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Article of the Month
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Time Prophecy

At the outset of this article, let it be plainly stated that its purpose is not the detailed explanation or calculation of time prophecies -- a subject far too extensive for a brief article! Instead, this article's purpose is to introduce time-prophecy's principal Scriptures, major concepts, and their results. It is a subject which, while it has many complexities, has relatively simple foundations. Presenting those concepts is the purpose of this month's article.

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MOSTLY OLD TESTAMENT

Nearly all *time prophecy* is in or has its origin in the Old Testament. Even when New Testament passages use time prophecies, they are almost without exception pointing backwards to their roots in Old Testament Passages. For those Christians who tend to dismiss much of the Old Testament writings, this becomes a major problem. Suffice it here to say that it is virtually impossible to be a student of time prophecy in the Bible unless one is willing to accept and treasure the continuing validity and applicability of the Old Testament Scriptures.

MOST ARE IN DANIEL

While some chronological prophecy has its presentation and roots elsewhere in the Old Testament, the book of Daniel is the primary container for the most significant details of Biblical time prophecy. Indeed, even time prophecies which are stated in places like Leviticus have references in Daniel. It is little wonder that Bible students over the centuries, who have had any interest in time prophecy, have focused on the two books of Daniel and Revelation (which reflects Daniel's prophecies). We would not claim that these two books have all there is to offer on time prophecy, but their understanding opens much of the mystery of time in the Bible. As this article progresses we will summarize the time elements in Daniel's great book.

THE TIME OF THE SECOND ADVENT

Christians -- especially since French Revolution times -- have focused on chronology which pinpoints the time of Jesus' second advent. Some have claimed that this date is not knowable. They point to Matthew 24:36 as their proof for their position. But Matthew 24:36 is not about the time of Jesus' second advent! If we read carefully, verse 35 says that verse 36 is about the time of the passing of "heaven and earth" -- NOT about the time that Jesus returns. And there IS a difference. Those two events are NOT synchronous even though they are related.

"Heaven and earth" symbolize the ruling powers and society of THIS AGE. When THEY pass away, we will be in the Peaceable Kingdom which Jesus taught us should be the object of our prayers (Matthew 6:10). The point in time of the passing of "heaven and earth" is the time when God, Himself, ends the commotion of this old order of man's confusion by stepping in and commanding, "BE STILL, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) THEN we will have the beginning of a "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwell righteousness." (II Peter 3:13) This does NOT happen at the moment the Lord returns! When the "day" of the Lord's presence begins, there is only mass confusion, trouble, and disintegration of civilization as we know it. (II Peter 3:10) We are already undergoing the gradual process of this experience.

Indeed, there is only ONE direct time prophecy (a difficult one!) which pinpoints the time of Jesus' return -- his presence "as a thief in the night" (Luke 12:35-40; I Thessalonians 5:1-4; II Peter 3:10). It is a *combination* of Acts 3:19-21 with Leviticus 25:8-13. In the Acts text, the Apostle Peter points out that a large period of time (a thousand years) has been set aside in God's plan during which everything that has been lost to man will be RESTORED. Peter calls it "the times of restitution of all things." And he points out that these times are SO IMPORTANT that ALL of God's holy prophets have spoken about them. And Peter LINKS these "times" to Jesus' return in verse 21. He says that Jesus must remain in heaven UNTIL these "times" of restoring begin. Jesus' second advent is thus CONNECTED TO a time prophecy. If we can find "The Times of Restitution," we will know when Jesus returns.

The Leviticus 25 passage is about a time prophecy hidden in Jewish sabbath ceremonies. The ceremonial event is called "The Jubilee." Its entire purpose was to RESTORE ALL THINGS that had been lost for Jewish individuals in the previous 50 years. It was a pictorial or typical prophecy of "The Times of Restitution of All Things" which ALL of God's holy prophets spoke about -- the times during which the earth and humanity will be rid of the horrors of Satan's old order and will be restored to life and perfection which it lost in Eden.

