

Interpreting Prophetic Biblical Texts
(three methods)

(no respect for differing literary genre)

A. Interpret everything at face value (literally).
B. Interpret everything figuratively (spiritually).

(respect for differing literary genre)

C. Interpret everything normally (literarily).

Daniel, Revelation O.T. Prophets Gospels Epistles

Non literal language ↔ **Grammatical historical**

Apocalypse (to reveal) is a genera of literature that offers comfort and assurance to God’s people in a time of great trouble. It employs **dramatic symbols and figures from dreams** of the final culmination of history where God intervenes to save His people. The O.T. book of Daniel and the N.T. book of Revelation are examples.

Characteristics of Apocalyptic Literature

- ✓ It arose in 6th cent. B.C. from a worldview of conflict between **cosmic good and evil**.
- ✓ In Judaism it was shaped by the Hebrew view of God and took the form of **“ethical dualism” angels and demons, life after death, etc.**
- ✓ It put an emphasis on **“end of history”** events.
- ✓ It used **symbolic language** that was dramatic, and often grotesque or spectacular.

3 = the spirit world	white = victory
4 = the created order	red = war
7 = perfection	black = hard times
10 = totality	greenish gray = death
12 = God’s people	
1,000 = total completeness	
144,000 = total no. of God’s people	
3 1/2 = the time of evil is not eternal	

✓ We might liken it to the symbols in a political cartoon

Benmet Chattanooga State Free Press

DANIEL 9

Setting vs. 1-2	vs. 3-19 Daniel’s confessional prayer	vs. 20-23 Gabriel’s response	vs. 24-27 70 weeks till Messiah
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This section is the beginning of the most controversial prophetic teaching in Daniel.

This material is controversial because it is unclear (to most).

Gabriel brings a response to Daniel's confession

"20 Now while I was speaking and praying, . . . the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in *my* extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. 22 He gave *me* instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. 23 At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell *you*, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision."

"24 "Seventy weeks (**490 years**) have been decreed for your people (**nation of Israel?**) and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*."

- ✓ **"Weeks"** In Hebrew refers to a unit of 7 without reference to what kind of unit of time.
- ✓ **"Atonement, righteousness, etc."** - This sounds like the advent of Christ in the 1st cent. A.D.

"25 So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem

(Cyrus - 586 or 538 (Ezra 1:2-4, 6:3-5), Artaxerxes - 445 (Ezra 7:11-26) or 458 (Neh.2:5-8))

until Messiah the Prince

(anointed ruler, priest, or Messiah?)

there will be seven weeks (49 years) and sixty-two weeks (434 years); it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress (Neh.4:1ff, 9:36-37)."

"26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah

("anointed one" "Messiah" was not yet a technical term)

will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come

(Antiochus - 176 B.C., Titus - 70 A.D., Antichrist?)

will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

"27 And he

(Jesus, Antiochus, Titus, Antichrist?)

will make a firm covenant

(New Covenant or Deceptive covenant)

with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week

(after 3 1/2 years)

he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

The challenge

My Observations

- ✓ **The nation Israel is in view with no mention of the church unless it is equated with Israel.**
- ✓ **If interpreted at face value, the prophecies were not fulfilled at the expected time.**
- ✓ **The book of Revelation has similar prophecies and it is dated after 167 B.C. and A.D. 70.**

Some Possibilities

- ✓ **The text is not to be taken literally.**
- ✓ **There are multiple fulfillments.**
- ✓ **There is an unspecified gap in the timeline.**

1st cent. Jewish view

"²⁵ So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince (**Cyrus, or Jeshua**) there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."

"²⁶ Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come (**Alexander Yannai**) will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

"²⁷ And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."



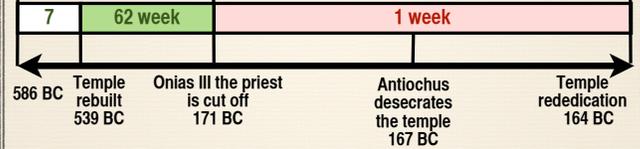
This prophecy covers the period from the end of the Babylonian exile to the Roman invasion.

A historical critical view

"²⁵ So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince (**Cyrus, or Jeshua**) there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."

"²⁶ Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah (**Onias**) will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come (**Antiochus**) will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

"²⁷ And he (**Antiochus**) will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."



This text is not about Jesus at all and ends with events in the 2nd cent. B.C.

Evaluation

Their Assumptions

- ✓ Daniel is dated in the 2nd cent. B.C. This is not a supernatural prophetic revelation but rather a commentary after the fact.

