

A Day As a Thousand Years

Many today see significance in the jubilee cycle as an indication of when Jesus might return to this earth. The 7,000-year prophecy may clarify this concept somewhat. If the sabbatical cycle is typological, as I believe it is, then the Second Coming will introduce the antitypical seventh-year Sabbath—not the jubilee. In addition, the jubilee year was not a *sabbaton* as the seventh year sabbaticals were, and may not therefore have been typical as to time but almost surely pointed forward to the meek inheriting the earth. In his sixth article J. N. Andrews stated the same concept.

"After seven of these weeks of years came the year of jubilee." Lev. 25:8-10. In this year liberty was proclaimed throughout all the land to all its inhabitants, and every man returned to his own inheritance. This signifies that after the great Sabbath, during which the earth will remain uncultivated for 1,000 years, the great week of 7,000 years being finished, the curse will cease, after having consumed the earth with all who are wicked. Then the earth will be created anew by the power of God, and all the just will return to their inheritance in the new earth, and never know sin nor sorrow any more." (J. N. Andrews, "The Great Week of Time," *Review and Herald*, Aug. 21, 1883)

The provisions of the jubilee thus reach their logical fulfillment at the creation of the new earth when the meek are granted their inheritance along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (See Hebrews 11:8-16.)

The second point of discussion in this chapter is how the weekly (seven) cycle and the sabbatical year help us understand the prophecies of Daniel. When we see this connection it is then very clear that the weekly and yearly cycles of seven do indeed have prophetic or predictive elements. William Shea has done a thorough study of this topic. He states, when commenting on Leviticus 25:8, "A literal translation of the opening clause of Lev. 25:8 reads: 'You shall count seven Sabbaths of years, seven years seven times, and to you the days of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be forty-nine years.'

"The explanation of the first numerical expression, as given in the second of the same clause, indicates that a 'Sabbath was the seventh day of the week. In this passage the *seventh day* has been taken to stand for a *seventh year*. As the seventh and concluding day of the week, the Sabbath has been taken over here to stand for the seventh year of a period of seven years. Thus *each day* of the 'weeks' which end with these 'Sabbaths' in the jubilee cycle stand for *one year*."

"...Thus the Sabbath day and the six days that preceded it came to be used as the model by which the occurrence of the jubilee year was calculated according to divine directions. Each of these year-days was to extend into the future from the beginning of those cycles to measure off the coming of the jubilee year."

"In prophecy this use of the year-day principle is paralleled most directly by Dan. 9:24-27. A different word (*sabua*) is used in that prophecy, but it means the same thing that the 'Sabbaths' mean in Lev. 25:8, that is, 'weeks.' The applicability of the year-day principle to the time periods of Dan. 9:24-27 is especially evident, therefore, from the parallel construction of the Levitical instruction on the jubilee year. One could almost say that the time period involved in Dan. 9:24-27 was modeled after the jubilee legislation.

"Since it is legitimate to apply the year-day principle to the days of the weeks of Lev. 25 to reckon time into the future to the next Jubilee, it is also legitimate to apply that same year-day principle to the days of the weeks in Dan. 9 to reckon time into the future from the beginning of their cycle. By extension, this same principle can be reasonably applied also to the 'days' of the other time prophecies in Daniel." (William H. Shea, "Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation," *Daniel and Revelation Committee Series*, vol. 1, pp. 71,72)

Shea states that the cycle of seven as found in Leviticus 25 is a model to help to properly interpret the book of Daniel. Andrews follows the same reasoning to interpret 2 Peter 3:7,8 and to establish an overall prophecy of the history of the great controversy.

"The week of years in which, after the land had been cultivated six years, it was to remain without cultivation the seventh (Lev. 25:1-7) is certainly a type of the great week of 7,000 years, in which, after the earth has been cultivated by its inhabitants during 6,000 years, it will remain uncultivated and desolate during the seventh period of 1,000 years while the Judgment takes place...

