

The Bible and Prophecy



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Dan. 2:27–45, John 14:29, Num. 14:34, Dan. 7:1–25, Dan. 8:14, 1 Cor. 10:1–13.*

Memory Text: “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (*Daniel 8:14, KJV*).

Bible prophecy is crucial to our identity and mission. Prophecy provides an internal and external mechanism to confirm the accuracy of God’s Word. Jesus said, “‘And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe’ ” (*John 14:29, NKJV; see also John 13:19*). This presents a crucial question: How do we interpret prophecy correctly so that we know when the prophecy has, indeed, come to pass?

During the Reformation, the reformers followed the historicist method. This method is the same one Daniel and John used as the key for their own interpretation. The historicist method sees prophecy as a progressive and continuous fulfillment of history, starting in the past and ending with God’s eternal kingdom.

This week, we will study the pillars of historicist prophetic interpretation. “We are to see in history the fulfillment of prophecy, to study the workings of Providence in the great reformatory movements, and to understand the progress of events in the marshalling of the nations for the final conflict of the great controversy.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 307.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 13.

Historicism and Prophecy

The foundational method that Seventh-day Adventists apply for studying Bible prophecies is called historicism. It's the idea that many of the major prophecies in the Bible follow an unbroken linear flow of history, from past to present, and to future. It's similar to how you might study history in school. We do it this way because that is how the Bible itself interprets these prophecies for us.

Read Daniel 2:27–45. What aspects of the dream indicate a continuous, uninterrupted succession of powers throughout history? In what way do we have the Bible itself showing us how to interpret apocalyptic (end-time) prophecy?

Note that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is recognized as the head of gold. Thus, Daniel identifies Babylon as the first kingdom (*Dan. 2:38*). Then Daniel says, “‘But after you shall arise another kingdom and then another, a third kingdom’” (*Dan. 2:39, NKJV*) and then a fourth (*Dan. 2:40*). That these are in succession one after another without any gaps also is implied in the image itself, for each of the kingdoms is represented in parts of a larger body moving from the head down to the toes. They are connected, just as time and history are connected.

In Daniel 7 and Daniel 8, instead of an image, specific beast symbols are used, but the same thing is taught. We are given an unbroken sequence of four earthly kingdoms (three in Daniel 8). They start in antiquity, and go through history, up to the present and into the future, when Christ returns and God establishes His eternal kingdom.

Thus, the image of Daniel 2 and the successive visions of Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 provided the basis for the Protestant historicist interpretation of prophecy, which Seventh-day Adventists still uphold today.

Read John 14:29. What does Jesus say that helps us understand how prophecy can function?

What great advantage do we have today, living when so much history has already unfolded, that someone living in the time of Babylon would not have had?

The Year-Day Principle

One of the interpretative keys of historicism is the year-day principle. Many scholars throughout the centuries applied this principle to the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. They derived the principle from several key texts and from the immediate context of the prophecies themselves.

Read Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6. How does God spell out the year-day principle in these specific texts?

In these texts, we can see very clearly the idea of the year-day principle. But how do we justify using this principle with some of the time prophecies, such as in Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 8:14, as well as Revelation 11:2, 3; Revelation 12:6, 14; and Revelation 13:5?

Three other elements support the year-day principle in these prophecies of Daniel and Revelation: the use of symbols, long time periods, and peculiar expressions.

First, the symbolic nature of the beasts and horns representing kingdoms suggests that the time expressions also should be understood as symbolic. The beasts and horns are not to be taken literally. They are symbols for something else. Hence, because the rest of the prophecy is symbolic, not literal, why should we take the time prophecies alone as literal? The answer, of course, is that we shouldn't.

Second, many of the events and kingdoms depicted in the prophecies cover a time span of many centuries, which would be impossible if the time prophecies depicting them were taken literally. Once the year-day principle is applied, the time fits the events in a remarkably accurate way, something that would be impossible if the time prophecies were taken literally.

Finally, the peculiar expressions used to designate these time periods suggest a symbolic interpretation. In other words, the ways in which time is expressed in these prophecies (for example, the “2,300 evenings and mornings” of Daniel 8:14, NIV) are not the normal ways to express time, showing us that the time periods depicted are to be taken symbolically, not literally.

Look at the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27. We read that “the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince” (*Dan. 9:25, NKJV*) will be a literal 69 weeks, or just one year and four months and one week. The prophecy makes no sense when understood that way, does it? What happens, however, when we apply the Bible’s own year-day principle—and the 70 weeks become 490 years?

Identifying the Little Horn

For centuries, the Protestant reformers identified the little-horn power of Daniel 7 and in Daniel 8 as the Roman church. Why?

Read Daniel 7:1–25 and Daniel 8:1–13. What are the common characteristics of the little horn in both chapters? How can we identify it?

