

# ***Twenty Reasons to Apply the Year/Day Principle***

## **By Pastor Stephen Bohr**

### **Introductory Matters**

As we begin our study we need to underline two very important facts. First of all, the Bible month consists of thirty days (compare Genesis 7:11 with 8:3-4 and Deuteronomy 21:13 with Deuteronomy 34:8; See also, Esther 4:11 and Daniel 6:7, 12) Secondly, the Bible year consists of 12 months. (See I Kings 4:7 and I Chronicles 27:1-15). The year/day principle basically means that when time periods are used in the context of prophetic events which occur between A. D. 34 and the Second Coming, they are to be understood by applying the principle that one literal calendar day is equivalent to one literal calendar year.

The preterist and futurist schools of prophetic interpretation adamantly deny the year/day principle. Most preterists interpret the little horn of Daniel 7 as well as the little horn of Daniel 8 as Antiochus Epiphanes (171-164 B. C.), a Macedonian ruler who desecrated the Jewish temple from 167-164 B. C. Preterists believe that the three and one half years and the 2300 days are literal time and apply to this period.

On the other hand, most futurists teach that the little horn of Daniel 7 represents a future Antichrist who will sit in a rebuilt Jewish Temple for three and one half literal years at the very end of the Christian dispensation. They also believe that the little horn of Daniel 8 represents Antiochus Epiphanes and that the 2300 days are literal time.

The common denominator of both systems is that they believe that the three and one half years and the 2300 days are to be taken as literal time. In contrast, historicism has always held that days, weeks, months and years in a prophetic context should be understood symbolically by applying the year/day principle.

### **Reasons for applying the year/day principle**

#### **Reason # 1:**

The expressions “time, times and the dividing of time”, “42 months”, “1260 days”, and “70 weeks”, are very peculiar. They could have been expressed in literal language but instead they are given a symbolic flavor. Notice, for example, that Luke 4:25 and James 5:17 refer to the period when there was no rain in the days of Elijah as “three years and six months”. This is the normal way of expressing time (see also, Acts 18:11; II Samuel 2:11; I Samuel 27:7).

It is significant that every measurement of time in prophecy is given a symbolic flavor: hour (Revelation 17:12; 9:13), day (Revelation 12:6), week (Daniel 9:24-27), month (Revelation 13:5), year (Daniel 7:25). It is also significant that non-apocalyptic prophecies express time in literal

language: 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11-12), 400 years (Genesis 15:13-15), 120 years (Genesis 6:3) with literal persons performing literal actions!

### **Reason # 2:**

The symbolic time periods are always found within the context of apocalyptic passages where symbols predominate. For example, the three and one half times are found in the context of four symbolic beasts, a symbolic sea, symbolic winds, symbolic clouds, symbolic horns, and a symbolic little horn.

Similarly, the 1260 days are found in a context where a symbolic woman, clothed with a symbolic sun, stands on a symbolic moon, with 12 symbolic stars on her head. She is persecuted by a symbolic dragon who has seven symbolic heads, ten symbolic horns and who casts a third of the symbolic stars to the earth.

In Revelation 13, the 42 months are found within a context where a symbolic composite beast, with ten symbolic horns, receives its power from a symbolic dragon. It also arises from a symbolic sea and later uses a symbolic image beast to impose a symbolic mark!

The same could be said about Daniel 8. There we have a symbolic ram, a symbolic he-goat, and a symbolic little horn. It only stands to reason that if the scenes where these time periods are found in are symbolic, then the time periods must also be symbolic!!

### **Reason # 3:**

The little horn of Daniel 7 arose among the ten horns on the head of the fourth beast (Rome). It is clear from history that the Roman empire was fragmented when the barbarians came from the northern sector of the empire and carved it up. Daniel 7 makes it clear that there are no gaps in the historical flow of nations. The lion is succeeded immediately by the bear, the bear is immediately succeeded by the leopard, the leopard is immediately succeeded by the dragon beast, the dragon beast then sprouts the ten horns and the little horn then arises among the ten.

