

THE SEVENTH — NUMBER OF PERFECTION

By G. Edward Reid

1. [WEEK OF DAYS](#) — a. Memorial of Creation. b. Ceremonial sabbaths
2. [WEEK OF WEEKS](#) — linking the Spring Feast days (from Wave-sheaf to Pentecost).
3. [WEEK OF MONTHS](#) — of the Sacred Year in which all Annual Feast days occur.
4. [WEEK OF YEARS](#) — the Sabbatical Year or Year of Release.
5. [WEEK OF WEEKS OF YEARS](#) — the 49th year ended the cycle.
6. [WEEK OF DECADES](#) — a. Seventh decade (70 years) b. 7 x 7 decades — 490 years
7. [WEEK OF MILLENNIUMS](#) — 7 Millenniums — 7000 years: the 7th being the 1000-year Millennium of rest for this world.

[THE PERFECT NUMBER](#)

Introduction

The following statements show that God has allowed only 6000 years for the demonstration of sin and the period will be immediately followed by the 1000 years of the Millennium which is the great Sabbath of rest for the earth.

"A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations. He will plead with all flesh; He will give them that are wicked to the sword.' Jer.15: 31. FOR SIX THOUSAND YEARS THE GREAT CONTROVERSY HAS BEEN IN PROGRESS: The Son of God and His heavenly messengers have been in conflict with the power of the evil one, to warn, enlighten, and save the children of men. Now all have made their decisions; the wicked have fully united with Satan in his warfare against God. The time has come for God to vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. Now the controversy is not alone with Satan, but with men. The Lord hath a controversy with the nations' 'He will give them that are wicked to the sword.' " GC 656.

"For SIX THOUSAND YEARS, Satan's work of rebellion has 'made the earth tremble.' He has 'made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof.' And he 'opened not the house of his prisoners.' For SIX THOUSAND YEARS His PRISON HOUSE HAS RECEIVED God's people, and he would have held them captive forever; but Christ has broken his bonds and set the prisoners free.

"Even the wicked are now placed beyond the power of Satan, and alone with his evil angels he remains to realize the effect of the curse which sin has brought. 'The kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory everyone in his own house (the grave). But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch...Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people.' Isa. 14:18-20.

"The great plan of redemption results in fully bringing back the world into God's favor. All that was lost by sin is restored. Not only man but the earth is redeemed, to be the eternal abode of

the obedient. For SIX THOUSAND YEARS Satan has struggled to maintain possession of the earth. Now God's original purpose in its creation is accomplished. 'The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.' Dan. 7:18. PP 342

1. THE WEEK OF DAYS

A. Seventh-day Sabbath.

"Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God...for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." Ex. 20:9-11.

The seventh day Sabbath was not a type to pass away with the death of Christ. It is the SEAL OF God imbedded in the very center of the holy ten commandments, the MORAL LAW.

This week of seven days which was established in Eden spans all time and covers all history. It is only the seventh day Sabbath (which begins Friday evening at sundown) that marks off the week. It is deeply engraven in the history of God's saints. Over 300 thousand Sabbaths line the road of the people of God, each as it were, pointing with out-stretched hand, like so many guide-posts, each in the same direction to the eternal city. Each is proclaiming in overwhelming testimony, "It is therefore the duty of the people of God to KEEP THE SABBATH." Heb. 4:9.

B. Ceremonial sabbaths.

These are a prophecy of seventh day Sabbath's ("a shadow of 'seventh-day Sabbath's to come.'" Col. 2:17). They may come on various days of the week each year because of their being calculated from the new moon. These ceremonial Sabbath's are highly significant when aligning with seventh-day Sabbaths. In the Bible this occurrence was termed "an high day." John 19:31.

2 THE WEEK OF WEEKS

This period is found between the Passover and Pentecost and begins on the 16th day of the first Jewish month of the Sacred Year. The first month of the year must be calculated by the new moon nearest the time of the barley harvest. In the Holy Land, barley ripens around the middle of April. "And ye shall count unto you, from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath..." Leviticus 23:15, 16.

3. THE WEEK OF MONTHS

The annual feasts within Israel's sacred year prefigured the history of redemption. This occupied a week of months. This period comprised the first seven months of the year. They began with the Passover; this was on the "fourteenth day of the first month." Lv. 23:5. The last feast was held in the seventh month and at its conclusion the sacred year closed. (See Patriarchs and Prophets 358, 540; Great Controversy 421.) Thus the period for holy annual gatherings was seven in character, a week of months.

4. THE WEEKS OF YEARS

In the plan of God the land was also to keep a Sabbath. The Lord said in Leviticus. 25:2-4, "When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a Sabbath unto the Lord.

Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord." The servant was likewise to serve six years and go free on the seventh. "Six years he shall serve; and the seventh he shall go out free." Exodus. 21:2.

This period of years had an exact beginning and ending year. The sequence of this has been recorded and is still on record. AD 26 was a Sabbatical year, making 1986 also a Sabbatical year.

5. WEEK OF WEEKS OF YEARS

"Thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years." Leviticus. 25:8.

