

Ancient Sun Dial

# Chapter I

## Biblical Time: Literal & Symbolic

### *Daniel 2:20-21*

*<sup>20</sup>Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: <sup>21</sup> And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:*

What is a Biblical measurement of Time? In Daniel 9 it gives us a number of fixed periods as they relate to Israel, Jerusalem, and the coming Messiah. Daniel 9:24 specifically states the prophecy in total encompasses a period of time which is 70 “weeks” in length.

The word “weeks” used in Daniel 9:24 is the Hebrew word, *Shabuwa*. *Shabuwa* literally means 7 or sevens. A “week” then in Daniel 9 could be a period of 7 days or 7 years or possibly in a symbolic sense even 70 years. Its literal meaning is normally determined by the context of the passage. Based on the context of Daniel 9 the events described therein would require more than 70 literal “weeks” of days (i.e. 490 days) to be fulfilled. Therefore it is likely that each “week” or *Shabuwa* is equal to 7 “years” or periods of time and 70 “weeks” would then equal 490 “years” or periods of time. Now if each “week” or *Shabuwa* is representative of a measure of 7 “years” then the next step is to determine the length of each one of these “years”.

**7620** שְׁבִיעַ shabuwa` {shaw-boo'-ah} or שִׁבְעָה shabua` {shaw-boo'-ah} also (fem.) shebu`ah {sheb-oò-aw'}

**Meaning:** 1) seven, period of seven (days or years), heptad, week 1a) period of seven days, a week 1a1) Feast of Weeks 1b) heptad, seven (of years)

Today we measure time in many different ways. The most common measurements of time today are the second, the minute, the hour, the day, the week, the month, the year, the decade, the century, and the millennium. While today we may have electronic wrist watches or extremely accurate atom clocks our days are still regulated by the rising and setting of the sun. Our years are measured by the circuit of the earth around the sun. Our months are determined by a calculated formula which is predetermined and set. This may be the only understanding of time that most people have today.

Biblical time on the other hand is measured in a different manner. The measurement of time is extremely important in Daniel’s Seventy “Weeks” vision. It is well worth the effort to learn how the Scripture reckons time. After all, Daniel 9 is most likely based on a Biblical measurement of time not our

### *Genesis 1:14-19*

*<sup>14</sup> And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: <sup>15</sup> And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. <sup>16</sup> And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, <sup>18</sup> And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.*

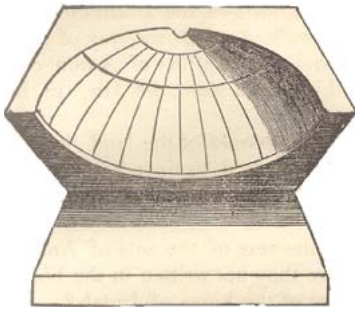


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modern methods. The first mandate for the measurement of time from a Biblical perspective is given in Genesis 1:14. It states here the lights in the firmament were given to us as “signs, seasons, days, and years.” The greater light (the sun) was to rule the day and the lesser light (the moon) was to rule the night.

Practically speaking, the sun governs man’s labors on the earth. From a Biblical perspective when Adam and Eve sinned the earth was cursed. From that point forward all mankind had to daily labor to produce their food. YHWH at creation gave the first example of how a day was organized into a cycle of time by his example of 6 days labor and the 7<sup>th</sup> of rest. Generally speaking then, time, as it relates to man and his labor, is strictly governed by the earth and its relationship to the sun. More precisely man’s labor on balance is measured by the rising and setting of the sun.

In Leviticus 23 YHWH gave Moses specific instructions relating to special days during the year which He wanted honored. These instructions Moses related to the children of Israel allow us to get a better understanding of



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what YHWH meant in Genesis 1:14-19. When he first mentioned the *seasons* or “*mow’eds*” (appointments) and *Owths* (signs). These appointments and signs were given in relation to a specific day of the lunar month. Israel was commanded to keep these special days every year at their appointed times. It is clear from the Scriptural record these feasts have symbolic and prophetic significance even to us today. The apostle Paul states clearly that these holy days and new moons are “*shadows of things to come*”. These prophetic “shadow” pictures or appointments are reminders of YHWH’s plan for mankind. They are a yearly reminder of YHWH’s promise and love.

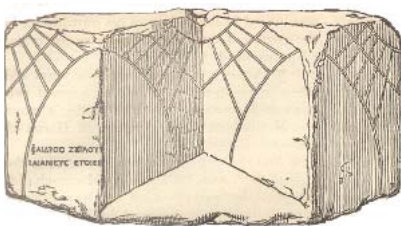
Symbolically you could look at it this way: Every day after man has completed his labor under the sun (figuratively the curse of sin) he looks into the night sky for the promise of YHWH. The gentle illumination of the moon provides this *Owth* or sign as a reminder of better things to come. Every time the ancient Israelite looked up into the night sky they would measure their day to day existence relative to these Holy Days. In other words while their daily existence was governed by the 6 days of labor and the 7<sup>th</sup> day of rest. Their future expectancy was governed by the night sky and their anticipation of the Biblical Feast days. Every year for 1000’s of years they rehearsed these prophetic pictures or reminders of things to come.