By careful mathematical-chronological investigation of this Jubilee prophecy, the date of the "Times of Restitution" (and, thus, the second advent) can be determined. Once this is accomplished, other references "fall into place" to support the conclusion that Leviticus opened for us. In the end, there is no question nor doubt. We KNOW when

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Jesus' secret and invisible return "as a thief in the night" occurred. And we know what he is now secretly doing before revealing himself and his completed Church as the rulers of the NEW "heaven and earth" -- the new rulership and its society. THAT is yet to come. But it is NOT synonymous nor synchronous with Jesus' second advent which happens secretly earlier.

The study of this topic has caused distress for many. But this was prophesied in Revelation where the "Second-Advent Movement" of the 19th Century is shown to result in spiritual indigestion! The "Second Advent Movement" of the 19th Century "ate" the "little book" (Daniel) and had incorrect conclusions. This is what Revelation 10:10 means by the "bitter stomach." (Revelation 10:9, 10) But verse 11 shows that the subject would be revived with success soon thereafter. [Compare Revelation 10:2, 5, and 6 to Daniel 12:7 to see the relationship between the two passages -- and, thus, to the chronology implied in each.]

The point is this: ONLY this **one** time-prophecy (the TIMES of Restitution) directly reveals the date of the Lord's return. Nearly all other time prophecies are about events that either support this date or that RELATE to the years just before and just after the Lord's return -- very exciting times both for the disintegrating world and for the Church.

ONE prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) gives us the time elements of **the first advent**. *It does so to establish the concepts of symbolic time*. By seeing how time symbolisms were fulfilled at Jesus' first advent, we can understand how to use the same symbolisms in understanding the time prophecies related to the second advent times.

Look now at the time prophecies which relate to events just before and during the time of the Lord's return.

"THE TIME OF THE END"

Some fearful or sensationalist translators and interpreters like to call this "The End of Time!" But the prophecies related to this subject are not about time's ending! They are about a PERIOD OF TIME which spans history from about 75 years before Jesus returns until he sets up the Peaceable Kingdom -- at the time that God, Himself, says "**Be Still!**"

It is during this "Time of the End" period that so very much happens to change the direction of earth's affairs in preparation for the glorious reign of peace on earth over which Jesus and his Church will rule. And the "Time of the End" is the topic of the last two chapters of Daniel's book.

In short: Daniel 11 and 12 are history written in advance. Chapter 11 follows the development in great detail of the political and religious events from the time of the Persian Empire (11:1) -- Daniel's day -- until it portrays events in the life of Napoleon Bonaparte (verses 36-45). It is in this passage where we learn WHEN the "Time of the End" begins. In Daniel 11:40, the collision of Lord Nelson's British fleet against

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Napoleon's fleet in Egypt MARKS the "Time of the End." That was in the year 1799. The "Time of the End" began in 1799 -- just when the French Revolution was progressing toward its end. That revolution and its aftermath began changes in every facet of human experience all over the earth. We yet feel its effects to our day.

Daniel then builds on that information to tell us that "Michael" (Jesus) would "arise" in that "Time of the End." (Daniel 12:1) "Arise" or "Stand up" is a term which, throughout the book of Daniel, is used to announce the arrival of a new kingship. Jesus, at his invisible second advent, is the new king of the world -- and all of the old "heaven and earth" begin ignorantly to FLEE from his new throne during the Time of the End -- (Revelation 20:11 -- just as we saw in II Peter 3:10.) The Daniel 12:1 text represents the Lord's return some time AFTER 1799. In Daniel 12:1-3, Daniel shows the results of the Lord's return -- carrying us all the way to the end of the thousand years of his reign over the earth. (Revelation 20)

In Daniel 12:4-13 is shown a very brief period of time -- the first 75 years of "The Time of the End." It is the period BETWEEN the beginning of the "Time of the End" (1799) and the Lord's secret return and presence (1874). Three dates are mentioned by symbolic reference. They are 1799, 1829, and 1874. And, when we read with care, they are ALL about the gradual opening of the understanding of the book of Daniel. That is how long it took to come to a deep and accurate understanding of Daniel once the "Time of the End" had begun.