Now, if the little horn arose among the ten and the ten were complete in 476 A. D., and the little horn ruled until the judgment (in 1844), then the three and one half times of dominion of the little horn must be 1260 years, and not literal days. If the days were literal, then the little horn would have ruled only from 476-479 A. D. But the fact is that the Roman Catholic Church ruled for 1260 years!!

### **Reason # 4:**

Daniel 8 makes it crystal clear that the 2300 day prophecy was for the time of the end (Dan. 8:14, 17, 26-27). Daniel 12:4, 7 underscores the fact that the book which contains the 2300 day prophecy would be closed and sealed until the time of the end and therefore could not be understood until then.

This being the case, those who believe that Antiochus is the little horn of Daniel 8 find themselves in a serious dilemma. Assuming that Antiochus is represented by the little horn of Daniel 8 and that the 2300 days were the literal period of his dominion, a question immediately comes to the fore: Why would we have to wait until the time of the end to understand this? It would simply be a matter of history! If Antiochus was the fulfillment, it should have been understood at that very time.

It is a matter of record that Josephus, Porphiry and others in the first centuries of the Christian era believed that Antiochus was the little horn of Daniel 8. If they were right then they were living in the time of the end. Yet we know that they were not living in the time of the end because over 2000 years of history have transpired since their time.

The simple reality is that Antiochus did not fulfill the little horn prophecy. Josephus and others mistakenly identified Antiochus as the fulfillment. They could not have comprehended the little horn prophecy because they did not live in the time of end!. It is clear that this prophecy was not present truth in the days of Daniel or Josephus, or even of Martin Luther. None of these men lived in the time of the end and therefore, none of them could have understood this prophecy! It became present truth when the prophecy was fulfilled in 1844. This is why the Millerites preached on this very text. The book of Daniel was being opened and now the time period of the 2300 days could be understood.

#### **Reason # 5:**

The vision of Daniel 8:1-2 covers the whole period of the ram, the he-goat, the little horn until the cleansing of the sanctuary. In Daniel 8:13 the question is asked: "Until when shall the **vision** be?". The context indicates that the word **vision** includes the totality of what Daniel has seen in Daniel 8 to that point. Then, in Daniel 8:15 we are told that Daniel wished to comprehend the vision. The question is, Which vision? The answer is simple: It must be the totality of the vision of Daniel 8 because when the Angel Gabriel comes to explain the vision in answer to Daniel's request, he begins with Persia and then continues with Greece, the little horn, and culminates with the conclusion of the 2300 days when the sanctuary is to be cleansed.

Thus it is clear that the 2300 days which cover the whole vision of Daniel 8 must involve CENTURIES and not literal days, (that is, six and one half literal years). Incidentally, this explains the reason why Daniel 8 begins with Persia and not with Babylon. The 2300 days begin when Persia gives the decree to restore and build Jerusalem and that is why the vision begins with Persia. Thus, Daniel 8 and 9 must be connected in order to comprehend the 2300 day prophecy.

Notice the following illustration:

**Vision** = Ram + He-goat + Pagan Rome + Papal Rome + Judgment

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## **How Long? 2300 Days/Years**

## **Reason # 6:**

What do conservative evangelical Christians do with the prophecy of the 70 weeks? Don't they have to employ the year/day principle to convert the weeks to years? The answer is that they attempt to get off the hook by saying that the expression "70 weeks" really means "seventy sevens" or even "70 weeks of years". In this way they get rid of the year/day principle. This they must do because if they employed the year/day principle for the seventy weeks, they would also have to employ it for the other prophetic time periods in order to be consistent!! Let us look at a few facts about the word translated "week" here in Daniel 9.

Is it true that the Hebrew word *shabuwa* should be translated "sevens" or "weeks of years"? This word is used a total of 19 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and in every single instance it refers to a literal week of seven literal days (Genesis 29:27; 29:28; Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 12:5; Numbers 28:26; Deuteronomy 16:9 (used twice); 16:10; 16:16; II Chronicles 8:13; Jeremiah 5:24; Daniel 9:24; 9:25(used twice); 9:26; 9:27 (used twice); Daniel 10:2; Daniel 10:3).