This larger week was similar in character to the others, having an exact beginning and ending year and at its close, bondage, debt, and poverty passed away. AD 26 ended one of these cycles. Then came the JUBILEE of rest, joy, and liberty.

6 THE WEEK OF DECADES

A. Seventh Decade

In Psalms 90:10, we find the law of weeks embraces all, both Jew and Gentile. "The days of our years are threescore and ten." Human life is a week—a week of decades.

B. The Week of Weeks of Decades

Dan. 9:24 states "Seventy weeks" or as the Septuagint Version "Seventy weeks of years" or 490 years were allotted to the Jewish nation, so even in this scale of the centuries God has again adhered to the law of sevens. It is a week of weeks of decades.

7. THE WEEK OF MILLENNIUMS

Rev. 20 "the thousand years" are mentioned in this chapter six times, the 1000 years follows the 6000 years of sin. It will be the Sabbath Millennium when the saints "live and reign with Christ a thousand years." Meanwhile, Satan is on a desolated earth. Then the earth will keep its Sabbath. God sent Israel into captivity because they "transgressed very much," "They mocked the messengers of God and despised His words and misused His prophets" 2 Chron. 36:14, 16. They had brushed aside God's Sabbath so God removed them. This was "to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land enjoyed the sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath." 2 Chronicles. 36:21.

"The Jewish nation is before us as an example of the termination of God's long forbearance. In the destruction of Jerusalem the destruction of the world is typified." S.D.A. Bible Commentary. V. 3, pg. 1133.

For six thousand years our Lord's holy day has been trampled underfoot. For the seventh thousand year period it lies desolate. "for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath." 2 Chronicles. 36:21.

The Perfect Number

The number seven occurs often in Scripture. Here is a list of some of the better known Bible references to seven:

Seven days of creation;
Seven days before the flood the animals came into the ark;
Seven days Noah and his family stayed in the ark before the rain started;
Seven fat and seven skinny cows, and seven healthy ears of corn and seven withered ears of corn in Pharaoh's dream;
Seven years times two that Jacob worked for Rachel;
Seven times that Elijah prayed on Mt. Carmel before the rain came;
Seven times Naaman dipped in the Jordan river to be healed;
Seven "sabbaths of years" before the great year of release—the jubilee;
Seven days the Israelites marched around Jericho with seven priests with seven trumpets and then seven times on the seventh day;
Seven years Nebuchadnezzar was humiliated before all the world;
Seven times ten weeks set apart for the Jews;
Seven times the priest cast the blood of the sacrifice toward the temple;
Seven eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth;
Seven times seventy that we are to extend forgiveness;
Seven devils cast out of Mary Magdalene;
Seven deacons chosen to help with the work of the church;
Seven churches representing seven characteristics and time periods in the history of the Christian church;
Seven golden candlesticks;
Seven stars in God's right hand;
Seven angels;
Seven thunders;
Seven trumpets;
Seven seals;
Seven last plagues;
Seven hills surrounding the New Jerusalem;
Seven pillars supporting the temple; and
Seven crowns of Jesus—crowns within a crown.

Why is the number seven used so often? Is there some mathematical reason? Are multiples of seven in any way significant in nature? We base our time calculations from the movements of the heavenly bodies and the stars. We call the orbit of Earth around the sun over a time period of 365 days a year. A month is measured by the moon's orbit around the earth every 30 days. And a day passes when the earth rotates on its axis every 24 hours.

But what heavenly body determines the weekly cycle? There is none. There is no mathematical formula or principle that establishes a week. It is based solely upon the weekly cycle established by God at Creation and memorialized by Him in the Sabbath celebration. There simply is no other explanation.

If God had asked us how many days there should be in a week we probably would have chosen five or six, because they both divide evenly into a thirty-day month. But God chose seven days for a week, because to Him that number symbolizes completeness. This completeness is demonstrated both in creation and redemption.

The March 20, 1879, issue of the Signs of the Times, contained an article by Ellen G. White entitled "Disguised Infidelity," which dealt with the Creation week and the seven principle.

"The first week, in which God performed the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was just like every other week. The great God, in His days of creation and day of rest, measured off the first cycle as a sample for successive weeks till the close of time. 'These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created.' God gives us the result of His work on each of the days of creation. each day was accounted of Him a generation, because every day He generated, or produced some new portion of His work. On the seventh day of the first week God rested from His labor, and then blessed the day of His rest, and set it apart for the use of man. The weekly cycle of seven literal days, six for labor and the seventh for rest, which has been preserved and brought down through Bible history, originated in the great facts of the first seven days.

"When God spoke His law with an audible voice from Sinai, He introduced the Sabbath by saying, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' He then declares definitely what shall be done on the six days, and what shall not be done on the seventh, he next gives the reason for thus observing the week, by pointing us back to His example on the first seven days of time. 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.' This reason appears beautiful and forcible when we understand the record of creation to mean literal days. The first six days of each week are given to man in which to labor, because God employed the same period of the first week in the work of creation. The seventh day God has reserved as a day of rest, in commemoration of His rest during the same period of time after He had performed the work of creation in six days.