"The seventh period of 1,000 years commences with the resurrection of the martyrs, and of all those who have not worshiped the beast nor his image. Rev. 20:4. This period terminates at the resurrection of the unjust. Rev. 20:5. As the dead in Christ are raised at the second coming of Christ (2 Cor. 15:23, 51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17), we know that this period of 1,000 years will commence at the sound of the last trumpet. Peter seems to assign the period of 1,000 years to the day of Judgment (1Pet. 3:7, 8), and John expressly assigns this period to that grand event. Rev. 20:4." (J. N. Andrews, "The Great Week of Time," *Review and Herald*, Aug. 21, 1883)

One key point remains to be made. It appears upon deeper study that the sabbatical and jubilee models were the basis of the prophecy that predicted Christ's first coming, and by extension, why not the second? Let's take a look at the first advent prophecies. Again a good, concise study has been done by the Daniel and Revelation study committee.

"Daniel's prayer in ch 9 begins with an appeal to God for the return of His people to their land on the basis of the 70 years Jeremiah prophesied they would be exiled in Babylon (v. 2/ cf Jer. 25:12; 29:10). In answer to his prayer, Gabriel assured Daniel they would return and rebuild the temple and capital city. In doing so, Gabriel also delimited another period of prophetic time: 70 weeks. During that period other events, beyond the previously mentioned ones, would take place (Dan. 9:24-27).

"Since these events could not have been accomplished in 70 literal weeks, it is evident that this later time period was intended to be understood symbolically. The seven-day week provided the model upon which the symbolic units of that time period were based. Thus we find two prophetic time periods in this narrative of Dan. 9—the 70 years at its beginning and the 70 weeks at its end; the one literal, the other symbolic. What is the relationship between these two time periods?

"A relationship between them can be seen from the fact that both are prophetic in nature, and the latter is given in answer to the prayer about the former.

"A relationship between them can also be suggested on the basis of their location in similar positions in the literary structure of the narrative...

"Another way these two time periods are linked is through their common use of the number 70. This is no random selection of numbers. The latter has been directly modeled after the former...

"These two time prophecies are also related by the fact that both are multiples of seven. When the 70 weeks are multiplied by their individual units, they are found to contain seven times more symbolic units than the literal units of the 70 years (70 years: 490 day-years).

"Furthermore, when the symbolic units of the 70 weeks are interpreted according to the literal units of the 70 years, a relationship is produced which parallels the relationship between the jubilee period and sabbatical-year period (Lev. 25:1-19). It may be recalled that the years of the jubilee were also measured off in terms of 'weeks' in the legislation given about them in Lev. 25:8...

"Sabbatical year terminology was applied to Jeremiah's 70-year prediction of Babylonian captivity by the chronicler: 'to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, *until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths*. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfil seventy years' (2 Chron. 36:21, italics Shea). Since the land rested every seventh year, it is evident that the inspired writer viewed the 70 years of captivity as the sum of ten sabbatical-year periods.

"Inasmuch as the 70-year period (referred to by Daniel in v. 2 just prior to his prayer) was understood to relate to the sabbatical-year legislation (Lev. 25:1-7), it may be expected that the 70-week period (at the close of his prayer) would be related to the jubilee period. This is the sequence in Lev. 25:1-17 (sabbatical year—jubilee). Thus the 70 weeks or 490 years (on the year-day principle), may be seen as ten jubilee periods even as the 70 years were seen as ten sabbatical-year periods.

"Supplementary support for these sabbatical year-jubilee relationships to Daniel's 70 weeks can be found in the fact that they were fulfilled historically through events that occurred in post-exilic sabbatical years. The years 457 B.C. and A.D. 27 and 34 were sabbatical years." (William H. Shea, "Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation," *Daniel and Revelation Committee Series*, vol. 1, pp. 77-79)

This study underlines that there is genuine Biblical support for the predictive use of Leviticus 25: 1-17. The *Adventist Review* released a special undated issue in the fall of 1993 titled "LAST-DAY EVENTS SPECIAL. LOOK UP! JESUS IS COMING." On page 7 Beatrice Neall, Professor of Religion at Union College, in an article titled "Jesus at the Center—How to Interpret Prophecy," states, "Keep in mind that Daniel and Revelation draw upon the typology of the Old Testament—Creation, the Exodus, the sanctuary. This means that type and antitype must be studied carefully."

Every Bible scholar and researcher that I have found who has addressed the 7,000-year time line has considered 2 Peter 3:8 in the process. Some have advanced the idea that 2 Peter 3:8, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," gives support to the 6,000-year theory. Others have said, "No, that's not what it says at all. This text just means that God is eternal and does not think in terms of time as man does." Which view is right? Are either of them? From my perspective having just finished the research for this book, I surely do not believe in the second view. It is obvious that God is operating on a very exact time schedule. His modus operandi is to set a schedule and then follow it very precisely. Though eternal, he always deals with man within the parameters of time and always tells us through the prophets what He is about to do or will do in the future.

