

RE-EXAMINING 1844

A BETTER UNDERSTANDING



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1. Re-Examining the “Day-Year Principle”

When interpreting the 2300 evening and morning prophecy of Daniel 8:14, as well as other prophetic timelines in Daniel and Revelation, Adventists use a “day-year principle”. This is the idea that when interpreting time periods in symbolic prophecies, every day in the prophecy equals one year of literal time. It appears to trace back as far as 380 A.D.² by Ticonius, a 4th-century theologian of North African Latin Christianity.³

This method was used by most of the Reformers and by the historicist school of prophetic interpretation, which includes the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians the Bahá'í Faith and most astrologers who adhere to a "Secondary Progression" theory. None of these groups agree on how or to which dates it applies.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-year_principle#:~:text=It%20was%20first%20used%20in%20Christian%20exposition%20in,id%20est%20annos%20tres%20et%20menses%20sex%27%29.%20 Accessed February 2024

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ticonius> Accessed February 2024

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The idea that a day equals a year in Bible prophecy comes from two texts:

(NKJV) Numbers 14:34

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, **for each day you shall bear your guilt [H5771]⁴ one year**, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.

(NKJV) Ezekiel 4:4-6

⁴ Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity.

⁵ For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou **bear the iniquity [H5771]** of the house of Israel.

⁶ And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you **a day for each year**.

In Numbers, for every day of sin, the children of Israel were punished for one year – for each day a year. In Ezekiel, it is the opposite. For every year of sin, Ezekiel was to bear their punishment for one day – for each year a day. **The first text is a year of punishment for a day of sin, the other is a day of punishment for a year of sin. That is a huge problem, as they are opposites.**

⁴ Strong's Concordance, H5771 (‘âvôn): perversity, that is, (moral) evil: - fault, iniquity, mischief, punishment (of iniquity), sin

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In Numbers, one day of sin resulted in one year of punishment. But in Ezekiel, it is the opposite, with one year of sin resulting in one day of punishment. If you were being punished, you would see a clear difference between being punished one day for one year of sin, or being punished one year for one day of sin. Yet the day-year principle treats these two as if they are the same.

How can the “principle” be that a day always equals a year in Bible prophecy, when the two “proof texts” for the principle are opposites? At the very least, if indeed this was a Bible prophecy principle, then every day in prophecy would be a year, and every year in prophecy would be a day, right? To even call this idea a “principle” should raise a red flag. What exactly is the “principle” - a day for a year, or a year for a day? Or are they both to be used depending on the wording of the prophecy? In reality, when delving further, we believe that you will find it is neither.

Prophecy vs. judgments

Those who seek to apply this “principle” to Bible timelines are careful to explain that it only applies in symbolic, but not literal, prophecies. A close look at the two proof texts shows no indication that they apply to any type of prophecy at all. The texts are not symbolic prophecies; rather, they are judgments for disobedience.

Strong’s Concordance defines the Hebrew word translated judgment as “a verdict (favorable or unfavorable) pronounced judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree”.⁵ Judgments were essentially decrees of punishment for going against God’s laws.

When Yehovah gave His instruction, it consisted of laws, statutes, and judgments.

(NKJV) Exodus 24:3

So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the **judgments**. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said we will do."

(NKJV) Leviticus 18:5

You shall therefore keep My statutes and My **judgments**, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

In the texts that convey a day for a year, or a year for a day, Israel was disobedient for specific, literal time periods, and a proportional judgment was decreed based on their disobedience.

⁵ Strong’s Concordance, H4941 mishpāt

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How does the meting out of a judgment become a principle for symbolic prophecy? More likely, if these verses do define a Bible principle, that principle would be that the length of our sin can be related to the length of our punishment for that sin, by either a factor of one year to one day, or one day to one year. Anything beyond that is not supported in these texts.

An example of the Biblical application of these texts can be seen in the number of days that Yeshua spent in the wilderness. He spent one day for each year that Israel was in the wilderness. He overcame where they had not.

Visions vs. interpretations

But the fact that these verses are judgments instead of prophecies isn't even the biggest problem with the idea that this "principle" applies only to symbolic prophecies. Let's look at two examples that make this problem very clear.

Pharaoh (Genesis 41) had a dream of fat and skinny cows and was troubled by its meaning. Joseph was able to interpret the dream which revealed that there were going to be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine. Was the meaning of the dream about cows, or were the cows symbolic? Symbolic, right? Using the principle, wouldn't these seven calendar years be 7 (years) x 360 (days in a year), to convert the number to days, and then apply the principle to end up with thousands of years? Or, based on the two proof texts being opposites with one a day for a year, and the other a year for a day, were the 7 years to be interpreted as seven days? This was obviously a symbolic dream that was explained in literal time, as is shown by the Biblical account of the seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine.