Evangelicals frequently use Daniel 10:2-3 as an argument for translating the word *shabuwa* as "weeks of years". They point out that in these verses the word "weeks" is qualified by the word "days", in other words, "weeks of days". They then imply that if these are weeks (with the qualifier "days"), then the other weeks (without the qualifier "days") must mean "weeks of years".

For example, the New International Version translates the word week with "seven" or "sevens" in Daniel 9:24-27 but then translates the very same word as "weeks" in Daniel 10:2,3. The only problem with such an explanation is that it ignores the meaning of the Hebrew idiom, "weeks of days". When the word "week" in Hebrew is qualified by the word "days", it simply means "full weeks". Notice the following examples: In Genesis 29:14; Numbers 11:20-21; Judges 19:2 the Hebrew literally reads, "month of days". Is there a month that does not consist of days? Furthermore, in Genesis 41:1; Leviticus 25:29; II Samuel 13:23; 14:28 the Hebrew literally reads "years of days" but the translators have recognized that this means "full years".

The fundamental reason why futurist and preterist scholars refuse to translate *shabuwa* in Daniel 9 as "weeks" is because they would then have to admit, in order to be consistent, that the year/day principle must be applied to other prophetic time periods as well. Furthermore, if they applied the year/day principle to the 70 weeks, they would have to apply it to the 2300 days (of which the 70 weeks constitute the first part) and this would force them to admit that prophecy was fulfilled in 1844!! This would then make them Seventh-day Adventists!! Have mercy!!

Incidentally, the Septuagint translates the Hebrew *shabuwa* with the Greek word *hebdomas*. This word is consistently translated "week".

## **Reason # 7:**

A comparison of Daniel 8:11-13, 23-25 with Daniel 11:31-45 also reveals why Antiochus cannot be represented by the little horn. As we compare these two passages it becomes crystal clear that the King of the North of Daniel 11 represents the same power as the little horn of both Daniel 7 and 8.

Particularly in Daniel 11 (but also in Daniel 7 and 8) it is clear that the king of the north is the last power to rule the earth before Christ sets up His everlasting kingdom. This is also true of the little horn of Daniel 8. He is broken “without hand”, an expression used in Daniel 2:34; 8:25; 11:45. The little horn/king of the north is destroyed by Christ at his coming. Obviously, this makes it impossible for Antiochus Epiphanes to be the little horn.

Daniel 11:31-45 also contains many elements which are common with the little horn of Daniel 7. These considerations leave no doubt that the little horn of Daniel 7, the little horn of Daniel 8 and the king of the north of Daniel 11 symbolize the same power. Thus, those who see the little horn of Daniel 7 as a future Antichrist and the one in Daniel 8 as Antiochus Epiphanes are at a loss to explain why Daniel 11 blends the description of the little horn of Daniel 7 with that of the little horn of Daniel 8. Why would Daniel 11 blend the two descriptions if they represented two different powers, one past and the other future?

#### **Reason # 8:**

In the book of Daniel, the word for “days” can mean “years”. Daniel 1:5 refers to three years but in Daniel 1:18 the same period is described as “days”. The seven times of Daniel 4:25 are referred to as “days” in Daniel 4:34. Daniel 5:11 speaks of the days of Nebuchadnezzar. These days were obviously years. Compare, Daniel 2:28, 44 where “latter days” and “days of these kings” means “years”. See also, Daniel 8:14, 26; 10:14; 12:13; 11:20; 11:33 in the light of Daniel 7:25; 12:7.