In seeking to understand a passage, scholars look at both the internal evidence contained within the text itself and external evidence from outside pertinent sources. Let's follow this method in trying to see what Peter is trying to tell us not to be ignorant of or not to forget.

Peter's second epistle divides itself easily into three sections:

Chapter 1 - Growth in Christ and the cultivation of Christian character

Chapter 2 - The danger of false teachers

Chapter 3 - Confidence in Christ's return.

Peter was not writing to people disappointed after having waited long centuries for Christ's return. His readers needed no reassurance about time being viewed differently by God, or any other explanations for a very long delay, since no long delay had in fact occurred. He was writing to Christians whose hopes had been raised by false teachers to expect Christ's imminent return, and who needed to be guarded against possible disappointment when told that Christ's second coming as in the distant future. In addition, he wanted to turn the believers' heavenly expectations into positive present action.

With this brief historical background clearly in mind let's now turn to consider specific passages in 2 Peter 3:3-14, where the subject of the second advent is treated most fully.

Peter pictured a long delay in Christ's coming (2 Peter 3:3, 4); he illustrated the delay by the long period from Creation to the Flood (3:5-7); he gave the approximate limits of probationary time by comparing the days of the week with 1,000-year

periods (3:8); he gave God's longsuffering as the reason for the delay (3:9). Forestalling the idea of an interminable delay, he declared emphatically that "the day of the Lord will come." He described it as a universal cataclysmic event, not to be confused with the destruction of Jerusalem (3:10). And finally, he used the judgments associated with Christ's coming as the basis for an appeal for holy living (3:11). He tells those 'looking for' Christ's imminent return that it was in their power to "hasten the coming of the day of God" by godly lives (3:12-14). We also understand that Peter's statement holding out the possibility for believers in the last days to hasten the coming of Christ disqualifies the use of 2 Peter 3:8 as a yardstick for fixing the exact time of Christ's return.

In 2 Peter 3:8 the apostle cannot be referring to the shortness of time with God, for he says, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years." Seeing that he then repeats the statement in reverse which would exactly reverse the meaning, we are left with two alternative interpretations. Either Peter is comparing the days of the week with successive 1,000-year periods in human history (possibly based on his knowledge of the day/year and week/sabbatical relationships in Leviticus), or he is saying that time is of no consequence to the Eternal God even when dealing with man and the great controversy on earth.

Let me deal with the second alternative first. It is clear that though God is eternal, he deals with man within the parameters of time. While God is not dependant on the universe He has created, He nevertheless lives within and not apart from His universal creation.

And so the view that "we cannot confine God or His ideas to our scale of days and years" is a confusing half-truth, which does not resolve the problem. We must not forget that the whole Bible witnesses to the fact that in redemption God has chosen to act within the dimensions in which He placed man at Creation; not above and apart from these dimensions, and the Second Advent is as much a part of God's plan of redemption as the incarnation.

The other alternative I have stated, namely, that Peter probably was using Hebrew typology to explain the parameters of salvation history, can be defended on five grounds: (1) it fits the immediate context; (2) it fits the historical situation; (3) it is corroborated by the understanding of Christian scholars quite near in time to the historical situation of Peter's second epistle; (4) other statements in the epistle lend support to Peter's time equation; and (5) insights from the Spirit of Prophecy. Let's consider these points individually.

(1) The immediate context requires that we should understand the two uses of "day" in 2 Peter 3:8 in the light of a further three uses of "day" in 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12, or vice versa. Not that they should all have the same meaning, but rather that their use in such close association suggests a deliberately meaningful relationship.

The three terms "the day of judgment" (3:7), "the day of the Lord" (3:12) all refer to Christ's second advent and associated events. The use of "day" here is, of course, figurative and does not refer to a twenty-four-hour period. As we addressed in Chapter 10 the term "day of the Lord" has its origin in the Old Testament and—like most figurative terms which are derived from literal usage—can be traced back to the seventh-day Sabbath of Creation week. "The day of the Lord" in history of the Jews was primarily the whole period of Babylonian captivity. This 70-year period when "the land enjoyed her sabbaths" (2Chron. 36:21), was the seventh part of a previous six-times-seventy-year period of apostasy and rebellion, during which the Jews refused to "be reformed" to fulfill their calling as God's people (Lev. 25:1-32-35, 43). The local "day of the Lord," was a type of "the great and terrible day of the Lord" ushered in by Christ's return in glory and lasting for 1,000 years.

