) covered the restoration of Jerusalem, the arrival of the Messiah, the crucifixion of the Messiah, and the universal proclamation of the gospel. The same year-day principle, we argued, must be applied to the interpretation of 2,300 days, because the 70 weeks (490 years) were cut off from the larger period of 2,300 years. Hence, the 2,300-year period also should have the same starting point as the 490 years, namely, 457 B.C.), which would bring us to A.D. 1844 when the sanctuary shall be cleansed. This interpretation hinges on two factors: (1) in apocalyptic prophecy, one day is equal to one year, and (2) the 70 weeks were part of the 2,300-day prophecy. Hence, both must have the same starting point.

However, is that all there is to our argument? While we can say

## 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?

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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”?

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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?

Yes on the basis of a contextual study of Daniel 8 and 9, we need to note a few other factors: the nature of symbolic prophecy, the contextual flow in which the 70 weeks and 2,300 days are located, and the end-time nature of the 2,300-day prophecy.

### **I. The Nature of Symbolism in Apocalyptic Prophecy**

Daniel and Revelation are known as apocalyptic prophecies because they deal with the conclusion of history in a cataclysmic manner and the establishment of God's kingdom afterward. In contrast, traditional prophecy, such as the ones found in other books of the Bible, speak either of impending events or of God's stern warnings. One important characteristic of apocalyptic prophecy is symbolism. For example, Daniel 2 speaks of an image and a rock. As the interpretation itself shows, each of these symbolizes various kingdoms. Likewise, in Daniel 7 and 8, the beasts symbolize kingdoms, while the sea and the winds in Daniel 7:2 represent the conditions of the Mediterranean world out of which the kingdoms arose. The horns, the wings, and the little horn are symbolic of an earthly power. Thus, it is logical to conclude that the time periods mentioned in Daniel also are symbolic. How else can we explain the supremacy of the little horn of Daniel 7 (papal Rome) that lasted "time, times, and half a time" (*Dan. 7:25, 12:7, NIV; compare Rev. 12:14, NIV*) or "forty-two months" (*Rev. 11:2, 13:5*) or 1,260 days (*Rev. 11:3, 12:6*)? If they are literal, then papal Rome ruled for only three years and six months. Yet, this is not historically true. The little horn's power is projected to the end time, something that is possible only if we accept the year-day principle. Such a principle is used in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 as a teaching principle.

### **II. The Contextual Flow of Daniel's Prophecies**

Further, the year-day principle has the following supportive factors. (1) The empires of Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 12 last for long historic periods. So, the power of the little horn of Daniel 7 is said to be longer than any, reaching almost to the end time. (2) Daniel 8:26 (*NIV*) demands that the vision of the "evenings and mornings" (i.e., 2,300 days) is true but needs to be sealed up, "for it concerns the distant future." This indicates that the time period is not literal days but prophetic years, projecting events to the distant future. (3) Why would Daniel be exhausted and become sick if the sanctuary were to be reconsecrated after a short period of 2,300 literal days (*Dan. 9:27*)? Daniel understood these were years and that the captivity was not nearing its end as Jeremiah declared it would after 70 years. (4) Gabriel, in explaining the prophecy of 2,300 days, says 70 weeks (490 days) were cut off for the Jewish people. Cut off from what? Obviously from the 2,300 days; and both were to begin from the

## 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?

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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?

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**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?

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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?

decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 B.C. If all these were to be true, then a literal period makes no sense, for the time period would not then be sufficient for all the events regarding the Messiah to take place (*vss. 24-27*). The rooting of Daniel 7–9 in the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus demands that the time period involved refer to years. (5) Likewise, the truth concerning the sanctuary in the 2,300 days would make sense only if the period refers to years. Thus, Adventists and biblical scholars throughout history have maintained that the year-day principle is key to interpreting apocalyptic prophecies. Those who deny this principle usually have a hidden theological agenda—to shift the interpretation of the little horn to

## Inductive Bible Study

**Texts for Discovery:** *Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 12:5; Ezekiel 4:5, 6; Daniel 8:17, 19, 26; 10:2, 3*