### Genesis 7:11

*In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.*

We discover more evidence for “time” during the days of Noah and the flood. The Biblical word for month is *Chodesh* ( 2320 חֹדֶשׁ *chodesh {kho’-desh}*) *Meaning: 1) the new moon, month, monthly 1a) the first day of the month 1b) the lunar month)*

The first usage of the word Chodesh or month in the Scripture is in Genesis 7:11. Here it states the fountains of the deep were broken up in the 17 day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month. In Genesis 8:3-4 it states the waters “abated” from off the earth for 150 days and the ark rested on the 17th day of the 7th month. These two passages provide evidence as to the nature of the month at the time of the flood. The month at this time was likely 30 days in length. We can determine this because it says there were 150



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days from the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month until the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month. This would give 5 months of 30 days each. Today the lunar month is slightly shorter. Its cycle is only 29.53 days in length. We have records of eclipses that verify this cycle length back to at least the time of Nebuchadnezzar. So sometime after the Flood of Noah and before the time of the Babylonian kingdom the lunar cycle likely slowed almost ½ of a solar day or the means of reckoning the lunar cycle changed. The Scripture in Daniel 2:20-21 seems to indicate that the times and

seasons had changed at some point previous to the era of Daniel.

**Genesis 8:3-4**

*<sup>3</sup> And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. <sup>4</sup> And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.*



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A solar year today is 365.24 days in length. A lunar month is 29.53 days in length. A lunar cycle of 29.53 days does not equally divide into a solar year of 365.24. 12 months of 29.53 days is equal to 354 days or about 11 days short of a solar year. This means that some years would have 12 lunar months and then every 3<sup>rd</sup> year or so an extra month would have to be added to keep the religious lunar calendar synchronized to the

physical 365.24 day year. In reality then a Biblical lunar-solar year at the time of Daniel was not a specifically set number of days or months like our modern calendar. Most years had 354.36 days or 12 lunar months. (12 months of 29.53 days each). Every few years though, saw a year of 383.89 days or 13 lunar months to realign the religious calendar with the solar year. (13 months of 29.53 days each).

This then raises some interesting questions regarding a year as it would relate to interpreting the prophetic vision of Daniel 9. Strictly speaking the Biblical length of the year varies. What then, was the length of the year meant to be in Daniel 9? Is it a modern year of 365.24 days?

Or is it a 360 day year of Noah? How about a Biblical year of 12 lunar months? (i.e. 354.36 days) Or is it a Biblical year of 13 lunar months? (i.e. 383.89 days) Since a Biblical year could literally be 12 or 13 months in length is there a possibility that the “year” of Daniel 9 could be a prophetic year of some other symbolic number of lunar cycles? In other words if the religious lunar-solar year could be 12 or 13 lunar cycles in length, could the prophetic “year” of Daniel 9 be a symbolic number of lunar cycle representing a prophetic year? (i.e. 6, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19, etc., lunar cycles in length)

At this point we obviously don’t have enough evidence to determine which, if any of these measurements of time should be used in Daniel 9. In the next few chapters we will pull together additional evidence from the Scriptural record and secular sources which will help us determine the correct measurement of time as it relates to the “week” and “year” in Daniel 9.

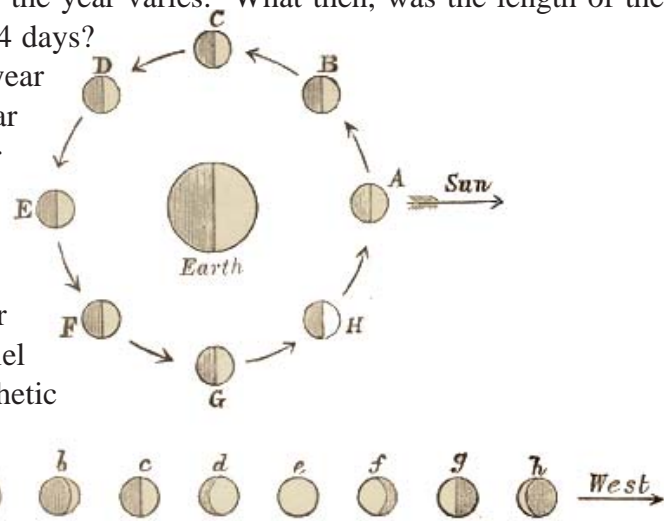


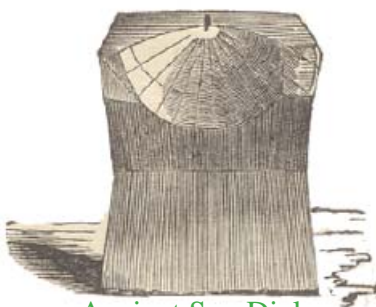
FIG. 81.

*Mathematical Astronomy - 1893*  
C.W.C. Barlow & B.H. Bryan

The lower figures, a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, represent the appearances of the Moon relative to the ecliptic, as seen from the Earth when in the positions represented by the corresponding letters in the upper figure.

As a final thought, I believe that in our quest to determine the appropriate measurement of time for the 70 “weeks” prophecy we should keep in mind that

time as it relates to the prophetic “shadow” pictures or holy days is regulated by the lunar cycle. And man’s time as it relates to our labor and rest is determined by the cycle of the earth around the sun. Which one of these measurements were meant to be used for the prophecy regarding the Countdown to the Messiah? Is it a “year” of solar days? Or is it a “year” of prophetic lunar months? I believe the Scripture holds the answer to these questions which have been hidden in plain sight since before Daniel 9 was even written. The answers lie in the Biblical Feast days themselves. The very “shadow” pictures of the promised Messiah hold the key to understanding the correct Biblical measurement of “time” to the Countdown to the Messiah.



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