Finally, the pointedness with which Peter introduces his analogy between a day and a thousand years in the context of his threefold mention of "the day of judgment," "the day of the Lord," and "the day of God," suggests very strongly that "the day of the Lord" IS the "day" that will last for "a thousand years." Since "the day of the Lord," derives its meaning from the seventh-day Sabbath of Creation week, we should also understand him to imply that it will be the seventh part of a previous six-times-1,000-year period.

(2) As we noted earlier, since Peter's readers had been misled into expecting Christ's immediate return, they needed to be taught that a long period lay ahead before Christ would return. By equating the days of the week with 1,000-year periods, Peter satisfies this need in the historical situation. In effect he put "the day of the Lord" about 6,000 years after Creation and about 2,000 years after his own time, thus dispelling the idea of Christ's imminent return. The immediately preceding five verses are all concerned with putting Christ's return in the then distant future.

(3) The fact that there is general support for the 7,000-year time line in 2 Peter 3:8 is corroborated by the "early church fathers" or the ante-Nicene fathers. The use these scholars made of 2 Peter 3:8 is significant since they lived close in time to the historical situation of Peter's second epistle. The following comments are representative:

Justin Martyr (c. 100-c. 165) writes when discussing the millennium in his *Dialogue With Trypho*, "We have perceived, moreover, that the expression, 'The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,' is connected with this subject." (i.e., the 1,000 years.) (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue With Trypho*, Chapter LXXXI. Footnotes cite Ps. 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8.)

Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 202) writes, "For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed; it is evident therefore, that they will come to an end at the six thousandth year." (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, xxviii, 3. Footnote cites 2 Peter 3:8.)

Hippolytus (died c. 236) writes, "For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they shall reign with Christ, when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse. For a day with the Lord is as a thousand years. Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6000 years must be fulfilled." (Hippolytus, *Fragments From Commentaries*, Sections on Daniel 2, chapter 4)

No wonder J. N. Andrews could write, "It has been the faith of the most eminent servants of God, not only during the entire gospel dispensation, but also during some hundred years previous to Christ's first advent, that the period of 6,000 years from the creation would extend to the day of Judgment. And we think that the most careful study confirm this view." And again he stated, "That the great week of 7000 years was indicated by the first week of time has been the judgment of many of the wisest and best of men for the period of more than two thousand years." By the way, both of these statements are made following comments on 2 Peter 3:8!

Some critics of the 7,000-year time line have suggested that the early church fathers got their ideas in this regard from ancient Persian traditions or from Jewish literature such as the Slavonic book of 2 Enoch. However, when you read the ante-Nicene fathers, their only appeal is to Scripture! And if both Jewish and non-Christian traditions mention the 7,000 years, that surely does no more harm to Biblical integrity than mythological flood stories such as the Gilgamesh epic or the Enuma Elish do to the credibility of the Biblical account of the flood. Neither is any harm done to the Biblical laws by the Hammurabi Law code, though it precedes the written laws of God and Moses.

Moreover, Barnabus, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Augustine clearly use the phrasing of 2 Peter 3:8, 10, and not that of 2 Enoch, as the basis for their teaching that one day is equal to a thousand years, and that "the day of the Lord" represents the Sabbatical Millennium. It is inescapable to conclude that 2 Peter 3:8 was the source of their idea.

The case of Justin Martyr is particularly significant. His *Dialogue With Trypho* (c. 148) is his effort to convert one of the most learned Jews of his time. With such a delicate task in hand, Justin was particularly careful in his use of sources, preferring whenever possible to quote a Jewish authority to prove a point. Moreover, in discussing the Millennium, Justin assured Trypho, "I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines (delivered) by Him." (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue With Trypho*, Chapter LXXX) Then, without any reference to Jewish canonical or non-canonical sources, Justin added, "We have perceived, moreover, that the expression, 'The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,' is connected with the subject. And furthermore there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation made to him..." (*Ibid.*, Chapter LXXX) It is evident that by "we" and "us" Justin means Christians. By referring to "the expression" without a Jewish source, he must be quoting a widely known Christian saying, as the "furthermore" could also be taken to imply, when he next refers to the Revelation of John. Since he claims to follow only God-inspired doctrines, and since "the expression" he quotes corresponds exactly with a combination of two key phrases from 2 Peter 3:10 and 8, we are forced to conclude that Peter's second epistle was the source of his idea.

