

The time, times, and a half, and remaining time of the Church

by Douglas E. Cox

One of the most contentious issues in prophecy has been understanding the prophetic time periods, which are important, but widely misunderstood. Since there are many interpretations that tend to scatter and separate Christian believers from one another, an interpretation is required that will tend to unify, and bring together the saints who are scattered.

There are two main camps which are wide apart on the time to which most prophecy applies. These are preterism and dispensationalism. But the middle way, which applies most prophecy to the whole church age, rather than to the first century, or to an alleged future seven year tribulation, after the church has been raptured to heaven, tends to reconcile people from both camps, and bring unity.

When we consider the introductory verses in the Olivet Discourse, is there anything about them that supports the preterist claim, that Jesus was speaking of events local to Jerusalem, in the first century? Or did he mention anything that supports the claim of dispensationalism, that he was speaking of events local to Jerusalem, in a future seven year tribulation? I think not. The things Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24:4-14, many deceivers, [vs. 4-5] wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, famines, pestilences, earthquakes in divers places, [vs. 6] the saints hated of all nations, [vs. 9] many will be offended, [vs. 10] false prophets who deceive many, [vs. 11] and the gospel preached in all the world, are all events that apply to the *whole church age, without exception*. They are each *global* in scope, and not limited to the first century, or to a future seven year tribulation. They are not things that are local to the earthly Jerusalem.

This strongly supports the conclusion that the things Jesus described in his Olivet Discourse should be understood as applying to the present age of the church, rather than to events at Jerusalem in the first century, or to Jews in a future seven year tribulation.

Signs such as "earthquakes in diverse places" would make no sense, if confined to first century Judea. The same applies to "nation shall rise against nation;" "ye shall be hated of all nations," and "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations." These are events that by nature, cannot be restricted to Judea or Jerusalem, a fact which discredits the preterist interpretation. Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:34, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" must be understood in the light of the resurrection of Jesus. He remains alive, and *continues* to represent his generation, so it has not passed away. It is a unique generation, as it will remain forever.

A psalm written during the exile in Babylon focuses upon the city of Jerusalem:

Psalm 137:5-6

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

The exile was a crucial event in prophecy. Its duration was foretold by Jeremiah. Seventy years are mentioned in Jeremiah 25:11-12, and Jeremiah 29:10 says: "For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."

Daniel refers to Jeremiah's prophecy in his prelude to the 70 weeks prophecy. [Daniel 9:4] In his prayer of confession, Daniel said that the curse of the law of Moses was poured out on Israel. He said: "Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him." [Daniel 9:11]

This alludes to the prophecy contained in Leviticus 26, which specifies *four* periods of *seven times* of punishment that would come upon Israel, if they did not keep the covenant. Daniel said that it had begun. The 70 years of exile in Babylon corresponds to the first of the four periods of "seven times" in Leviticus 26. In the 70 weeks prophecy, three more periods of seven times are described, as each of the three sections of the 70 weeks is a period of "seven times," where "time" is a variable, that can take different units in each of the three sections.

In the last of the four periods of seven times in Leviticus 26, God *remembers* his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This corresponds to Daniel 9:27, where Christ *confirms* his covenant with many for one week.

Using the principle that a "time" may take various units, the duration of the first two sections of the 70 weeks accurately points to the ministry of Jesus, taking the decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C. as the start date, and *leap years* as units in the first section. Seven weeks of leap years with 13 months spans 133 years, which is seven times, where a "time" is a week of leap years, or 19 years. The second section is also seven times, where a "time" is 62 years, the age of Darius when he became king of Babylon. The first two periods combined terminate in 28 A.D.

In the 70th week Christ confirms his covenant with many. This is also the period in which the city and sanctuary are destroyed, and an abomination of desolation is set up, and something is poured upon the place which is made desolate, referring to the anointing of the Spirit, one of the things promised in verse 24.

The three and a half years of Jesus' ministry in the first century was the first half week, but then Jesus was crucified, and rose again, and ascended to the throne of his Father in heaven. Jesus' ascent to heaven, where he was made Christ, fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, that the mountain of the Lord's house would be "established in the top of the mountains," and "exalted above the hills." Jerusalem was raised up, and became the heavenly Jerusalem, and "the city of the great King." The units of the last half week are therefore *not earthly units*. With God, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." [2 Peter 3:8] The last half week spans the present age of the church, which is represented by the symbolic expression, "a time, times, and a half." This expression applies to the whole age of the church, not only in its entirety, but also to a portion of it.

The numbers mentioned in Daniel 12:11-12 are three years and a half, where the years are of two kinds; they consist of both regular years of 12 months, and leap years of 13 months, one year differing from the rest in each case. But this assumes that the months are exactly 30 days, which is not true of natural months, which are slightly less.