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Here's another example. Prior to His crucifixion, Yeshua prophesied that He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40). What exactly is the heart of the earth? Is it a cardiac muscle pumping blood inside of the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea? Is it the geographical center of the earth thousands of miles under the surface of the ground? Or is the heart of the earth understood to be a symbolic term? Was Yeshua going to be in this symbolic location for three days as He said in the symbolic prophecy? Or was He going to be in this symbolic location for three years based on the day-year principle of symbolic prophecy? This was a symbolic prophecy that was explained in literal time.

The idea that symbolic prophecies are to be interpreted with the day-year principle does not stand up under close investigation. What evidence is there that would justify using a day-year principle in only certain symbolic prophecies, but not others?

Let's continue to investigate this point from the book of Daniel itself. When such examples are available, comparing other texts from the writer is probably the best source to shed light on the intended meaning.

Nebuchadnezzar had a second dream, recounted in Daniel 4. He saw a great tree that provided food and shelter for animals and birds. Then a being came from heaven and commanded the tree to be cut down to a stump. The most critical verses to analyze are Daniel 4:16 and its interpretation in 4:32:

(KJV) Daniel 4:16

Let his heart be changed from man's, and let
a beast's heart be given unto him; and let
seven times pass over him.

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(KJV) Daniel 4:32

And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

The first thing to note is that the dream was symbolic. Symbolic characters were carrying out symbolic actions. The time frame in the symbolic dream (Daniel 4:4-18) was “seven times”. The interpretation (Daniel 4:19-27) was literal. The literal person (Nebuchadnezzar) was going to be carrying out literal acts (dwelling with beasts and eating grass as an oxen). The time frame in the literal interpretation, however, remained “seven times”. There was no change in the length of time from the symbolic to the literal.

That is a key point: the symbolic and literal time was the same. If everything in the dream was symbolic, including the “seven times”, then the literal interpretation should have explained the symbolism by giving it in literal terms, just as it did with the rest of the dream. The seven times (years) at 360 days per year (7 years x 360 days in a year = 2,520 days) would be turned into 2,520 literal years.

Note that the Aramaic/Chaldean word translated “times” in both the symbolic prophecy and the literal interpretation in Daniel 4 is also the word translated “times” in the literal interpretation in Daniel 7:25, that the little horn would rule for “time, times, and half a time”. The way it was interpreted in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 4 as literal is also how it should be interpreted in Daniel 7 – a literal 3.5 year period. The

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interpretation of the symbols are explained literally, including the time frame. Almost all Bible expositors agree that the literal time frame of Nebuchadnezzar’s judgment was a seven year period. To say that the time frame in a symbolic prophecy must be interpreted by the day-year principle cannot be substantiated by Daniel himself. He knows no such rule.

Note also that the events foretold in the dream were a judgment on Nebuchadnezzar and his egotistical power and majesty (Daniel 4:30). Recall that the two texts that are supposedly the basis for a day-year principle were judgments, not prophecy. If ever a symbolic prophecy should use the day-year principle, wouldn’t it be a symbolic prophecy that was also a judgment?

The answer to this, among the day year adherents, is to insert another qualification. Not only must the prophecy be symbolic, but it must be apocalyptic (defined as “describing the complete destruction or end of the world”). **Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:4-6 are not prophecies, they are not symbolic, and they are not apocalyptic. They are judgments – punishment for sin. What is the scriptural evidence for turning them into a principle related to symbolic apocalyptic prophecies? There is none. Don’t miss that point.**

Symbolic vs. literal

With Daniel 4 as our example, where both the symbolic vision and the literal interpretation used the same time specification, there is no reasonable basis for determining that the 1260 days in Daniel 7:25, given only in the literal interpretation, should be converted into years by a day-year principle.

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Adventists compound this by asserting that the identical time period (1260 days) in a literal prophecy must still be interpreted symbolically. We see this in Daniel 12:7. This verse gives the timeframe for Daniel 11's literal visions of a king who exalts himself above God. This king represent the same character as the little horn in Daniel 7. They claim this solely because it refers back to a time period described previously in a symbolic prophecy, even though there is no symbolism in Daniel 12:7.

