

PENTECOST 2020

DIG DEEP INTO THE BIBLE

THE YEAR-DAY PRINCIPLE

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What is the day-year principle? Is it based on Scripture?

The day-year principle says that one day in prophetic Scripture is equal to one year of actual time. For example, the 2300 days in the prophecy of Daniel 8 actually play out as 2300 years in history.

Here are some verses in Scripture that point us to the day-year principle:

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years (*Numbers 14:34 NKJV*).

I have appointed thee each day for a year (*Ezekiel 4:6*).

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee (*Deuteronomy 32:7 emphasis added*).

There are three primary precedents in Scripture that show the day-year principle: (“Seventh-day Adventists Believe - An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2nd edition”. Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. 2005: 48.)

1. Numbers 14:34. The Israelites will wander for 40 years in the wilderness, one year for every day spent by the spies in Canaan.

2. Ezekiel 4:5-6. The prophet Ezekiel is commanded to lie on his left side for 390 days, followed by his right side for 40 days, to symbolize the equivalent number of years of punishment on Israel and Judah respectively.

3. Daniel 9:24-27. This is known as the Prophecy of Seventy Weeks. Read about the 70-week prophecy here. The majority of scholars do understand the passage to refer to 70 “sevens” or “septets” of years—that is, a total of 490 years.

Jon Paulien has defended the principle from a systematic theology perspective, not strictly just from the Bible. (Jon Paulien, “A New Look at the Year-Day Principle”, talk at the 2008 Evangelical Theological Society meetings)

This view was recognized by the Jews (Froom, L. E. (1950). *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*. 1 & 2. Review and Herald. pp. 889 and 124.) as seen in Daniel 9:24-27, and as seen in Jesus’ use of the day-year principle in Luke 13 verses 31-33, and in the early church. (Froom, L. E. (1950). *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* 1. Review and Herald. pp. 170, 174–76.) Protestant Reformers were well established on the day/year principle and it was also accepted by many Christian groups, ministers, and theologians.

1. Elliott, EB (1862). *Horae Apocalypticae III (fifth ed.)*. p. 281.
2. du Ion, Francois (1596). *The Apocalyps*. p. 124.
3. Nigrinus. *Antichrists Grundtliche Offenbarung*. p. fils 28v,29r.)

Others who expounded the Historicist interpretation are John Wycliffe, John Knox, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Phillip Melancthon, Sir Isaac Newton, Jan Huss, John Foxe, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, C. H. Spurgeon, Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke, Albert Barnes, and Bishop Thomas Newton as exponents of this school.

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This day-year principle specifically applies to prophecy and is used for prophetic interpretation of “days” in prophecies. For example, historicist interpreters have usually understood the “time, times and half a time”, “1,260 days” and “42 months” mentioned in Daniel and Revelation to be references to represent a period of 1260 years.

These time periods occur seven times in scripture:

- Daniel 7:25, “time, times and a half”.
- Daniel 12:7, “time, times and a half”.
- Revelation 11:2, “42 months”.
- Revelation 11:3, “1260 days”.
- Revelation 12:6, “1260 days”.
- Revelation 12:14, “time, times and a half”.
- Revelation 13:5, “42 months”.

Historicists usually believe the “1,260 days” spanned the Middle Ages and concluded within the early modern or modern era. Although many dates have been proposed for the start and finish of the “1,260 days”, certain time spans have proven to be more popular than others.

We, like the earlier Bible students of the Reformation and post-Reformation eras, understand the 1260 “days” to be the period from AD 538 to 1798 when the papacy ruled in Rome. This 1260-year-period began with the defeat of the Ostrogoths by the general Belisarius and ended with the successes of Napoleon of France; specifically, the capture of Pope Pius VI by general Louis Alexandre Berthier in 1798.

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