Figure 1 is a 3D graph depicting the three prophetic time periods, 1,335 days, 1,290 days, and 1,260 days. 1,335 days and 1,290 days are mentioned in Daniel 12:11-12, and 1,260 days are mentioned in Revelation 11:3 and 12:6. Each of these periods consist of three sections, which fit the pattern of "a time, times and a half." The "times" in each section of this expression may take different units. In Daniel's numbers, the units of one "time" differs from the units of the remaining "times." In the graph, the blue section represents the smallest period, of 1,260 days, which is represented as "a time, times and a half," where one "time" is one year of 12 months, "2 times" are 2 years of 12 months each, and a "half time" is six months, the months being 30 days. The gold section represents 1,290 days, which is similar to the blue section except that one "time" consists of a year of 13 months. In the orange section, representing 1,335 days, only one "time" is 12 months and the units of the remaining two and a half "times" are years of 13 months. All months are 30 days.

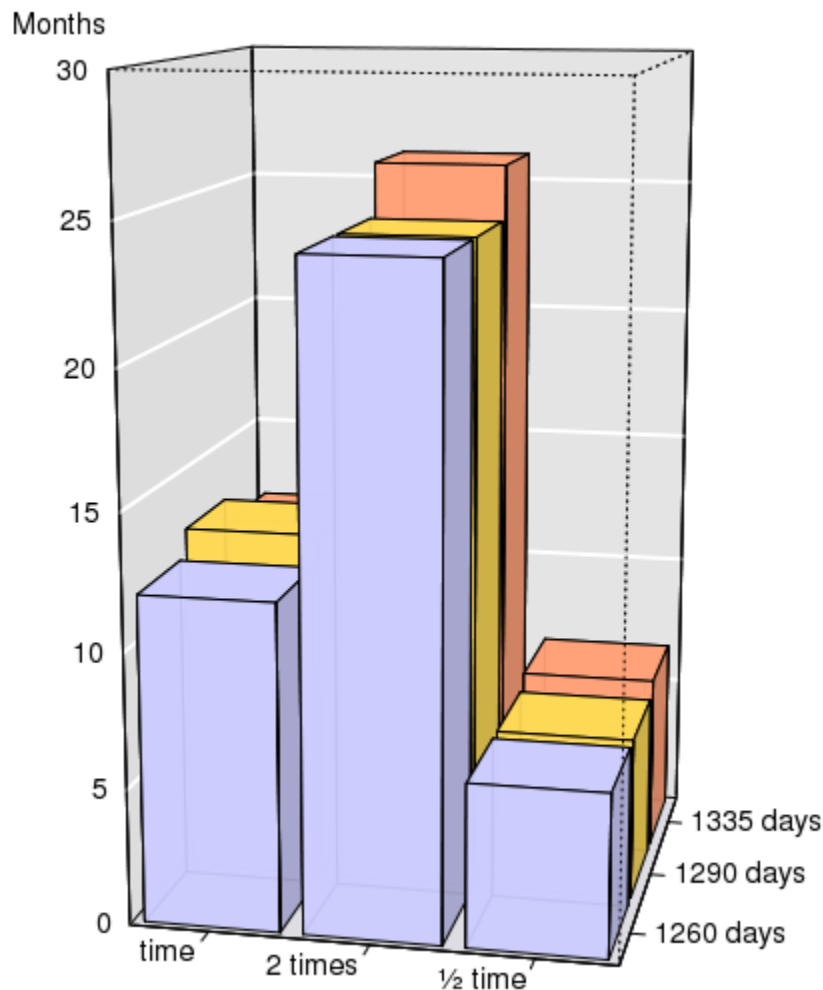


Figure 1: 3D graph of 'the time, times, and a half'

The prophetic numbers that represent the time, times, and a half are a progression of smaller and smaller periods, depicting a diminishing time. The 1,335 days is the largest, and of this period Daniel wrote, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." [Daniel 12:12] The one who waits is Christ, who waits in heaven while his Church is being prepared and completed. I suggest that this number represents all the time from the crucifixion to the end of the age.

The 1260 day period is the duration of the ministry of the two witnesses, and the time when the woman in Revelation 12:6 who represents the Church sojourns in the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, and where is nourished.

After the Apocalypse was written, no further scriptural revelations were given to the church. The canon of scripture was sealed. Since the writing of the Apocalypse, the two witnesses, the Spirit and the Word of God, have remained in the world. The writing of the Apocalypse, probably about 95 AD, began the 1,260 days, which extends to the end of the age.

The 1,290 days is intermediate between 1,335 days and 1,260 days. This number identifies the abomination of desolation. John referred to the Antichrist spirit, and he said there were already "many antichrists." This is the abomination of desolation. It has been active in the church, since about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., which may have been a sign that the desolation of the heavenly Jerusalem was about to begin. [Luke 21:20]

None of the colored blocks in Figure 1 represents a natural period of time such as one or two years, or six months, because the months are exactly 30 days. Natural months are a little less than 30 days. Each of the prophetic time periods must be symbolic. Daniel 12:7 shows that the time, times and a half extends to the end of the age.

The smallest number that fits the pattern of a time, times and a half is the three days and a half of Revelation 11:9-11. This signifies a short period near the end of the present age of the church. None of these are a literal three and a half years or days, as literal earth time does not apply to spiritual things. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." [Matthew 24:36]