

The day-for-a-year principle

Tony Benson

THE DAY-FOR-A-YEAR principle is the principle of interpreting periods of time referred to in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation on the basis that each day represents a year. These periods of time are variously expressed as 'days', 'months', 'times', 'weeks' and 'evening mornings'. A 'time' in this context is generally accepted as being a period of 360 days, the length of a Babylonian year, and a month would therefore be thirty days.

The usual way of interpreting time periods on a day-for-a-year basis is to take each day as representing one standard solar year of just over 365 days. There are also more complicated ways of interpreting such time periods, involving tak-

ing them as representing lunar years of 354 days or years of 360 days and then converting into solar years. When a time period runs from a B.C. year to an A.D. year it should be remembered that the A.D. year is one year later than the year you would expect. This is because there is no year 0.

The table details the 'day-for-a-year' verses. It should be noted that there are some shorter time periods in the book of Revelation that are also interpreted symbolically, but not necessarily on a day-for-a-year basis. Apart from the 2,300 Evening Mornings Prophecy of Daniel 8 and the Seventy Weeks Prophecy of Daniel 9, the time periods in the table are all based on the seven

Passage	Time period	Years represented
Daniel 4:16,23,25,32	seven times	2,520
Daniel 7:25	a time and times and the dividing of time	1,260
Daniel 8:14	two thousand and three hundred evening mornings (mg.)	2,300
Daniel 9:24	seventy weeks	490
Daniel 12:7	a time, times, and an half	1,260
Daniel 12:11	a thousand two hundred and ninety days	1,290
Daniel 12:12	thousand three hundred and five and thirty days	1,335
Revelation 11:2	forty and two months	1,260
Revelation 11:3	a thousand two hundred and threescore days	1,260
Revelation 12:6	a thousand two hundred and threescore days	1,260
Revelation 12:14	a time, times, and half a time	1,260
Revelation 13:5	forty and two months	1,260

For a more detailed look at the fulfilment of prophetic time periods see "A summary of the time periods of Daniel and Revelation" (p. 228).

times (2,520 day/years) of Daniel 4. There are two 1,260 day/year prophecies in Daniel and a further five in Revelation, and 1,260 is half 2,520. The 1,290 and 1335 day/year periods of Daniel 12 are clearly connected with the 1,260 period earlier in the chapter.

The idea of a day standing for a year occurs outside the symbolic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation:

- Because the spies who brought the bad report of the land of Canaan had taken forty days to spy out the land, Israel, because of their murmuring, were condemned to spend forty years in the wilderness (Num. 14:34).
- Ezekiel lay on his left side for 390 days, representing 390 years of iniquity by Israel, and on his right side for forty days, representing forty years iniquity by Judah (Ezek. 4:4-6).
- When Jesus was warned of Herod's enmity, his reply was, "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following" (Lk. 13:32,33). Can this be understood other than on the principle of a day representing a year of the ministry of Jesus?
- Jonah warned of coming judgement in his three days' journey across Nineveh (3:3,4), just as Jesus warned Israel for three years. Nineveh was to be overthrown at the end of forty days (3:4) if they did not repent, and Israel were overthrown in A.D. 70 at the end of forty years because they did not repent.

Evidence for the validity of the day-for-a-year method of interpreting time periods is provided by the Seventy Weeks Prophecy of Daniel 9, which was fulfilled by the coming of Christ on a day-for-a-year basis. Though it is sometimes argued that the original word translated 'weeks' here means 'sevens', in practice the original word *shabua* clearly means weeks in every other place in which it is used.

Other points in support of the day-for-a-year principle are:

- 1 In Luke 21:24, after predicting the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews at the hand of the Romans, Jesus states: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled". Clearly this refers to a long epoch of time. What can these times of the Gentiles be other than the symbolic time periods of Scripture, in particular the 2,520 years of Daniel 4?