My Observations

- ✓ The events are quite detailed and some do not have a historical fit - Antiochus did not destroy Jerusalem, make a covenant with Israel, etc.
- ✓ The N.T. prophecies (Gospels & Revelation) link themselves to Daniel's prophecies suggesting that they have yet to be fulfilled.

Historical-messianic view

"²⁵ So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince (**Jesus**) there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."

"²⁶ Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come (**Titus**) will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

"²⁷ And he (**Christ**) will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."



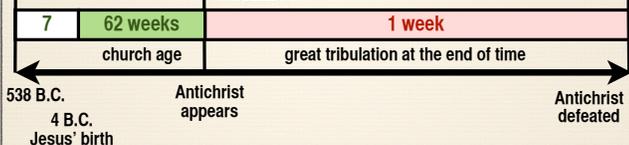
It has symbolic significance primarily for the ministry of Christ.

A symbolic view

"²⁵ So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince (**Jesus**) there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."

"²⁶ Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come (**Antichrist**) will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

"²⁷ And he (**Antichrist**) will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."



The text has symbolic significance for the ongoing church in history and culminates with the end of time.

Evaluation

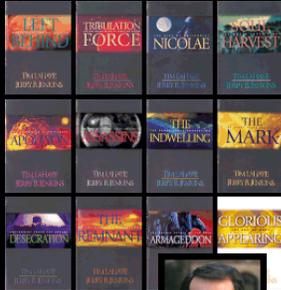
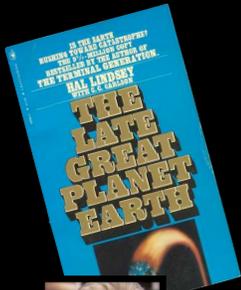
Their Assumptions

- ✓ Prophetic texts are not to be viewed literally.
- ✓ The text is to be applied to the church.

My Observations

- ✓ The identification of the O.T. Israel with the N.T. church is not as clear as one would expect.
- ✓ Jesus and the Apostles seem to speak of events that are specific and future just as Daniel did.
- ✓ The present situation does not seem to be even close to "the promised kingdom of God."

The popular (Dispensational) view

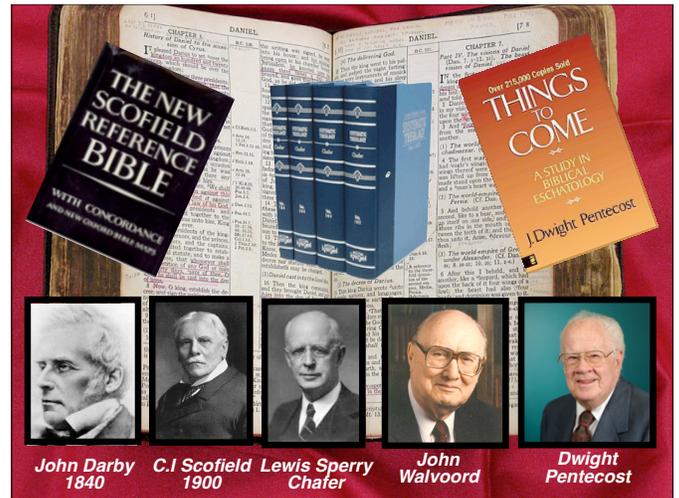


Hal Lindsey

- Published in 1970
- Sold 35 million copies
- Printed in 54 languages



Tim La Haye



John Darby 1840



C.I. Scofield 1900



Lewis Sperry Chafer



John Walvoord

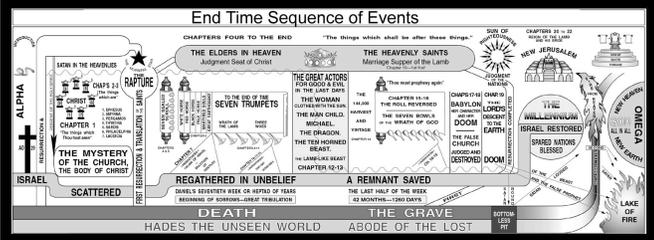
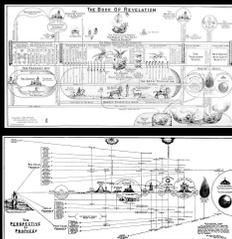
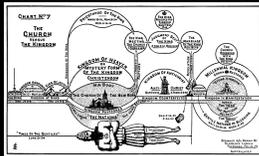


Dwight Pentecost

Dispensational charts



Clarence Larkin 1914



Dispensationalist view

"25 So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince (**Jesus**) there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."