#### **Reason # 9:**

In the historical books of the Old Testament, days and years are used in a parallel fashion. Notice the following illustrations:

- Exodus 13:10 reads literally in Hebrew that the Passover was to be celebrated “from days to days”. Obviously this means from year to year.
- I Samuel 20:6- the Hebrew literally reads “sacrifice of the days” but the context clearly shows it refers to the yearly sacrifice.
- I Samuel 2:19 literally reads, “from days to days”
- I Samuel 1:21 literally reads, “sacrifice of the days”

- ❑ Judges 11:40 literally reads, “from days to days, four days each year”
- ❑ I Samuel 27:7 literally reads, “days and four months”
- ❑ I Kings 1:1 says that David was stricken “in days” but it means “years”.
- ❑ Genesis 47:9 is an interesting verse in that Jacob speaks of “the days of my years”
- ❑ Genesis 5:5 states that the days that Adam lived were 930 years.
- ❑ Genesis 6:3 is the first time prophecy in the Bible where days are linked with years.

### **Reason # 10:**

In Old Testament poetry, days and years are employed in synonymous parallelism. Please notice the following examples: Job 10:5; 15:20; 32:7; Deuteronomy 32:7; Psalm 77:5.

A very interesting text is Psalm 90:9-10 where the translation, “years of our lives” literally reads in Hebrew, “the days of our years”. In every place where the Old Testament couples days with years, the word “day” is in the “A” line and the word “year” is in the “B” line. Regarding this, the Old Testament scholar, William Shea comments:

“When we come to the occurrence of the word ‘days’ in the time prophecies, therefore, an ancient Semite whose mind was steeped in this parallelistic type of thought would naturally have made an association of ‘years’ with the ‘days’ found in a symbolic context, just as he naturally would have identified ‘years’ as the B-word that would follow the A-word ‘days’ in its occurrence as part of a well-known parallel pair.” (William H. Shea, Selected Studies in Prophetic Interpretation, p. 69).

### **Reason # 11:**

In the prophetic books of the Old Testament days are also used interchangeably with years. For instance, Ezekiel 30:3 refers to the “day of the Lord” but Isaiah calls it “the year of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:2). Isaiah 10:3 speaks of the “day of visitation” but Jeremiah 11:23 refers to the same event as “the year of visitation”. Isaiah 34:8 speaks of the “year of recompense” but Hosea 9:7 refers to the “days of recompense”.

Of course, we would not want to leave out the traditional texts which have been used by Seventh-day Adventists to corroborate the year/day principle. In both Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, God Himself employs the year/day principle in the context of prophecy!!!

### **Reason # 12:**

We can also approach this subject from the perspective of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years. It is obvious that the **weekly Sabbath is the foundation for both of these!** That is to say, the seventh

day of the week becomes symbolic of the seventh year and the forty-ninth day comes to symbolize the forty-ninth year. Leviticus 25:1-7 addresses the Sabbatical year. This passage contains the earliest Biblical use of the year/day principle. It becomes clear when we compare verses 3 and 4 with verse 5 that the weekly cycle is being used as a pattern for the seven year period. We have “six years” which are followed by the “seventh year” and the seventh year is one of rest. This arrangement is patterned after “six days” of labor followed by the “seventh day” which is a day of rest. Here we clearly have an example of the year/day principle. The same is true of the Jubilee year (see Leviticus 25:8 and compare with Leviticus 23:15).

### **Reason # 13:**

If we accept the testimony of Jesus, the little horn of Daniel 8 cannot represent Antiochus Epiphanes. Jesus made it clear that the “abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel” was still in the future in His day!! How could Antiochus, who lived in the second century before Christ, fulfill a prophecy which Jesus clearly indicated was still unfulfilled in His day? (See Matthew 24:15; Luke 21:20).

Furthermore, the little horn of Daniel 7 could not have been fulfilled by Antiochus either, because the apostle Paul specifies that this horn was still future in his day (II Thes. 2:1-13) The book of Revelation also places the fulfillment of this prophecy in the future (see Revelation 12:6, 14; 13:5; 11:1-2).

### **Reason # 14:**

As a rule of thumb, the shorter the time period in apocalyptic prophecy, the more likely it is to be symbolic of a longer time period. For example, Is it really possible to fit into one literal week all of the events spoken of in the last of the 70 weeks? (See Daniel 9:26, 27). Would ten literal days of persecution during the period of Smyrna really be such a terrible ordeal? (See Revelation 2:10). Would three and one half literal days be enough to fulfill all of the events of Revelation 11? (See Revelation 11:9). If the two witnesses, the two Olive Trees, the two Lampstands, the sackloth, etc., are all symbolic, then, why not the time period?