- 1 Read Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:13, 14; and 8:25, 26. Identify the words or phrases that indicate that the events of these prophecies will come at the very end of earth's history. What suggests that these events are more than just the natural rise and fall of nations?
- 2 The day-for-a-year principle of prophetic interpretation has a long history among students of the Bible. Given the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to see how the pieces of the puzzle fit so perfectly into place. Why, then, do so many try to discredit this method of prophetic interpretation? What are they afraid of?
- 3 At the heart of the 2,300-day prophecy is the earthly and heavenly ministries of Jesus. Yet, often evangelistic and Bible study treatments of this prophecy focus almost exclusively on the activities of pagan and papal Rome. Why is it necessary for believers to stay focused on Jesus? Read 2 Corinthians 3:18.
- 4 After seeing these visions, Daniel wrote: “‘I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts’” and “‘I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding’” (*Dan. 7:28, 8:27, NIV*). Clearly, Daniel did not understand all the symbols and timetables related to these prophecies. What did he understand about his relationship with God (*see Dan. 12:13*)? What should we emphasize as we await history's climax?
- 5 Think of the challenges and persecutions faced by Christ's followers through the centuries. What encouragement do the prophecies of Daniel offer you that was unavailable to believers of previous generations?

## 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?

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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?**

some other power than historicist interpreters have attributed.

### III. The End-Time Nature of 2,300 Days

Daniel 7–9 predicts the course of history to the end of time when God will crush all earthly kingdoms, along with false religious systems. Before those final days dawn upon the earth, God’s last time prophecy predicts the restoration of the sanctuary. That is the purpose of the 2,300 days. As an end-time event, these days must also be years and must begin at the same time as the 70 weeks. Both time periods begin and run concurrently. Any attempt to break them apart, or break the 70 weeks to let the last week be fulfilled in connection with the Second Coming, as secret-rapture theorists advocate, is a violation of Scripture. After the end of the 70 weeks with the conclusion of Christ’s

## Witnessing

During the later part of the 1800s and the early decades of the twentieth century, some Western women believed they should have a true “hourglass” figure. For them, this meant squeezing into a tight, laced-up garment called a corset. Sometimes there would be pain—and even internal injuries—but the women were usually pleased with their appearance.

Oddly enough, today there are many people, women and men, who are all too willing to bind themselves into a prophetic corset that limits their range of movement through the texts of the Bible. Rejecting commonsense views of Scripture, they try to squeeze the Bible into their preconceptions, perhaps with internal spiritual injury as a result.

That’s one good reason why this week’s study gives us something important to share with our friends and neighbors. It’s as important as sharing the truth about the prophecies surrounding Jesus or the understanding of the significance of 1844 as a prophetic milestone.

Properly understanding the day-year principle behind Bible prophecy will give you a vital tool in explaining the mysteries of Scripture to others, especially nonbelievers. Those who understand simple mathematics and how time works will suddenly understand that these predictions aren’t mere fables but reliable guides to what has happened in history—and to what shall happen in the future.

The human heart and mind yearn to know what’s going to happen; we’ve read about this before. But most people are as logical as they are curious, and using this knowledge can satisfy their need for understanding, as the good news behind the prophecies satisfies the longing of their hearts.

Isn’t there someone you know who needs to grasp this good news? Could that someone even be . . . you?

## 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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

work on earth, the next point in the 2,300-day prophecy is 1844—the cleansing of the sanctuary. This will be discussed in lesson 12.

## Life-Application Approach

**Icebreaker:** One of the most amazing scientific discoveries of the past century was the theory of special relativity. Albert Einstein showed that time was not absolute; that a person in one frame of reference would experience time differently from someone in another frame of reference. It was all relative. The faster you moved, the slower time went. If two people were the same age, and one of them spent time in a rocket moving near the speed of light, then when that rocket returned to earth, the person on the ground would have aged more rapidly than the one in the rocket! Why? Because for the person in the rocket time slowed down, and what was a year for him in the rocket was (depending upon how fast he or she was going) three years for the person on the ground. Time is clearly something more complicated than we imagine.

### Thought Question:

The Adventist Church obviously understands and accepts the time prophecies in Daniel. Yet, at times it doesn't seem as though we take them too seriously. According to the prophecies, we are in the last phases of earth's history. Time is running out. And still we are lukewarm and laid back. We are content to sit back, relax, and wait for the Second Coming. Knowing our place in time, through Daniel's prophecy, shouldn't we utilize every moment we have? Why aren't we on fire, making use of our short time here?

### Application Questions:

① We have limited time on this earth to do our part in the great controversy. Every second is precious. Every moment we waste could be a moment used to further God's work. How can you make better use of your time and live every moment for God?

② Today there are companies such as HeadConcierge.com that offer to do what you don't have time for—anything from taking your child to the doctor to researching for your next report. This trend of passing on our responsibilities to someone else because of our lack of time can bleed over into our spiritual lives. We may rely on Christian music or Christian schools to provide our children spiritual food. As a class, find biblical passages about stewardship and spiritual accountability. Then come up with ways your class can support one another during the week to provide quality time within each family.

**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?