

How Long Do The Beast And The False Prophet War Against The Faithful Witnesses Of Christ? (#2)

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:19-20

Revelation 13:4-5

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In the previous sermon, we began considering who these enemies are (namely, the Beast and the False Prophet) whom Christ will destroy in Revelation 19. In focusing the spotlight of God's revelation on these enemies of Christ (and Christ's victory over them), we began by seeking to answer the question: How long these enemies would war against Christ and the faithful witnesses of Christ? For if Scripture gives us a clear understanding as to how long these enemies war against Christ and His faithful witnesses, we will be helped in determining who these enemies cannot be, and we will be that much closer in determining who these enemies are. Let me illustrate what I mean by using the enemies as identified by Preterists and Futurists.

Preterists (who interpret most of the Book of Revelation as already fulfilled around the year 70 a.d.) identify the Beast of Revelation as Nero. Thus, they interpret the 42 prophetic months in which the Beast wars against the saints on earth (in Revelation 13:5) as a literal 42-calendar-month period of time (i.e. as a literal 1,260 days). On the other hand, Futurists (who interpret most of the Book of Revelation as yet to be fulfilled in the future) identify the beast of Revelation as a political world leader that is yet to be revealed. But they too interpret the 42 prophetic months in which the beast wars against the saints on earth (in Revelation 13:5) as a literal 42-calendar-month period of time (i.e. as a literal 1,260 days).

Now what happens to the Preterist interpretation of the Beast (as the

historic Nero) and the Futurist interpretation of the Beast (as a future world political leader) **IF** the 42 prophetic months are not a literal 42-month-calendar period of time, but are rather 42 months of years (i.e. 1,260 years), and are rather to be interpreted (as is taught by Historicists) according to the inspired Day-Year Principle which the Holy Spirit has revealed in Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:4-6; and Daniel 9:24-25? **IF** the 42 prophetic months of Revelation 13:5 (in which the Beast wars against the faithful witnesses of Christ) is actually 42 months of years (i.e. 1,260 calendar years), then it is impossible that the Beast revealed in the Book of Revelation can be either the historic Nero (as alleged by Preterists) or can be a future world political leader (as alleged by Futurists), because neither Nero nor any future world political leader has lived or will live 1,260 actual calendar years. Thus, I submit that the only tenable prophetic interpretive system (that gives specific meaning to these prophetic time periods) would be that of historicism (which interprets the Beast to be an antichristian political system and the False Prophet to be an antichristian religious organization that have both existed as enemies of Christ and Christ's faithful witnesses for 1,260 years). Dear ones, How we interpret these prophetic periods of time either closes the door to the identity of the Beast and the False Prophet of Revelation or rather opens the door to the identity of the Beast and False Prophet of Revelation.

In the previous sermon, we considered that God Himself has given to us a key to understanding time periods in prophetic books of the Bible that are highly symbolic. The key texts that were searched out were the following: Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:4-6; and Daniel 9:24-25.

We now turn to the Book of Revelation this Lord's Day in order to consider the prophetic time periods that John records by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which are all the same length of time: 1,260 prophetic days (which is revealed in Revelation 11:2; Revelation 12:6); 42 prophetic

months (which is revealed in Revelation 11:2; Revelation 13:5); and a prophetic “time, and times, and half a time” i.e. a prophetic 3 ½ years (in Revelation 12:14). And this prophetic period of time (whether 1,260 prophetic days, or 42 prophetic months, or a prophetic time, times, and half a time i.e. 3 ½ prophetic years) is that period of time in which Satan will work through the Beast and the False Prophet in misleading and deceiving the world to follow them rather than to follow Christ, and in warring against Christ and His faithful witnesses. Our time today will be spent in considering the evidence for the Day-Year Principle in the Book of Revelation.

I. The Evidence For The Day-Year Principle in the Book of Revelation.

A. First, I submit that there ought to be a presumption from the very outset in favor of using the Day-Year Principle as we approach these prophetic time periods in the Book of Revelation (whether 1,260 prophetic days; 42 prophetic months; or a prophetic time, times, and half a time i.e. 3 1/2 prophetic years).

1. In other words, I do not believe that we ought to begin with either a blank piece of paper (as if God has said nothing about how to interpret prophetic time periods in highly symbolic books of the Bible), or that we ought to begin with an assumption that the prophetic periods of time given in the Book of Revelation are a literal 1,260 days, or a literal 42 months, or a literal time, times, and half a time (i.e. a literal 3 ½ years), as is done in Preterism and Futurism.