Further evidence that Jewish non-canonical sources were not the origin of the 6,000-year theory among the Church Fathers may be seen in the fact that while they generally held to a tempora millennium, when the world would flourish like Eden, the early Jewish idea was that "the world would last six thousand years and be in chaos during the seventh thousand years." (L. E. Fromm, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 191)

During and following reformation times Bible scholars continued to hold and teach the general validity of the 6,000-year time line. Latimer (1485-1555) preached the scriptural basis for this idea, saying, "The world was ordained to endure, as all learned men affirm and prove it with Scripture, six thousand years." (H. Latimer, "Third Sermon on the Lord's Prayer," 1552, appearing in *The Works of Hugh Latimer*, vol. 1, p. 356) Thomas Burnet (1635-1715) also cited Scripture as the basis for nearly twenty of the Church Fathers subscribing to the 6,000-year history of the world. He says it was "not so much for the bare authority of the tradition, as because they thought it was founded in the history of the six days of creation and the Sabbath succeeding." (Thomas Burnet, *The Theory of the Earth*, vol., 2, pp.34, 35)

Thus we are not alone in the view that Scripture in general and 2 Peter 3:8, 10 in particular are the origin of early Christian ideas that the millennium will be the seventh 1,000-year period of human history, corresponding to the seventh day of Creation and the Sabbatical year. Erroneous views regarding the conditions of the earth during the millennium that many of the Church Fathers associated with this understanding did not arise out of 2 Peter 3:8, and therefore, do not weaken the validity of their interpretation.

(4) Let's consider other statements in Peter's epistle that lend support to his time equation. Peter identifies Christ's transfiguration "in the holy mount" as a type of the "coming of our Lord" in "power" and "glory" (1:16-18). Holy Scripture indicates that Christ arranged for the transfiguration to occur "six days" "after" He gave His cryptic promise (Matt. 16:28; 17:1; Mark 9:1, 2). Therefore Peter's statement equating one day with a thousand years in the mind of "the Lord" and with special reference to the Second Advent, could also mean that the Second Advent would occur after about 6,000 years.

Next, Peter's reference to Noah as "the eighth preacher of righteousness" (cf. 2 Peter 2:5 and Jude 14) provides the key to a typological understanding of the genealogy in Genesis 5. Significantly, this results in a 6,000-year typological period from Creation to the Flood, which Peter, like his Lord, identified as a type of the Second Advent (cf. 2 Peter 3:5-7 and Matt. 24:37).

(5) Finally, what insights into the meaning of 2 Peter 3:8 can we gain from the Spirit of Prophecy? There are two very pertinent references in Ellen White's writings.

The first I found while studying the life of Lot and his wife in the fourteenth chapter of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Abraham had been promised the land of Canaan—hence the name "promised land." But all he ended up with was a cemetery plot for his wife and himself. "But the word of God had not failed; neither did it meet its final accomplishment in the occupation of Canaan by the Jewish people. 'To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.' Gal. 3:16. Abraham himself was to share the inheritance. The fulfillment of God's promise may seem to be long delayed—for 'one day is with the Lord as a thousand years,

and a thousand years as one day' (2 Peter 3:8); it may appear to tarry; but at the appointed time 'it will surely come, it will not tarry; but at the appointed time 'it will surely come, it will not tarry.' Habakkuk 2:3. The gift to Abraham and his seed included not merely the land of Canaan, but the whole earth...And the Bible plainly teaches that the promises made to Abraham are to be fulfilled through Christ. All that are Christ's are 'Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise'—heirs to 'an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away'—the earth freed from the curse of sin. Galatians 3:29; 1 Peter 1:4 (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 169, 170)

So here is Ellen White's first use of 2 Peter 3:8, associated in the same sentence by way of explanation with Habakkuk 2:3! "It may appear to tarry; but at the appointed time it will surely come, it will not tarry." The coming of Christ may seem long or delayed but God is right on schedule.