It is promised (12:4) that Daniel's words were "sealed up" (not to be understood) UNTIL the "Time of the End" (1799). AT that time, it is shown that many would begin to run to and fro in the pages of Daniel, resulting in a gradual great increase of knowledge about what it means. That happened! Napoleon had put an end to the Papal ability to persecute those who wished to have free Bible study. The French Revolution had, at first, outlawed religion and the Bible! But it then put into law that Protestantism would stand on equal footing with Catholicism -- a true "revolution" in France! As the 19th Century opened, Bible societies opened up all over the world -- translating and distributing the Holy Bible all over the face of the earth. And hungry Christians began avid studies into its intricacies -- with a great focus on the prophecies of Daniel.

This led to what is known as "The Second Advent Movement." This was a concentration on the subject of the Lord's return. It was an inter-denominational movement begun in the United States in 1829 (the 1290 "days" of Daniel 12) by William Miller, but picked up by others in Europe. It gained a large following, and it mistakenly predicted that the Lord's return would occur in 1844-45. It was wrong, and it gave chronological studies a bad name. It was the "stomach ache" of Revelation 10:10. But we must remember that Daniel 12 PREDICTED this. It shows distinctly that the opening of understanding was GRADUAL from 1799 until the "1335 days (years)" would come. (Daniel 12:12) At THAT point, understanding would be complete -- NOT BEFORE!; and, therefore, the prophecy promises great blessings to those who wouldn't give up on chronology, but who would "wait" until the 1335 years came. THAT is the promise in Revelation 10:7. That text shows that those who wait for the symbolic blowing of the 7th Trumpet would

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find that Daniel is FULLY OPEN -- and its mysteries would no longer exist. It is also the year that the secret second advent began "as a thief in the night" -- the beginning of The Times of Restitution of Acts 3. It is because of Jesus' presence that Daniel's book was fully opened; and the food for understanding -- the last wonderful meal of the age -- was served to us for our comprehension of chronology. (Revelation 3:20; Matthew 24:45)

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Thus Daniel 12 has supplied information about the 75 years prior to the second advent. The dates of 1799, 1829, and 1874 have all been given to us to let us know of the struggle of the saints through the 19th Century to understand what Daniel meant by his writings.

In Chapter 9:24-27, Daniel had explained first advent dates. But Daniel 9 was an EXTENSION of another prophecy by Daniel in Chapter 8:13, 14. This is the prophecy we usually refer to as the "Cleansing of the Sanctuary." Daniel 8:17 tells us that THIS prophecy refers to something which would be **completed** during The Time of the End -- in other words, after 1799.

So, we have here one more element dated for us during the Time of the End. And it has a connection to the entire "Second Advent Movement" which began at the "1290 days" (in the year 1829) of Daniel 12.

BECAUSE of the Protestant Reformation (1521), BECAUSE of all the searching of Scripture which began in 1799 (Daniel 12:4), and BECAUSE of all the intense scrutiny of Scripture associated with the Second Advent Movement of 1829 and following, Bible students began to realize the amount of doctrinal error (dirt) that had accumulated over the previous centuries when the apostate or nominal church dominated. To put it bluntly, Christian doctrine had become filthy. And it needed to be cleansed for the faithful "sanctuary class" -- the true saints. The Daniel 8 prophecy is EXACTLY about that "cleansing" of Christian doctrine from all error. The 19th Century saw that cleansing completed.

We do not want to be misunderstood here. When the 2300 years of Daniel 8 expired in 1846 (just two years past the failure of the Adventist's return-predictions), *we should not expect that everything was understood!* It is clear from Daniel 12 that clear understanding would NOT come until 1874 (the 1335 "days"). What DID happen was that error had (among a nucleus of Christians) *all been refuted* -- thrown into the trash heap of religious errors. We might say that the whole house had been CLEANED OUT -- the "sanctuary was cleansed," but no new furniture was yet in place. The saints knew that WRONG ideas were exposed. But they yet were not quite sure of what RIGHT ideas should replace those old errors. That information would soon come when the 1335 "days" would arrive, and the saints would say, "O the blessedness" of the new meal of "meat in due season" which the Lord would use to furnish the swept-out house! (Matthew 24:45)

ISRAEL'S PROPHECIES:

"THE JEWISH DOUBLE" AND "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES"

There are TWO prominent time prophecies which center NOT on Christianity, but on the return of Israel to its homeland where they will be an important part in God's plan for the new Kingdom. (Zechariah 8:20-23) One of these two time-prophecies occurs in three places: Isaiah 40:1, 2; Jeremiah 16:14-18; and Zechariah 9:11, 12. This prophecy is usually called "The Jewish Double." It points to 1878 -- once again in "The Time of the End." Jews to this day realize that 1878 marks the date of the small beginnings of the modern state of Israel -- the regathering of Israel for its place in God's plan.