### **Reason # 15:**

Preterists and futurists who apply these prophetic time periods literally encounter serious problems in another sense as well. In the Old Testament God is presented as One who reveals the course of human history and provides His divine evaluation of it. There we find a revelation of the continuous and unbroken flow of human history from creation until the first coming of the Messiah. The Gospels present the story of Jesus’ ministry on earth. The book of Acts and the Epistles then describe the history of the early church. After this is where the preterists encounter serious problems. You see, in the preterist view, there is no revelation from God concerning the entire history of the Christian church. There are almost two thousand years of silence. According to them, God’s description and evaluation of history ended with the Roman Emperors in the Early Church.

The futurists are not in better shape. According to this school, Revelation 4-18 refers to a short period of human history at the very end of time. Likewise, God's description and evaluation of human history as found in Daniel (according to this school) ends with the Roman Empire and does not pick up again until the last seven years of human history. Thus, there is a 2000 year gap in God's description and evaluation of human history (with the brief exception of the seven churches). God has been silent about the events of the church for 2000 years!!!

Only the historicist method is able to reveal a God who is concerned with His church during the entire period of church history, including the period of dominion of the little horn.. Only historicism is able to show the providential guidance of God in human history and His loving care for His church during the last 2000 years!!

#### **Reason # 16:**

The Apostle Paul makes it absolutely clear that the Man of Sin was already working in his day and yet this man of sin will not be destroyed until Jesus comes. How could this be a literal person, if he was alive in Paul's day and yet is not destroyed until Jesus comes? Is this one literal man who has lived over 2000 years? The inevitable conclusion is that the Man of Sin cannot be a literal man nor can his period of dominion be literal time. (See II Thes. 2:1-13).

It is also significant that Paul is getting his picture of the Man of Sin from the little horn of Daniel 7, the little horn of Daniel 8 and the King of the North in Daniel 11. This being the case, the little horn and the King of the North must have ruled for centuries, not for a few literal days.

#### **Reason # 17:**

The acid test of the year/day principle is whether the events forecasted were fulfilled on schedule. In other words, the pragmatic test of historical fulfillment must be applied to the historicist interpretation of these prophecies. Does the historicist method pass the test? Notice the following incontrovertible facts:

- The Papacy did indeed rule for 1260 years and the true church had to flee during that period. The dates can be corroborated by history (538-1798 A. D.).
- The Church during the period of Smyrna did experience ten years of severe persecution under Diocletian (303-313 A. D.). In fact, it was this period of persecution which led to Constantine's famous Edict of Milan in 313 A. D.
- A decree to build and restore Jerusalem was given in the year 457 B. C. Jesus was anointed in the year 27 A. D. Jesus did die in the spring of the year 31 A. D. Stephen was stoned in the fall of the year 34 A. D.
- The Millerites did indeed preach from Daniel 8:14 that the Sanctuary was about to be cleansed, and this preaching took place right before the 2300 years came to an end. Why

didn't they preach from some other text? Simply because God wanted to bring to the world's attention that the 2300 years were about to end and a significant event was about to take place in heaven! The great Second Advent Awakening in the 1830's provides powerful evidence that the year/day principle must be applied to Daniel 8:14.

- Churches were closed and Bibles were forbidden in France during the French Revolution for about three and one half years (March of 1793 A. D. to November of 1797 A. D.).

Thus, historical fulfillment vindicates the historicist method of interpreting the prophetic time periods.

### **Reason # 18:**

Many great scholars, both Seventh-day Adventist and non-Seventh-day Adventist have understood and taught the year/day principle. Unfortunately, after the Great Disappointment of 1844, Protestants gave up on the year/day principle which had been used by the Millerites to calculate the prophetic time periods. In other words, because Jesus did not come as predicted in 1844, the Protestant world threw out the method which the Millerites had used. Thus they threw out the proverbial baby with the bath water!! We will limit ourselves to comments which were made by two men whose last name is Newton:

“Three times and a half; that is, for 1260 solar years, reckoning as time for a calendar year of 360 days, and a day for a solar year. After which the judgment is to sit, and they shall take away his dominion, not at once, but by degrees, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” (Sir Isaac Newton, Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John, part 1, chap. 8, p. 114. London: J. Darby and T. Browne, 1733).