In other words, they apply the day-year principle to the same lengths of time, even though it appears once in a symbolic prophecy, and once in a literal prophecy. Yet their "principle" is to only applies to symbolic prophecies. They break a rule of their principle as soon as they extend it to Daniel 12:7.

Here is how they explain this:

The time periods of Daniel are connected with these symbolic figures and their actions. Those in Daniel 12:7, 11 refer back to times or actions already described with symbols in Daniel 7:25 and 8:11-13. Thus the 3 ½ times of Daniel 7:25 belong originally, for example, to a symbolic horn, not to a person or persons described primarily as such. Thus, when time periods in apocalyptic accompany symbolic figures carrying out symbolic actions, it is natural to expect that those time periods should also be symbolic in nature. The symbols aren't taken literally; thus, why should the time prophecies associated with them be taken literally as well?⁶

This becomes even more challenging when they apply their reasoning to a time period not mentioned anywhere in Daniel 7.

⁶ <https://1844madesimple.org/year-day-principle/> Accessed February 2024

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Daniel 12:11-13 (a literal prophecy) references two new time periods not included in Daniel 7, a 1290-day period, and a 1335-day period. They claim these must be interpreted with the symbolic day-year principle for the sole reason that they interpreted the 3.5 years of Daniel 7 that way.

Daniel 7 is a vision of four beasts: a lion with eagle's wings, a bear, a leopard, and a fourth beast with ten horns. Out of those ten horns arises a little horn who speaks blasphemy. We are told that he is given “a time, times, and half a time” to have power. The vision of the animals is interrupted as Daniel is then shown God on His throne, and a court process begins. After the judgment scene closes, the vision returns to the beasts, and he sees the little horn destroyed by fire. The vision then fast forwards, and Daniel is shown the Second Coming and the everlasting dominion. Upon the conclusion of the vision, Daniel was shown the interpretation, in literal terms, by a being we find out later was Gabriel. The beasts were kings, the horns on the 4th beast were kings, etc.

They use their principle on one time period (3.5 years) in a symbolic prophecy, then they use that symbolic time period to justify using their “principle” even on a different time period (1290 days) that was only found in a literal prophecy. So you can see that again, they are violating their own principle. They say it is a principle that applies only to symbolic prophecies, but they still apply it to literal prophecies with no Biblical basis to do so. This must surely qualify as a private interpretation, something we are warned against doing.

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(NKJV) 2 Peter 1:20

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

Day-year adherents take one time period (3.5 years) from a literal interpretation, and use their principle to convert it to a symbolic time period. That becomes their justification to use symbolic timing on a different time period (1290 days) found only in a literal prophecy. This violates their own principle, which they say applies only to symbolic prophecies, but they still apply it to literal prophecies with no Biblical basis to do so.

Is Daniel 9 proof?

Day-year adherents claim that Daniel 9 is proof of the day-year principle. We break Daniel 9 down much more in-depth in Chapter Five, but for now, let's just consider the day-year aspect of Daniel 9. First, as a brief recap of Daniel 9. Daniel is now in captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah had prophesied that the time of captivity would be 70 years.

(NKJV) Jeremiah 25:11-12

And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans,

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for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.

The seventy years were nearing completion, so Daniel begins to pray. Daniel 9:4-19 is his prayer, asking God to turn his anger away from Israel and end the captivity. While Daniel was yet praying, the messenger Gabriel appeared unto him and laid out a “seventy sevens” time period for the people to return to Jerusalem, rebuild their temple, put away sin in preparation for the arrival of the Messiah, who would arrive near the end of the prophetic time period. Everything in this prophecy is literal: Jerusalem, temple, Messiah, etc.

Disregarding the glaring problem that a solid Bible principle has only one example where it is claimed to have been used, let's explore their assertion that Daniel 9 proves the day-year principle.

The literal prophecy in Daniel 9 of “seventy sevens” (also translated as “seventy weeks”) is borne out in history that this was indeed a 490-year period. Day-year adherents determine that 70 x 7 days (as there are in a week) = 490 days, which they then use their day-year principle to declare confirms the 490 years. But there are two problems with this. Daniel 9, a literal prophecy, is 1) neither symbolic nor 2) apocalyptic. How then can it be the sole proof that a day equals a year in symbolic and apocalyptic Bible prophecies? A closer look is necessary.

(KJV+) Daniel 9:24

Seventy^{H7657} weeks^{H7620} are determined^{H2852}

H7620 shabûâ'

Strong's Concordance: “literally sevened, that is, a week (specifically of years): - seven, week.”