2. The prophetic Book of Revelation is very dependent upon the prophetic Books of Ezekiel and Daniel for the right interpretation of a number of the symbols and figurative language used in it. In fact, the Apostle John makes 403 allusions, or indirect quotes, from the canonized books of the Hebrew Bible (cf. “Index of Allusions and Verbal Parallels” found in UBS, pp. 891-901). The four Books of the Old Testament that are used most in the Book of Revelation are Isaiah (18% of those 403

allusions or indirect quotes), Psalms (17%), Ezekiel (14%), and Daniel (10%). In other words, nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of the references to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation come from the prophetic Books of Ezekiel and Daniel. Thus, as we approach the question as to how we are to compute and calculate the time periods found in the prophetic Book of Revelation (1,260 prophetic days, 42 prophetic months, and a prophetic time, times, and half a time i.e. a prophetic $3\frac{1}{2}$ years), ought we not to presume that the same God who gave the inspired Day-Year Principle in order to interpret prophetic time periods in Ezekiel and Daniel would likewise expect us to use the same inspired Day-Year Principle to interpret prophetic time periods in the Book of Revelation, and especially since the prophetic Book of Revelation is so dependent upon the prophetic Books of Ezekiel and Daniel for the symbols, figurative language, and themes that we find in the Book of Revelation?

3. Such a presumption of continuity from the prophetic Book of Daniel to the prophetic Book of Revelation certainly ought to guide us in accurately interpreting the symbol of the Beast with the ten horns (in Revelation 13:1-2). As we approach this beast that is revealed in Revelation 13, should we assume absolute nothing about this Beast and come with a blank page and a completely empty mind, or should we assume a literal interpretation of a great and grotesque sea creature that will war against the faithful witnesses of Christ that literally has 7 heads and 10 horns? Or should we rather read what God has already revealed about this Beast in Daniel 7-8 (where we find a figurative representation of Daniel's 4th beast to be one that also has 10 horns)? I dare say that most Christian interpreters would take the latter approach of presuming the symbol of the Beast with 10 horns in the prophetic Book of Daniel is the same Beast with the 10 horns in the prophetic Book of Revelation. And so they should. And that is precisely the same argument that I am using (and that Historicists use) when it comes to accurately interpreting the prophetic time periods of 1,260 days, 42 prophetic months, a prophetic time, times, and half a time i.e. $3\frac{1}{2}$ prophetic years. I will be

using the inspired Day-Year Principle to interpret these prophetic time periods in the prophetic Book of Revelation, just as God used the same inspired Day-Year Principle to interpret prophetic time periods in the prophetic Books of Ezekiel (Chapter 4:4-6) and Daniel (Chapter 9:24-25). That is not a blind leap of faith. That is simply allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, and allowing Scripture to provide us with the interpretive key to unlocking these prophetic time periods God has revealed in His Word.

B. The **second** piece of evidence for using the Year-Day Principle in our calculating the prophetic 1,260 days, the prophetic 42 months, and the prophetic time, times, and half a time i.e. the prophetic 3 ½ years is this: The uniqueness of these prophetic time periods should alert us to their being figurative (and that they represent different periods of time than are specifically stated).

1. The time periods of 1,260 days (in Revelation 11:3; Revelation 12:6); 42 months (in Revelation 11:2; Revelation 13:5); and a time, times, and half a time i.e. 3 ½ years (in Revelation 12:14) are all very unique and unlike the way time periods are expressed when they are intended to be literal years, months, or days in the rest of Scripture.

2. When the Holy Spirit refers to a literal period of 3 ½ years, it is simply stated elsewhere in Scripture as “three years and six months” (Luke 4:25; James 5:17), not “a time, a times, and half a time”. In fact, whenever the Word of God expresses broken periods of time (i.e. so many years and so many months) that are to be taken literally, it is stated as we find it in 2 Samuel 2:11 and Acts 18:11. Therefore, when we read of a time period that is expressed as “a time, a times, and half a time”, it clearly deviates from the ordinary way in which a literal 3 ½ year period of time is expressed in the Bible. It is like a flashing neon light that is intended to draw our attention to the fact that this uniquely stated time period is not to be interpreted literally, but rather according to the Day-Year Principle.