"26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come (**Titus**) will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

"27 And he (**Antichrist**) will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

7	62 week	Prophetic gap	1 week (7 years)
483 years		Church age	Great Tribulation of Israel
444 BC	AD 26 Jesus' Baptism	AD 70 Titus	Rapture of the church Second coming of Christ

The gap is necessary in order to harmonize a literal reading of Daniel & Revelation.

Evaluation

Their Assumptions

- ✓ All Scripture (including prophecy) should be read literally.
- ✓ The end times for Israel, not the church, is in view.
- ✓ The book of Revelation suggests that the prophecies have not yet been fulfilled.

My Observations

- ✓ Literal reading does not respect the genera.
- ✓ Literal reading seems to be selective.
- ✓ The idea of a "prophetic gap" does not have any clear Scriptural support.

A Gospels / Revelation view

"25 So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince (**Jesus**) there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."

"26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come (**Titus**) will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

"27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

7	62 week	1 week
483 years		
588 BC	AD 26 Jesus' baptism	Antiochus 167 B.C. Titus A.D. 70 (Luke) Future ? (Rev.)

The coming of Jesus marks the beginning of the end. A 3rd fulfillment is coming at the end of history.

Matthew

Beginning of birth pangs	Great Tribulation	2nd Coming of Christ	Parables	Final Judgment
24:4-14	24:15-28	24:29-31	24:32-25:30	25:31-46
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ False Christs will come ✓ Wars & rumors of wars ✓ Famine & earthquakes ✓ Believers hated by all ✓ Conflict within the ch. ✓ False prophets ✓ Many are misled ✓ Increased lawlessness ✓ Love will grow cold ✓ World evangelism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Desecration ✓ Tribulation ✓ False signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cosmic signs ✓ Christ is seen ✓ Trumpet sounds ✓ Elect gathered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fig Tree ✓ Servants ✓ Virgins ✓ Talents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sheep ✓ Goats
1 Thess.5:1-11	2 Thess.2:1-12	1 Thess.4:13-18 2 Pet.3:3-13		2 Pet.3:3-13
Rev. 6-7 (seals)	Rev. 8-18 (trumpets, bowls)	Rev.19	The Millennium ?	Rev.20

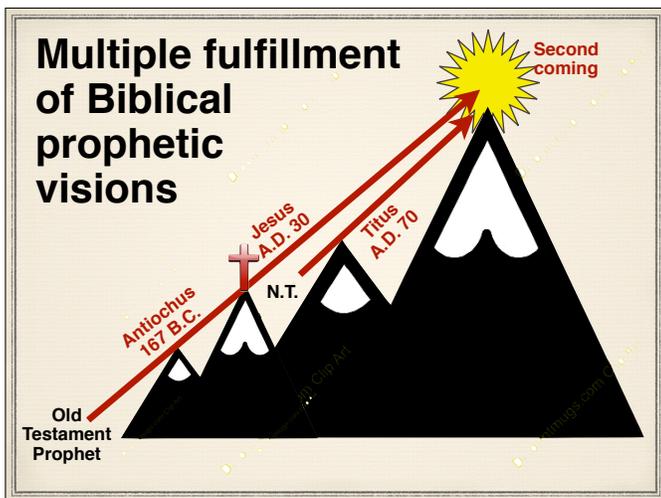
Evaluation

Their Assumptions

- ✓ The inspired Scripture is to be read as a whole allowing the N.T. to interpret the O.T.

My Observations

- ✓ The N.T. writers pick up many of the themes and order of events in Daniel (abomination of desolation, etc.)
- ✓ Some of the material does not have a historical fit - and may relate to the future coming of Christ.
- ✓ Multiple fulfillments are common in Biblical prophecy.



My "TENTATIVE" conclusions

1. I am not at all certain as to how to interpret these texts.
2. I tend to have respect for the N.T.'s explanation of Daniel.
3. Prophetic texts are often clarified only after the event.
4. Prophetic texts can have multiple fulfillments.
5. I am not certain about the future of the nation Israel in Biblical prophecy.
6. The general point seems to be - things will get worse before they get better for God's people.
7. Literal or dogmatic interpretations seem unwarranted.
8. Let's focus on what is more transparent (Epistles) and wait to see how things unfold.

"God's Kingdom is "present in its beginnings, but still future in its fullness. This guards us from an under-realized eschatology (expecting no change now) and an over-realized eschatology (expecting all change now). In this stage, we embrace the reality that while we're not yet what we will be, we're also no longer what we used to be."

Tim Keller 



Blaise Pascal

"There is pleasure to be on board a ship battered by a storm, when we are certain that it will not perish: the persecutions buffeting the Church are of this kind."