

Great Controversy p439.2 [GC439]

“Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months [Revelation 13:5].’ And, says the prophet, ‘I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death.’ And again: ‘He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.’ The forty and two months [quoted above] are the same as the ‘time and times and the dividing of time’, three years and a half, or 1260 days, of Daniel 7—the time during which the papal power was to oppress God’s people. This period, as stated in preceding chapters, began with the supremacy of the papacy, A.D. 538, and terminated in 1798. At that time the pope was made captive by the French army, the papal power received its deadly wound, and the prediction was fulfilled, ‘He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity’” (Great Controversy 439.2).

This statement is taken by many to mean that all references to *1260 days* apply to the Dark Ages of papal persecution and the ‘days’ are *ipso facto* years, thus forming an important plank in Historicism’s established platform. However, this conclusion does not withstand thorough examination.

Historicism, with its “year-for-a day” principle (YDP), rightly stands as the sole eschatological framework with a robustly established credibility in the face of all objections from Futurism, Preterism and increasingly Idealism.¹ The following statement generated by AdventAI.app expresses the typical, traditional assumptions.

¹ Idealism interprets the prophecies in the book of Revelation, in particular, as symbolic representations of “timeless spiritual truths” rather than specific historical events, past, present, or future, focussing rather on “evil’s” ongoing struggle with “good”.

² In Daniel 12 the “1260 days” are a subset of the “1335 days”.

“Any theory suggesting that the 1290 and 1335² days are still future contradicts the foundational pillars of the Advent faith, implying that the book of Daniel remains sealed and that the historical movement of 1843/1844 was based on falsehood. **We rest assured in the certainty that these periods have been fulfilled**, confirming the unfolding of God’s plans in human history”.

Unsurprisingly, many sincere administrators, academics, pastors and evangelists are profoundly committed to this long-held position. Consequently the proposition that the 1260-day period of Daniel 12:7 is not referring to the same period as that of Daniel 7:25, can be very hard for some to even so much as fleetingly consider. It feels far too daunting—even the betrayal of a sacred trust.

The GC439 statement seems clear enough on a surface reading with the traditional mindset. And when it is combined with this “bunker buster” Ellen White statement, it appears to be “game over”:

“The people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time, reaching from 1842 to 1844, there can be no definite tracing of *the prophetic time*.¹ The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844” (7BC, Phil–Rev, Revelation 10:4-6, page 971).

¹ The expression “prophetic time” refers to the “year-for-a-day” method of interpreting the 2300 “days” of Daniel 8:14. [See Allen Sonter](#)

But, Ellen White also wrote trenchant words that appear to flatly contradict these:

“In the Scriptures are presented truths that relate especially to our own time [penned 39 years beyond 1844]. To the period *just prior* to the appearing of the Son of man, the prophecies of the scripture point, and here their *warnings* and *threatenings* pre-eminently apply. ***The prophetic periods of Daniel, extending to the very eve of the consummation, throw a flood of light upon events then to transpire***” (The Review and Herald, E G White, September 25, 1883).

And there’s this from a letter Ellen White wrote to church leaders A G Daniells and W W Prescott 59 years after 1844:

“Let us read and study *the twelfth chapter of Daniel*. It is a **warning**² that we shall all need to understand **before** the time of the end” (LT 161, July 30, 1903).

² If “we rest assured in the certainty that these periods have been fulfilled”, there can be no direct “warnings” in Daniel 12 that apply to us now. [See Three Facts](#)

The first statement (GC439) correctly has the “days” of Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 13:5 as years, ending in 1798. The second statement (R&H), written 25 years later, also correctly, makes it clear that the time periods of Daniel 12 extend beyond 1844 to the end of this world’s history and thus cannot be “years”³. Which is correct? Can the two statements be reconciled? Should we simply walk away from it all as so many people have, because it all feels too hard, even destabilising?