But a second, and very dramatic, time prophecy about Israel is hinted at by Jesus in Luke 21:24. There Jesus refers to "The Times of the Gentiles." It refers to a complicated prophecy in Leviticus 26 -- a prophecy which Daniel also builds upon in Chapters 2 and 5 of his own prophecy. It could easily have escaped our attention had Jesus not made his remarks in the Luke text.

To make the matter short and simple: God was eventually angry enough (Amos 3:2) with Israel's disregard for His leadings, that God placed Gentile rule over Jerusalem as a constant and continuing punishment for the Jews for "Seven Times" or 2520 years (Leviticus 26) -- beginning with the captivity of them by Babylon in 606 BC, and ending 2520 years later in 1914 when the First World War finally removed Gentile control over Jerusalem -- ultimately resulting in the 1948 statehood of modern Israel.

THE SABBATH SYSTEM

The sabbath system, as portrayed under the Jewish Law Covenant, has been a chronological part of the Bible since the creation account in Genesis. There is a prophetic-time reason why God wanted the sabbath celebrated. The seven 1000-year periods since Adam's fall coincide with time prophecies. The Millennial Age ("thousand years") of Revelation 20 is the 7th of these 1000-year periods since Adam's fall. And, quite excitingly, that 7th 1000-year period begins exactly with the 1335 "day" prophecy of Daniel 12. The conclusion of the year of AD 1874 marks the very beginning of that 7th (or "sabbath") "day." It is 6 "days" (of 1000 years each) past the disobedience of Adam, and the date set for the beginning of the "Times of Restitution" which will restore mankind to perfection -- give them REST (as a sabbath is supposed to do).

The Jubilee prophecy of Leviticus 25 (which told us when the second advent was due) was a part of Israel's observance of the sabbath-year system. The return of Jesus to restore the world IS AT THE GREAT SABBATH of time prophecy -- 1874 (the 7th "day"). It is for this reason that Jesus called himself "the Lord of the sabbath." (Matthew 12:8) It is for this same reason that Jesus did nearly all of his healing miracles on the sabbath day as a prophetic demonstration of WHEN he would begin the motions to restore and heal the human race.

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Jesus' reign of 1000-years (the prophetic "Sabbath") is DIVIDED into (1) a period of his secret presence for the destruction of the old order plus (2) a period of blessing all the families of the earth (mediation). We have not yet reached #2. We are observing in earth's events the progress of step #1. It is, and will yet be even more so, a terrible time.

IN SUMMARY

Time prophecy, while intricate, can be well summarized in a few basic parts:

- (1) It is mostly centered around the return of the Lord.
- (2) It shows (in "Time of the End" prophecies) events which come just before and after the return of the Lord -- events which destroy man's follies and affect and prepare the understanding of the Church during its last years on earth.
- (3) Two primary time prophecies about Israel show how its restoration is synchronous with these "Time of the End" experiences.
- (4) God's system of sabbath observances brings all of time prophecies into focus with a concentration on the REST (and RESTITUTION) which God has planned for humanity.

There are, of course, other time prophecies. But they are minor, and they all enhance appreciation and understanding of the above major time prophecies. As large as the subject is, it is quite compact and intertwining. For those who have the patience to ask the Lord's help in absorbing it, it all has a remarkably stabilizing effect. It not only helps us to appreciate the Lord's plans, but it explains where we are in time and why what is happening is happening -- as well as what happens next. We don't want to be like Israel which (at the first advent) "knew not the time of their visitation." (Luke 19:44)

Bible time-prophecy is not to be feared. It can be digested a little at a time. The Lord didn't put it there to frighten us. He put it there to edify us. We should learn as much as our abilities allow. We can only find peace from it all.

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