"But the infidel supposition, that the events of the first week required seven vast, indefinite periods for their accomplishment, strikes directly at the foundation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It makes indefinite and obscure that which God has made very plain. It is the worst kind of infidelity; for with many who profess to believe in the record of creation, it is infidelity in disguise. It charges God with commanding men to observe the week of seven literal days in commemoration of seven indefinite periods, which is unlike His dealings with mortals, and is an impeachment of His wisdom.

"Infidel geologists claim that the world is very much older than the Bible record makes it. They reject the testimony of God's word because of those things which are to them evidences from the earth itself that it has existed tens of thousands of years. And many who profess to believe the Bible are at a loss to account for wonderful things which are found in the earth, with the view that creation week was only seven literal days, and that the world is now only about six thousand years old. These, to free themselves from difficulties thrown in their way by infidel geologists, adopt the view that the six days of creation were six vast, indefinite periods, and the day of God's rest was another indefinite period; making senseless the fourth commandment of God's holy law. Some eagerly receive this position; for it destroys the force of the fourth commandment, and they feel a freedom from its claims upon them." (Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3, p. 9)

Five years later, in a Signs of the Times article entitled "The Creation Sabbath," Ellen G. White makes the following statement: "When God created the earth and placed man upon it, He divided time into seven periods. Six He gave to man for his own use, to employ in secular business: one He reserved for Himself. Having rested on the seventh day, He blessed and sanctified it. Henceforth, the seventh day was to be regarded as the Lord's rest day, and to be sacredly observed as the memorial of His creative work. It was not the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day that was sanctified, or set apart to a holy use, neither was it a seventh part of time and no day in particular; but it was the seventh day, the day upon which God had rested. We are every day to think of God and live as in His sight; but when the six days' work is done, we are to 'remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'—to cease from labor and devote the day exclusively to meditation and worship." (Signs of the Times, Feb. 28, 1884)

Once the cycle of seven was established at Creation God used it in other ways in dealing with man. He used it not only every seventh day but also every seventh year. "Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land." (Leviticus 25:3-5)

God even took further steps to emphasize the cycle of seven in the fiftieth year Jubilee which, of course, was preceded by seven times seven years. "And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family." (Leviticus 25:8-10)

Do we have any clues as to why God chose seven for His "cycle number"? I believe we do.

"Christ fulfilled still another feature of the type. 'His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; so shall He sprinkle many nations.' Isaiah 52:14. In the Temple service, when the animal brought as a sacrifice was slain, the high priest, clothed in white robes, caught in his hand the blood that gushed forth, and cast it in the direction of the tabernacle or Temple. This was done seven times, as an expression of perfection. So Christ, the great antitype, Himself both High Priest and Victim, clothed with His own spotless robes of righteousness, after giving His life for the world, cast the virtue of His offering, a crimson current, in the direction of the holy place, reconciling man to God through the blood of the cross." (Manuscript Released, vol. 12, p. 397)

With regard to the number of times one should forgive another, the significance of the number seven again is pointed out. "Peter had come to Christ with the question, 'How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?' The rabbis limited the exercise of forgiveness to three offenses. Peter, carrying out, as he supposed the teaching of Christ, thought to extend it to seven, the number signifying perfection. But Christ taught that we are never to become weary of forgiving. Not 'until seven times seven,' He said, 'but, until seventy times seven.'" (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 243)

We are also told, "The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number seven indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world." (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 585) It is very significant in light of this statement that we, by common consensus in our church, recognize that we are living in the time of the Laodicean church—the very last one in the cycle.

By looking at the seven principle we can see that:

God uses the number seven throughout the Bible as a cycle or chronological sequence;
The seven cycle is based on the Creation week model of six days for work and one day for rest;
The seven-day cycle is repeated in a seven-year cycle, six years to work and the seventh year—the "sabbath years"—as a rest year. Then there is the seven times seven-year cycle culminating in the Jubilee "sabbath year";
As we saw earlier, the description of the land of Israel during the "Sabbath of years" parallels the desolate description of the earth during the millennium;
Seven indicates completeness or perfection;

It is the worst kind of infidelity to believe that Creation took place over seven indefinite periods of time;
It is not like God to deal with men in indefinite periods of time;
God divided time into seven periods—six for work and one for rest; and
We are living in the time of the seventh and last church.

The various "seven cycles" listed in this chapter demonstrate that God frequently uses a cycle of seven for a complete picture of a given illustration. The seventh item in each cycle was the final event or era of each sequence. The cycles listed are of various lengths but each is complete in itself.

It follows by logical extension that God will use His cycle of seven, in this case 7,000 years, to complete the cycle of the great controversy—6,000 years for the great controversy struggle with evil followed by the Sabbath rest of 1,000 years for the earth. (Even At The Door—By G. Edward Reid, Chapter 13.)

A Day As a Thousand Years

by G. Edward Reid

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 was 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 temporal 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. From, *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. Andrews 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.)