- 2 In most places where time periods are referred to in terms of days or months, the context is that of symbolic visions, and symbolic or representative time periods thus make sense. It would not make sense if a beast was stated to continue its activities for 1,260 years, for example, since animals do not live anywhere near as long as this. The 1,260-day period is mentioned seven times in all, and the references occur within complex symbolic prophecies. It is, to say the least, a strain on one's credulity to believe that so much prophetic detail could be fulfilled in so short a time as 1,260 literal days.
- 3 If the time periods are literal then nothing is revealed concerning the length of time to elapse before Christ comes. Yet in Daniel 8:26 it is stated that the 2,300 period "shall be for many days", which caused Daniel to be ill. Similarly, Daniel 12 as a whole reads as though a long span would elapse before the fulfilment comes; see, for example, verse 4.
- 4 Outside Daniel and Revelation there are many literal periods of time mentioned, but they are always mentioned in terms of years, not days. If literal years are meant in Daniel and Revelation, why not refer to them as such?
- 5 The 1,260-year and 2,300-year periods are both examples of solar-lunar cycles of unusual accuracy, that is, they are periods of time in which the sun and the moon return to exactly the same place in relation to each other. This is of similar significance to the remarkable numerical patterns to be found in the Scriptures. It is not reasonable to dismiss this as coincidence.
- 6 In broad terms, it is about 2,520 years from Daniel's time to the present, and halfway through that time (1,260 years) saw the development of two great false religious systems with political power and influence, Roman Catholicism in the West and Islam in the East.

There are good examples of how expositors of Bible prophecy have accurately predicted from time periods that a certain year would be significant long before it was, as the following examples show:

- Robert Fleming in 1701 said that 1794 and 1848 would be critical years in the downfall of the papacy. Both turned out to be years in which revolutionary fervour severely damaged the papacy.

- In 1754 Thomas Newton said that the 2,300 period of Daniel 8 would expire in 1967, the year in which Jerusalem was once more in the hands of the Jews.
- In 1823 John Brown foresaw both the 2,520 period of Daniel 4 and Leviticus 26, and the 1,335 period of Daniel 12, expiring in 1917, whilst Grattan Guinness in 1886 stressed the great significance of the year 1917 in prophecy. These predictions were fulfilled in the driving out of the Turks from Palestine and the giving of the Balfour Declaration, which allowed the Jews to return to their land.

There are two arguments against the figurative interpretation that must be dealt with here:

- 1 It is pointed out that the statement of Jesus regarding his return, “of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mk. 13:32), means that it is not possible for men to predict the exact date of the return of Christ. However, none of the prophetic time periods of Daniel and Revelation are stated to expire exactly at the return of Christ, or at the resurrection of the dead. In any case, even if the time periods are literal,

they must begin at some time, and once they have begun the same objection, if valid, is equally applicable to the literal fulfilment.

- 2 The second objection is that there have been many cases where the proposed expiry dates of time periods based on the day-for-a-year method have come without anything significant happening. In particular, Christadelphians in the past have said with certainty that Christ would come in some year which has long since passed. However, just because brethren in past years in their laudable desire to see the return of Christ have wrongly applied these time periods, it does not follow that their method of approach was wrong. One might as well abandon all study of latter-day prophecy if such a criterion is used to evaluate prophetic studies.

There have already been more than sufficient fulfilments of prophetic time periods on a day-for-a-year basis to establish the validity of the method, as indicated above. It has become apparent that most, if not all, these periods have more than one appropriate commencement date and therefore more than one expiry date, and some anticipated expiry dates are still future.

The structure of Revelation

Geoff Cave

THE APOCALYPSE was written for a different audience and a different reason from any other book of Scripture. As the first verse reveals, it was for servants of the Lord Jesus Christ and it was to show them “things which must shortly come to pass”. It contains warnings, exhortation, encouragement and visions of future glory for those who “overcome”. It informs his servants of future events that will affect their walk in Christ.

The task of writing such a book would be difficult enough if it was for a specific group of servants, but this letter from the heavenly bridegroom was for a multitudinous bride living over a period of 2,000 years in many different circumstances. Human ingenuity could never rise to such a task in a letter containing just twenty-two short chapters, but God’s ways and thoughts are infinitely higher than human thoughts, and this is evident when considering the Apocalypse.

Use of symbols

The use of symbols is common throughout Scripture, but it is particularly dominant in Revelation. Using just a few words it is possible to describe an event that would need a few sentences if described using non-symbolic language. For example, the symbol is used in the third trumpet judgement of a star falling from heaven. It is describing the time when Attila the Hun attacked the Roman Empire. He had been a brilliant leader (a star), but when he attacked the Western Roman Empire his military career was coming to an end. The *Cambridge Mediaeval History* makes the following comment: “The empire of Attila was of too ephemeral a nature to be crucially dangerous; his attack on the west was like the passing of a transitory meteor”.¹

1. *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, Vol. 1, p. 417.