The second reference to this text is right in the middle of an article that Ellen White wrote in the *Signs of the Times* entitled "Noah's Time and Ours," on January 3, 1878. The following four paragraphs are very significant:

"In the days of Noah men followed the imagination of their own hearts, and the result was unrestrained crime and wickedness. The same state of things will exist in this age of the world...Of that vast population there was only eight persons who believed the message of Noah and obeyed God's word...One marked feature of Noah's day was the intense worldliness of the inhabitants. They were eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, not that these things were of themselves sins, but they were, although lawful in themselves, carried to a high degree of intemperance...The same evils intensified exist in our world today...As the time of Christ's second appearing draws near, the Lord sends His servants with a warning message to the world to prepare for that great event...But as in the days of Noah, there is with the majority a total disbelief of the testimony God has in mercy sent to warn the world of her coming destruction."

The seventh paragraph of the article contains the references from 2 Peter 3 so I will quote this paragraph in full. "When Noah proclaimed the solemn message, yet an hundred and twenty years the judgments, men would not receive it, so it is at the present time. Those who warn the transgressors of law to repent and turn to their allegiance for the Lawgiver is coming to punish the disobedient, will plead and entreat and warn the majority in vain. Peter describes the attitude of the world in reference to the last message: 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts and saying where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished; but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up...'

"The men of Noah's time, in their philosophy and worldly wisdom, thought that God could not destroy the world with a flood, for the waters of the ocean could not be sufficient for this... And when the great men and the wise men had reasoned before the world the impossibility of its destruction by water, and the fears of the people were quieted, and all regarded Noah's prophecy as the veriest delusion, and looked upon Noah as a crazy fanatic, God's time had come... and the rain began to descend...But let us all bear in mind that those who perished in that awful judgment had an offer of escape.

"While Satan is working to quiet the fears and consciences of men, he is making his last master stroke to retain his power over a world which he sees is about to pass from his grasp...He has come down in great power working with all deceivableness in them that perish. His lying wonders will deceive many... Those who would be loyal to the God of heaven will not allow that interpretation of prophecy which will do away with the force of the lesson God designed the prophecy should convey. As the contemporaries of Noah laughed to scorn that which they termed fear and superstition in the preacher of righteousness, so will the solemn messages of warning be ridiculed in our day." (*Signs of the Times*, Jan. 3, 1878)

This article certainly supports the idea that the timely message of Noah was based on a timetable that was growing shorter each day that passed. The same is true of our day. Our message is based on the Bible's time prophecies and the remaining time grows shorter with each passing day. Don't accept an interpretation of the prophecies that will do away with the force of the lesson God designed the prophecy to convey. There is indeed a lesson in the prophecy of 2 Peter 3!

The general validity of the 6,000-year theory does not need 2 Peter 3:8 for any additional support. However, I believe it does support the idea. It does not support the "God is eternal" idea—that He will come someday, whenever He gets ready.

Some have asked, "Since part of 2 Peter 3:8 comes from Psalm 90:4, should not Peter's meaning be the same as Moses' meaning?" While Peter's statement is reminiscent of Psalm 90:4, it is certainly not a quotation. In reality New Testament writers, guided by the Holy Spirit, often bring out meanings not evident to the surface reader. There is no doubt that Psalm 90:4 teaches the shortness of time with God, and if Peter intended merely to assure the believers not to worry at the delay in Christ's coming (which, of course, was not his purpose), then he simply needed to quote Moses' words or repeat his thought. But Peter reverses this thought ("one day is with Lord as a thousand years") which means that he can no longer be making a simple statement about the shortness of time with God.

Others have stated, "Simply because history is going to work out roughly into a 6,000-year period followed by a 1,000-year period is no evidence that the weekly arrangement was designed to be predictive." Remember the studies done by J. N. Andrew

and William Shea on the typological significance of the "sabbaths" of Lev. 23-25? True, God could have allotted a 4,000-year or a 10,000-year probationary period for the human race after its fall. He did not have to allow man 6,000 years. It is also true that on the basis of Genesis 1 and 2 alone, we cannot postulate a 6,000-year history for the world. But on the other hand, we must reject the idea implicit in the above objection, that history is working out according to chance or 'happenstance.' The whole Bible witnesses to the fact that God is in control of history and that history is working out according to a recognizable design. Actually, it is in the light of 2 Peter 3:8 and 10 as seen against the witness of the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 25, 26; 2 Chron. 36; Jer. 4: Rev. 20, etc.) that we recognize that God has allotted mankind 6,000 years of probationary time, followed by the 1,000-year "day of the Lord," and that God, in His perfect foreknowledge before the creation and fall of man, foreshadowed this history in the six days of Creation followed by His Sabbath rest upon which the sabbatical cycle was modeled.