There are seven common characteristics between the little horns of Daniel 7 and Daniel 8: (1) both are described as a horn; (2) both are persecuting powers (*Dan. 7:21, 25; Dan. 8:10, 24*); (3) both are self-exalting and blasphemous (*Dan. 7:8, 20, 25; Dan. 8:10, 11, 25*); (4) both target God's people (*Dan. 7:25, Dan. 8:24*); (5) both have aspects of their activity delineated by prophetic time (*Dan. 7:25; Dan. 8:13, 14*); (6) both extend until the end of time (*Dan. 7:25, 26; Dan. 8:17, 19*); and (7) both are to be supernaturally destroyed (*Dan. 7:11, 26; Dan. 8:25*).

History identifies the first kingdom as Babylon (*Dan. 2:38*), the second as Media-Persia (*Daniel 8:20*), and the third as Greece (*Dan. 8:21*). History is unequivocal that after these world empires comes Rome.

In Daniel 2, the iron representing Rome *continues* into the feet of iron mixed with clay; that is, until the end of time. The little horn of Daniel 7 comes forth from the fourth beast but remains *part of* this fourth beast.

What power came out of Rome and continues its politico-religious influence for at least 1,260 years (*see Dan. 7:25*)? Only one power fits history and prophecy—the papacy. The papacy came into power among the 10 barbarian tribes of Europe and uprooted three of them (*Dan. 7:24*). The papacy was “‘ ‘different from the previous ones’ ’” (*Dan. 7:24, NASB*), indicating its uniqueness compared to the other tribes. The papacy spoke “‘ ‘pompous words against the Most High’ ’” (*Dan. 7:25, NKJV*) and “exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host” (*Dan. 8:11, NKJV*) by usurping the role of Jesus and replacing it with the pope. The papacy fulfilled the prediction of persecuting “‘ ‘the saints of the Most High’ ’” (*Dan. 7:25, NKJV*) and casting down “some of the host” (*Dan 8:10, NKJV*) during the Counter-Reformation, when Protestants were slaughtered. The papacy sought “‘ ‘to change times and law’ ’” (*Dan. 7:25, NKJV*) by removing the second commandment and changing the Sabbath to Sunday.

In Daniel 2, Daniel 7, and Daniel 8, after Greece, one power arises that exists to the end of time. What power could that be other than Rome, now in its papal stage? No matter how politically incorrect, why is this a crucial teaching of the three angels' messages, and hence, a crucial component of present truth?

The Investigative Judgment

The prophetic outline studied this week has found overwhelming support among Protestant historicists since the Reformation. But it was not until the Millerite movement in the early 1800s that the 2,300 days and the investigative judgment were carefully reconsidered and studied. Look at the following chart:

Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Babylon (lion)	_____
Media-Persia (bear)	Media-Persia (ram)
Greece (leopard)	Greece (he-goat)
Pagan Rome (fourth beast)	Pagan Rome (horn moves horizontally)
Papal Rome (little horn)	Papal Rome (horn moves vertically)

Read Daniel 7:9–14 and Daniel 8:14, 26. What is happening in heaven as depicted in these texts?

After the period of medieval persecution, which ended in 1798 with the capture and imprisonment of the pope by Napoleon's General Berthier (*Rev. 13:3*), Daniel 7 and 8 speak of judgment. The judgment is to take place in heaven where “‘the court was seated’” (*Dan. 7:10, NKJV*) and “‘One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven . . . came to the Ancient of Days’” (*Dan. 7:13, NKJV*). This is a judgment scene that occurs after 1798 and before the second coming of Jesus.

This judgment scene in Daniel 7 is directly parallel to the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14. They are talking about the same thing. According to Daniel 8:14, the time of this “cleansing of the sanctuary,” which is Day of Atonement terminology, is 2,300 evening-mornings, or days. With the year-day principle, these days represent 2,300 years.

The starting point of the 2,300 years is found in Daniel 9:24, in which the 70-week (490 year) prophecy is *chatak*, or “cut off,” from the 2,300-day vision (*Dan. 9:24*). In fact, many scholars correctly see the 2,300-day (year) prophecy of Daniel 8:14 and the 70-week prophecy (490-years) of Daniel 9:24–27 as two parts of one prophecy. The next verse in the 70-week prophecy, Daniel 9:25, gives the beginning of the time period, “‘from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem’” (*NKJV*). The date for this event is “the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king” (*Ezra 7:7*), or 457 B.C. Counting forward 2,300 years, we come to 1844, which is not long after 1798 and before the second coming of Jesus. This is when Jesus entered into the Most Holy and began His work of intercession, of cleansing the heavenly sanctuary. See the chart in Friday's study.

Typology as Prophecy

The symbols of apocalyptic prophecies, such as those found in Daniel and Revelation, have one single fulfillment. For example, the he-goat found its fulfillment in Greece, a singular kingdom (*Dan. 8:21*). After all, the text came right out and named it for us! How much clearer could it be?

Typology, however, focuses on actual persons, events, or institutions of the Old Testament that are founded in a historical reality but that point forward to greater reality in the future. The use of typology as a method of interpretation goes back to Jesus and the New Testament writers, and is even found in the Old Testament itself. The only guide to recognizing a type and antitype is when an inspired writer of Scripture identifies them.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–13. To what events in history does Paul refer as he admonishes the Corinthian church? How does this relate to us today?