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Brown-Driver-Briggs⁷: “period of seven (days or years)”

Daniel 9 covers a period of “seventy sevens” (often translated as “weeks”). As shown above, in the Strong’s concordance definition, the “sevens” refer to “specifically of years”. One of two options given in the Brown-Driver-Briggs definition refers to a “period of seven (days or years)”. Two of the most significant Biblical resource books verify that the Hebrew term translated “sevens” or “weeks” can indeed be translated as periods of seven years, not just periods of seven days. Seventy 7-year cycles total 490 years, with no day-year principle involved, for the simple reason that sabbatical years were markers of seven-year periods. This is common knowledge. The majority of Bible scholars today recognize the fact that “seventy sevens” equals 490 years.⁸

(NKJV) Leviticus 25:2-4

² Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD.

³ Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;

⁴ But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the

⁷ Brown, Francis, D.D., D. Litt. *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, Hendrickson Publishers

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-year_principle#:~:text=It%20was%20first%20used%20in%20Christian%20exposition%20in,id%20est%20annos%20tres%20et%20menses%20sex%27%29.%20 Accessed February 2024

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LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor
prune thy vineyard.

Let's break down the problem with symbolic timing even further. Daniel 8 uses symbolism (ram, goat, horns, etc.), while Daniel 9 (from which they begin the timing for Daniel 8) is literal (the coming Messiah, Jerusalem, etc.). Remember that the supposed “day-year principle” does not apply to literal prophecies, only symbolic. Therefore, it is difficult to justify the idea that Daniel 9, which is literal, can be used as evidence of a principle that applies only to symbolic prophecies.

Furthermore, if Daniel 9, a literal prophecy, did prove a day-year principle, then shouldn't all literal prophecies follow this same pattern? We know this not to be true due to Daniel 9 itself. The chapter begins with the 70 literal years of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah. Why not turn those 70 years into 70 x 360 days, and then turn that number into thousands of years? Or maybe, since the two supporting verses for this “principle” are opposite, we should turn those 70 years into 70 days. After all, the 70 years lead up to the 70-week prophecy in question.

(NKJV) Daniel 9:2

in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

(NKJV) Jeremiah 25:11-12

And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 'Then it will come to pass, when

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seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.

(NKJV) 2 Chronicles 36:20-21

And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill **seventy years.**

It is important to note that God keeps track of sabbath years and gives prophecies and judgments according to the same.

Even if the case could be made that when interpreting symbolic prophecy, we should use a day-year principle, Daniel 9's literal prophecy (concerning the restoration of Jerusalem culminating in the coming of the Messiah) would not serve as proof. The actors and actions are not symbolic, but literal; and the time period, properly understood as Sabbath years, is also not symbolic.

Another issue is that while the vision in Daniel 7 is a symbolic prophecy, the interpretation by Gabriel is literal. He explains that the beasts are interpreted as kings, the judgment is described in literal terms, and in Daniel 7:25, a literal explanation of the little horn's activities, including changing times and laws, was given as being for "a time, times and half a time". There was no time given in the symbolic portion of Daniel 7. Time is only introduced in the interpretation, which is literal.

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How can we conclude that the symbolic prophecy, when interpreted in literal terms, would still use a “principle” of symbolic time in the literal interpretation? If all the symbols in the vision were interpreted with literal events, wouldn't the time period given in the literal interpretation (3.5 years) also be literal? Thus, if it literally was supposed to be 1260 years, it should declare that in the interpretation. Remember the pattern set forth in Daniel 4, where the time period was unchanged from the symbolic prophecy to the literal interpretation.

Even if we supposed for a moment that Daniel 9 confirmed the day-year principle, which, as you have seen, is a big “if”, there is still a problem in applying this across the board to Daniel's timelines. Daniel 7 and 8 are indeed symbolic (animals as kingdoms), but their interpretations are literal. The parallel prophecy found in Daniel chapters 10-12 is also literal. This final prophecy (chapters 10-12) is given in literal, not symbolic, terms, but it contains the same time of 1260 days from Daniel 7:25. Daniel 12 also adds two new timelines: 1290 and 1335 days.

The 1260 days appears in three formats in seven places: Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, and Revelation 11:2, 11:3, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5. If this principle is to apply to symbolic prophecy only, how can it apply to a single prophetic time period that is given multiple ways - in literal prophecies, in literal interpretations, and in symbolic prophecies? We must apply the time periods in Daniel 11 and 12 as literal days, not years for days.

To summarize the above, we have disclosed some big problems:

1. *Only one evidence:* A principle for symbolic prophecy is only provable with one single prophecy (Daniel 9).