3. As for the time period expressed as “forty and two months” in Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 13:5—this time period (equivalent to 3 ½ years) is only stated in these two places here in the Book of Revelation and never anywhere else. This time period of 42 months is also absolutely unique and unparalleled in Scripture i.e. a time period stated in terms of so many months. The longest period of time expressed in terms of months in the Bible (outside of Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 13:5) is 12 months (and is only found in Esther 2:12 and Daniel 4:29, both of which are found in historical not prophetic sections of these Old Testament Books). I submit that when we see 42 months in this symbolic portion of God’s prophetic Word (Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 13:5), we are being led by the Spirit of God away from a literal to a non-literal interpretation of that time period (i.e. we are being led to calculate this time period by means of the Day-Year Principle).

4. As for the time period expressed as “one thousand two hundred and threescore days” (i.e. 1,260 days) in Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 12:6, this time period (expressed as over a thousand days) is also very unique in Scripture, and I submit that we are being taught once again by the Spirit of God to interpret these days in a non-literal sense and by the Day-Year Principle (just as we find a prophetic time period in Daniel 12:11 of 1,290 days and a prophetic time period in Daniel 12:12 of 1,335 days). The closest time period in Scripture expressed in terms of days (that is less than 1,260 days) is 150 days (and it is used in the historical [not prophetic] narrative of the flood in Genesis 7:24). So when we come to time periods in symbolic highly portions of God’s prophetic Word, we ought to be considering a non-literal use of those time periods as intended by the Holy Spirit (per the Day-Year Principle as found in the prophetic Books of Ezekiel and Daniel).

C. The **third** piece of evidence for using the Day-Year Principle in our calculating the prophetic 1,260 days, the prophetic 42 months, and the prophetic time, times, and half a time i.e. the prophetic 3 ½ years is

this: The original source for the prophetic time period, “a time, a times, and half a time” (Revelation 12:14) is Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 12:7 (in both of these passages the prophetic enemy of Christ’s faithful witnesses makes war against them for a prophetic period of “a time, a times, and half a time”, which is the same prophetic period of time mentioned in Revelation 13:5 (where the beast wars against the saints for the same period of time, 42 prophetic months).

1. This unique expression of “a time, and times, and half a time” (Revelation 12:7) is found only in prophetic portions of Scripture (not historical narratives in Scripture), and prophetic portions of Scripture that are filled with many symbols. For example, in Daniel chapter 7 (where we find in verse 25 “a time and times and the dividing of time”) there are symbolic beasts, symbolic horns, symbolic heads, and a symbolic little horn; and likewise in Revelation 12 (where in verse 14 we find “a time, and times, and half a time”) there is a symbolic woman that has a symbolic crown with 12 symbolic stars and is given two symbolic wings of a great eagle, and flees into a symbolic wilderness, and is pursued by a symbolic serpent. Thus, in the midst of such prophetic symbolism, I submit we should also expect to find non-literal time periods that are stated in a unique manner different from how the Lord expresses literal time periods in other places in Scripture.

2. Dear ones, we cannot approach the time periods in the prophetic Book of Revelation as if those time periods (e.g. “a time, times, and half a time”) are never mentioned prior to their use in the prophetic Book of Revelation. No, this time period (“a time, and times, and half a time”) has a background and use in a highly symbolic portion within the prophetic Book of Daniel (where God gives to us the Day-Year Principle). Thus, I submit that just as the 70 prophetic weeks of Daniel (i.e. 490 prophetic days) in Daniel 9:24 are rightly interpreted to mean 490 actual years, so likewise the prophetic time period in Daniel 7:25 of “a time and times and the dividing of time” (i.e. 3 ½ prophetic years, which is 42 prophetic months, and which is 1,260 prophetic days) ought to be

interpreted as 1,260 years. In so doing, we have a perfect correlation between the prophetic time periods in the prophetic Book of Daniel and the prophetic time periods in the Book of Revelation.

D. The **fourth** piece of evidence for using the Day-Year Principle in our interpretation of the prophetic 1,260 days, the prophetic 42 months, and the prophetic time, times, and half a time i.e. the prophetic 3 ½ years is this: The Day-Year Principle helps us to understand other prophetic time periods mentioned in the Book of Revelation.