Some have said, "Ellen White does not urge the brethren to accept the 6,000-year theory as neglected Biblical truth." But it was not neglected truth in her day! J. N. Andrews, S. N. Haskell, W. H. Littlejohn, John Loughborough, and other Adventist contemporaries of hers taught and wrote about this topic in the *Review* and other publications by our presses. And we have shown that Ellen White did not view her role as bringing new light, but rather pointing out error, and confirming truth. And there is no question that she assumed the general validity of the 6,000-years. Further, in all of the hundreds of letters she wrote to her "pioneer" contemporaries, I find no evidence that she ever attempted to "correct" their views in this matter.

There is much to be learned and gained by reviewing the history of the pioneer work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. There were about a dozen individuals who began with the Advent movement, went through the 1844 experience, and then went on to help found the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Among those pioneers was J. N. Loughborough. He is now known as the historian of our early church. He was the last survivor of those known as the pioneers, having passed to his rest in 1922.

In 1892 Loughborough wrote a history of the church titled *The Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*. He revised and enlarged the book in 1905 and reprinted it with a new title, *The Great Second Advent Movement*.

Ellen White had high regard for Loughborough and encouraged the brethren to circulate his book. "The record of the experience through which the people of God passed in the early history of our work must be republished," she wrote. "Many of those who have since come into the truth are ignorant of the way in which the Lord wrought. The experience of William Miller and his associates, of Captain Joseph Bates, and of other pioneers in the Advent message should be kept before our people. Elder Loughborough's book should receive attention. Our leading men should see what can be done for the circulation of this book." (*The Publishing Ministry*, p. 30)

So what did Loughborough understand about the 6,000 years? He stated when answering the question as to when the saints would be taken to heaven and the events that would take place at the beginning of the millennium, "It is generally agreed that this thousand years is the period when Satan is to be bound, at the end of the six thousand years from creation. (This time is now very nearly expired.) There are very few who do not hold to this theory. The great difference of opinion is more in regard to the work of that period." (J. N. Loughborough, *The Saints Inheritance or The Earth Made New*, p. 58)

The most weighty objection to the 6,000-year principle is, "This interpretation has often been used to set false dates for Christ's coming and could be so used again." Yes, it would certainly be wrong to use 2 Peter 3:8, 10 for setting an exact date for Christ's return, as some Bible students have done since the days of Hippolytus. However, the deplorable abuse of this Scripture in the past or a misunderstanding of Biblical chronology should not lead us to rob it of its original meaning. It is not necessary for over-conscientious scholars to attempt to render 2 Peter 3:8 'harmless' by a spiritual interpretation, for Peter himself made it impossible to use his statement equating one day with a thousand years as a yardstick for determining the exact time for Christ's return.

Peter's use of the Greek participle *spoudontas* in verse 12, carries the idea of expediting the coming of Christ. Thus he counsels the believers, "Look eagerly for the day of God and work to hasten it on." (NEB) This hastening of Christ's return can be accomplished by godly lives. (Compare 2 Peter 3:11, 12, 14 and Mark 4:29.) Moreover, since Peter states that one reason for the delayed advent is God's unwillingness "that any should perish" (3:9), it follows that when all have been reached who can be reached with the message of mercy, Christ will come. (Matt. 24:14) In other words, not a fixed time, but a completed task is the final factor in determining exactly when Christ shall come.

This simply means that the 6,000 years resulting from Peter's equation (3:8, 10) can be regarded as no more than a basic interval of probationary time. There is a time limit which may be hastened by man (3:9, 12), and which Paul declares "will" be "cut short" by God (Rom. 9:28). By exactly how much God will cut short human history has not been revealed in Scripture and is expressly declared to be beyond the ken of "man" and "angels." (Mark 13:32) (**Even At The Door**, by G. Edward Reid, Chapter 11.)