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2. *Evidence does not match the principle it “proves”*: The supposed proof-text prophecy itself is literal, not symbolic, despite the principle applying only to symbolic, not literal, prophecies.
3. *Principle is applied to texts that don’t match the criteria for the principle*: Not all the prophecies to which the supposed symbolic principle applies are symbolic (Daniel 11-12), and
4. *Principle is applied to literal interpretations of symbolic visions*: The interpretation of the symbolic prophecy is given literally, yet the time periods in the literal interpretation is deemed to be subject to the symbolic principle.

Remember, too, that the timelines given in Daniel 7, 8, and 10-12, are specified, repeatedly, as being sealed up and applying to the end of days. Yet the 2300-year interpretation has them starting in 457 B.C. Even if we were to believe that a sealed end-times prophecy began around 2,500 years before the Second Coming, we have another problem with this timing. We are told in Daniel 12:10 that the wise will understand.

(NKJV) Daniel 12:10

Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

- Did the wise of Israel understand in 457 B.C. that Daniel 8:14 was now beginning?
- What about 480 years later? There is not one hint in the gospels that Yeshua taught, or that the early Christian church “understood”, that the end had begun in 457 B.C. Neither is there any hint that Yeshua taught, and the disciples

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understood, the end would continue another 1800+ years after the cross. In fact, it is the opposite. The New Testament is full of comments by Paul and the disciples sharing a belief that the Second Coming was imminent.

- Are we to believe that the wise are only going to understand thousands of years after the fact that Daniel 8:14 began in 457 B.C.?

Considering what we have seen when closely investigating this principle, ask yourself how reasonable is it that you can:

1. Take two verses that are opposites (Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 6:4),
2. Declare that they form a Bible principle that mirrors only one side of the two opposites,
3. Declare that even though the verses deal with judgments from God you apply the principle to prophecies instead of judgments, but not to a prophecy that contains a judgment (Daniel 4),
4. Declare further that they apply only to symbolic prophecy despite instances of symbolic prophecy where they do not apply (cows, heart of earth, tree, etc.),
5. Declare that they apply as symbolic timing even when the literal interpretation matches the symbolic timing (Daniel 4),
6. Declare that they apply as symbolic timing even when the timing was not given in the prophecy itself, but only given during the literal interpretation of the prophecy (Daniel 7:25),
7. Be able to provide only one piece of evidence, and that evidence itself is literal instead of symbolic (Daniel 9), and

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8. Declare that a time element which is told seven different times in three different ways should be interpreted with this principle, even though some of the seven repetitions are literal and others are symbolic.

Given these eight points, can you honestly say that applying a year for a day in prophecy is a concept built on a solid rock? Is this a solid enough rock to make a pillar of your faith? Solid enough to not consider an alternate interpretation of the prophecies? Solid enough to disfellowship anyone who believes otherwise? Solid enough to remove ministerial credentials from pastors over it? Solid enough to terminate the employment of professors over it? Because those very things have been happening within the Adventist church for the better part of the last century.

As a final thought on this chapter, consider this quote from *1844 Made Simple*, by Clifford Goldstein:

If the principle is not valid, or at least should not be applied in Daniel 7, 8, and 9, our message crumbles.⁹

An unbiased judge and jury, looking at all the above, would surely declare that by their own admission their message crumbles. The principle is not valid, it should not be applied to Daniel 7, it should not be applied to Daniel 8, and it should not be applied to Daniel 9. It should thus not apply to any end time timelines including those in Daniel 10-12 and Revelation as well.

⁹ Goldstein, *1844 Made Simple*, p. 74

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Key points from chapter one

There are simply too many problems with the idea that the Bible has a “principle” that a day equals a year in symbolic Bible prophecy, based on the eight points enumerated above.

Ask yourself: In light of the above, by the preponderance of the evidence, is the day-year method of interpreting prophecy a solid Biblical principle, built upon The Rock?

(NKJV) Matthew 7:24-25

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:
and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

If not, then you must agree with the official Adventist position quoted earlier that declares that if the day-year principle is not valid, their entire timeline crumbles.

Once you have come to that understanding, it is time that you return to the Word to search for the imminent literal fulfillment of these prophecies that God intended by giving them to Daniel and John the Revelator. (We’ll point you in that direction in Chapter Seven.)

If, instead, you wish to defend this principle, please give a Biblical answer to this question: How are two opposite, literal, judgments Biblically justified as being the foundation for a principle that matches only one of the opposites, and then applying it to symbolic apocalyptic prophecy?