1. **Revelation 2:10:** “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

a. To what do the “ten days” of tribulation refer? Are these ten literal days or using the Day-Year Principle do these ten prophetic days signify ten actual years of tribulation that the Church of Smyrna will face?

b. There are those who would interpret the ten days literally, but in so doing they cannot specifically identify when these ten days of persecution were brought against the historic Church of Smyrna, to whom this letter in Revelation 2:8-11 is addressed.

c. There are others who would interpret the ten days symbolically as intending no specific time period, but rather simply referring to a short but definite period of tribulation that would befall the Church of Smyrna.

d. However, I would submit that these ten days of tribulation may and ought to be interpreted using the Day-Year Principle (since this is a prophetic portion of God’s Word that is filled with much figurative speech in Revelation 1:10-20). There was indeed an imperial ten year tribulation that was brought against Christians during the reign of Trajan (the persecution extended from 108-117, which is ten years when the beginning year and the ending year are included (just as Christ

was in the grave for three days even though He died Friday evening and arose early Sunday morning—parts of a day or year are included in the time period). This ten year persecution under Trajan would have been likely 12-15 years in the future from the time that John was given this prophecy (while he was suffering under the persecution brought by Domitian against Christians).

(1) Consider what is stated in the *Geneva Notes* in regard to the “ten days” mentioned in Revelation 2:10.

That is, of **ten years**. For so commonly both in this book and in Daniel, years are signified by the name of days: that God thereby might declare, that the space of time is appointed by him, and the same very short. Now because Saint John wrote this book in the end of Domitian the Emperor his reign, as Justinus and Ireneus do witness, it is altogether necessary that this should be referred unto that persecution which was done by the authority of the emperor Trajan, who began to make havock of the Christian churches in the tenth year of his reign, as the historiographers [historians] do write: and his bloody persecution continued until Adrian the Emperor had succeeded in his stead: The space of which time is precisely ten years, which are here mentioned.

(2) During this period of persecution in Trajan’s reign, Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, wrote the Emperor Trajan and said that when someone informed upon a Christian, the Christian was brought before his tribunal and he asked him if he were a Christian. If he still admitted the charge after three such questions, he was sentenced to death. In his answer, Trajan assured Pliny that Pliny was following the correct procedure. If a Christian was reported, the Christian was to be punished unless he/she recanted and worshiped the gods of the Romans. This became official procedure, and governors throughout the empire followed the principles Trajan had approved (including Asia Minor, where the Church of Smyrna was located).

(3) It was also during this period of persecution under Trajan (about A.D. 115) that Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was seized and taken from Antioch to Rome. As Ignatius traveled, he wrote several letters to various churches, and one of those churches that he wrote to

was this very Church of Smyrna. Upon reaching Rome, Ignatius was thrown to the wild beasts in the Colosseum. He boldly declared,

May the wild beasts be eager to rush upon me. If they be unwilling, I will compel them. Come, crowds of wild beasts; come, tearings and manglings, wracking of bones and hacking of limbs; come, cruel tortures of the devil; only let me attain unto Christ.

Dear ones, although I firmly believe that the Day-Year Principle gives us the Spirit-inspired key to unlocking the door to prophetic time periods in the Book of Revelation and in aiding us in identifying the two great enemies who war against Christ's faithful witnesses and who will be destroyed by Christ in Revelation 19:19-20, I believe the exhortation from Jesus Christ in Revelation 2:10 is that which is even more important than a proper understanding of prophetic time periods. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." We may not be suffering at the present time as did Ignatius and the Christians under Trajan's persecution. Some Christians are, however, in various places in the world. How we need to uphold them in prayer. But what do you fear suffering? Loss of a loved one, loss of health, loss of work, loss of possessions, loss of the esteem of friends, loss of freedom etc.? Do not fear.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Being faithful unto death is no less necessary to you and to me than it was to Ignatius. The consequences of being faithful were greater to Ignatius than they are to us, but the need to be faithful is just as much required of us. And perhaps because toleration and compromise are the religious principles that most people embrace in this present age, the dangers to being faithful are in some ways even greater. Being faithful to Christ is contrasted in Revelation to being an unfaithful wife who plays the harlot (Revelation 17). Faithfulness begins with a firm foundation built upon our justification by faith alone, assurance built upon the unfailing promises of God, and growing in the grace and knowledge of

Christ. Compromise when it comes to the truth of Christ, dear ones, is not being faithful, it is playing the harlot.

And the promise upon which we are always to look with the eye of hope is the crown of life. Why are we not to fear? Why are we to be faithful unto death? Because the Lord has prepared for us a crown or reward of everlasting life with Him.

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