Paul refers back to the historical reality of the Exodus and develops a typology based on the experience of the ancient Hebrews in the wilderness. In this way, Paul shows that God, who inspired Moses to record these events, intended that “these things became our examples” (*1 Cor. 10:6, NKJV*), thereby admonishing spiritual Israel to endure temptation as we live in the last days.

Read the passages below and write down each type and antitype fulfillment, as described by Jesus and the New Testament writers.

Matt. 12:40 _____

John 19:36 _____

John 3:14, 15 _____

Rom. 5:14 _____

John 1:29 _____

In each case, Jesus and the New Testament writers apply the type and antitype interpretation that allow the prophetic significance to stand out. In this way, they point to a greater fulfillment of the historical reality.

Think about the earthly sanctuary service, which functioned as a type of the *entire* plan of salvation. What does this teach us about the importance of the sanctuary message for us today?

Further Thought: Read Clifford Goldstein, *1844 Made Simple* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1988) as one place, of many, to find more material on the 2,300-day prophecy. See also 1844madesimple.org.

Study this chart below:

Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Babylon (lion)	_____
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Greece (leopard)	Greece (he-goat)
Pagan Rome (fourth beast)	Pagan Rome (horn moves horizontally)
Papal Rome (little horn)	Papal Rome (horn moves vertically)
Judgment in heaven	Cleansing of heavenly sanctuary

The crucial point to see here is that the judgment scene in Daniel 7, which occurs after 1,260 years of persecution (*Dan. 7:25*), is the same thing as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14. And this judgment scene in heaven is what leads, ultimately, to the establishment of God's eternal kingdom at the end of this fallen earth's sad history. Hence, we have powerful biblical evidence for the great importance that Scripture places on Daniel 8:14 and the event it signifies.

Discussion Questions:

- ① Go back and review Daniel 2. See how clearly the historicist method is revealed here: an unbroken sequence of world empires, starting in antiquity and ending with the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. God gives us the key to interpreting these prophecies. What does it say, though, about the state of the Christian world that very few Christians today employ the historicist method anymore? Why does this fact help establish even more the pertinence of the Adventist message for the world at this time?
- ② How well do you understand the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14? If you don't understand it, why not take the time to learn it and to share it with your class? You might be surprised at how solidly grounded our interpretation of that prophecy really is.
- ③ Read Daniel 7:18, 21, 22, 25, 27. Notice the focus on what happens to the saints. What does the little-horn power do to them? In contrast, what does the Lord do for them? What is the good news for the saints in regard to the judgment? What does the judgment ultimately give to them?

Running for God

By MARIAN KAZMIERCZAK

Running brought me to church in Poland. As a young man, I started bodybuilding because the doctor cautioned me to take measures to improve my health. Then I got into long-distance running. I loved it! I ran marathons, 62-mile (100-kilometer) races, and even a 24-hour run over 126 miles (203 kilometers). I joined a group of runners who trained together several times a week.

After a while, I noticed that Piotr, a runner in our group, missed our training sessions every Saturday. I couldn't understand why, and I finally asked him. "I've been thinking about the meaning of life," Piotr replied. "I've been reading the Bible, and I've been going to several churches to find one that follows the Bible. Now I've found such a church. Would you like to study the Bible with us?"

The Bible studies, led by a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, confused me. I considered myself to be a devout Christian, and I belonged to another denomination.

One day while we were running, Piotr shocked me with a question. "Did you know that your clergy aren't telling you the truth?" he said.

"Now you have gone too far!" I exclaimed. "You're mixed up."

"The next time we meet, I'll bring a Bible," Piotr said. "You bring your church's book of doctrines. We'll see where the truth lies."

The proposal seemed good to me. I had always tried to live a truthful life and to follow the truth that I knew. At our next meeting, Piotr and I compared the two books. I was stunned to realize that my book didn't match the teachings of the Bible. Several months later, I was baptized. I was 45.

It felt good to join a church whose members cared about their health. Soon I noticed that several church members didn't eat meat. I researched the plant-based diet and also quit eating meat. Before, I saw my body as my own and exploited it for my own desires. Now I understand that my body is not my own. I try not to damage it. It is God's temple.

Today I am 71, and running remains a major part of my life, although I have stopped training and competing on Sabbath. Running is an ideal way to spread the gospel. After a marathon, everyone feels good about their accomplishments, and it is easy to talk about God. I share who gives me strength to run at my age.

I run at least three times a week, six miles (10 kilometers) each time. It takes me about 55 minutes. I run in forests and in nature. I think about my life and think about God. I hum hymns and remember Bible verses. I pray for God to bring someone into my path so I can talk about Him. He brings people to me.

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2017 that helped build a television studio for Hope Channel in Poland, broadcasting the gospel to the Polish-speaking world.