“We must therefore compute the time according to the nature and genius of the prophetic language. A time, and times, and half a time are three years and a half; and the ancient Jewish year consisting of twelve months, and each month of thirty days, ‘a time and times and half a time,’ or three years and a half, are reckoned in the Revelation 11:2,3; 12:6, 14, as equivalent to ‘forty and two months,’ or ‘a thousand two hundred and threescore days:’ and a day in the style of the prophets is a year: ‘I have appointed thee each day for a year,’ saith God to Ezekiel 4:6; and it is confessed that ‘the seventy weeks in the ninth chapter of Daniel are weeks of years; and consequently 1260 days are 1260 years.’” (Bishop Thomas Newton, Dissertations on the prophecies, London: B. Blake, 1840, p. 247.)

Incidentally, neither of these two authors were Seventh-day Adventists. The question might be asked, Why didn't the early church comprehend the year/day principle? It is true that the early church generally interpreted these time periods literally. But it must be remembered that the fulfillment of Bible prophecy is fully comprehended only by those who are living shortly before or during the time of fulfillment. This principle is clearly brought out in John 14:29. Even the disciples

on the road to Emmaus did not comprehend the prophecies about the Messiah until Jesus explained them.

### **Reason # 19:**

Practically every futurist writer is willing to concede that the seven churches represent seven epochs in the history of the Christian church. Most see Ephesus as the Apostolic church. Let's take a look at the fourth church in the series, Thyatira. It is obvious to any objective reader, that this church bears many similarities to the condition of Israel during the period of Elijah. Notice the following parallels:

In both cases Jezebel instigates the apostasy. In both cases the cardinal sins are fornication and idolatry. In both cases there is no rain. In both cases Elijah flees. In both cases Elijah is sustained in his flight to the wilderness. In both cases the period of apostasy lasts three and a half years. These parallels indicate that the church during the period of Thyatira is reliving the story of Elijah. Yet the historical period of the church of Thyatira does not last only three and a half literal years, not even by the calculations of conservative non-Adventist scholars!! If, in Revelation 2, Jezebel is not one literal person, Elijah is not one historical person, rain is not literal rain, fornication is not literal fornication, etc., then the three and a half years are not literal years either!! Time and space will not allow us to show that the harlot of Revelation 17 represents the second, future, stage of this Jezebel period of the church!

In conclusion, I would like to include a quotation from T. R. Birks on the year/day principle:

“1. That the church, after the ascension of Christ, was intended of God to be kept in the lively expectation of His speedy return in glory. 2. That, in the divine counsels, a long period of nearly two thousand years was to intervene between the first and the second advent, and to be marked by a dispensation of grace to the Gentiles. 3. That, in order to strengthen the faith and hope of the church under the long delay, a large part of the whole interval was prophetically announced, but in such a manner that its true length might not be understood, till its own close seemed to be drawing near. 4. That, in the symbolical prophecies of Daniel and St. John, other times were revealed along with this, and included under one common maxim of interpretation. 5. That the periods thus figuratively revealed are exclusively those in Daniel and St. John, which relate to the general history of the church between the time of the prophet and the second advent. 6. That, in these predictions, each day represents a natural year, as in the vision of Ezekiel; that a month denotes thirty, and a time three hundred and sixty years.” (T. R. Birks, First Elements Sacred Prophecy. London: William Edward Painter, 1843. P. 311).

### **Reason # 20:**

A study of the literary structure of Revelation 20 and Isaiah 24 reveals that “days” in Isaiah 24:22 is parallel to “years” in Revelation 20:2. This is clear evidence for the year/day principle. This can be seen in the chart on the next page.