³ 1335 years beyond 1798 (the beginning of the Time of the End), means Jesus’ second advent couldn’t take place until the year 3133 AD. 1335+1798=3133

Jesus emphasised the need for us to “Take heed” of what he said to Daniel.⁴ So we cannot with impunity ignore it. Neither can we cling tenaciously to a view that is manifestly anachronistic, albeit long held.⁵ And right here we have a powerful factor at play—cognitive dissonance. It is almost impossible for some to even glance at the simple facts of the matter. To them it feels like unconscionable betrayal of the church in which they are deeply invested.

⁴ “When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (**whoever reads, let him understand:**)” (Matthew 24:15)

We appear to have a terminal conundrum.

⁵ The Biblical Research Institute (BRI) continues to maintain a position on Daniel 12 that reflects the structural approach of the [Millerite chart](#) produced by Charles Fitch and Apollos Hale in April 1842, which articulated the prophetic framework that culminated in the Great Disappointment of 1843/4.

▶ But on closer investigation we actually have a comprehensive solution:

[A] Ellen White confirms (correctly) the “1260 days” of Daniel 7:25 *specifically*, and the “1260 days” of Revelation 13:5 *specifically*, both refer to the same period of papal persecution between the years 538 and 1798.

[B] The “days”, in those verses, are (also correctly) symbols for literal years as understood by Historicism’s Year-for-a-Day Principle (YDP).

However, she does NOT say the “1260 days” of Daniel 12:7 equate to the same period of history as [A] defines. That has merely been uncritically supposed. In fact, in GC439 she does not discuss the 1260 days of Daniel 12:7 at all—only Daniel 7:25. **Be sure**

▶ **to understand this pivotal fact.**

¹ See [1260 Days](#)

There are actually nine references to 1260 days in Scripture,¹ but none other of these is included in her GC439 statement. She confines herself specifically to Revelation 13 and Daniel 7 in the GC439 quotation. And nowhere else does she say anything different, as a diligent search shows.

Thus the seemingly-contradictory statements are actually perfectly congruent within Ellen White’s ambit of discussion in GC439 and do not confute the understanding that the “1260” of Daniel 12:7 are not “years” but literal “days” extending beyond 1844 “to the very eve of the consummation”.

While some may choose to dismiss this distinction as pedantic, nothing could be further from the truth. Because to do so dismisses **the only sign** Jesus gave us to recognise when the end of the world is about to occur.²

² See [The Only Sign](#)

The Irish Anglican bishop, William Connor Magee, famously quipped, “The man who never made a mistake never made anything”. Ellen White, herself, was obliged to relinquish fundamental positions as clearer light became available. For example, she once supported the ‘shut door’ theory, believing that after 1844 salvation was no longer available to those who had not accepted the Millerite message. This was a mistake. However, in 1848, she had a vision showing that the ‘shut door’ referred to the Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary, not to probationary time on Earth,³ indicating the door to salvation remained ‘open’. James and Ellen White both kept Sunday believing it to be God’s true Sabbath (another mistake) until Rachel Oakes Preston, a Seventh-day Baptist, influenced Captain Joseph Bates’ thinking and he in turn convinced the early Adventists that the seventh day of the week has always been “the Sabbath of the Lord your God”.

³ *This vision reveals the fact that the 1335 days were still future, because the close of probation is located at the end of the 1260 days of Daniel 12 after “Michael stands up” and “all these things shall be finished”.*

Along with hers, our understanding of truth must always be progressive. This is particularly pertinent to issues that have been specifically “sealed” until the end of time (which 1843/4 was not). And *then* is exactly when we must understand them:

“Truth is ever unfolding” (Testimonies, volume 5, page 703, [1892]).

“Light. . . truth is progressive” (Manuscript Releases, volume 13, page 15, [1895]). She made both these observations long after 1844.

Commenting on the mighty work of Martin Luther, she had this to say, “The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. *It is to be continued to the close of this world’s history.* Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures, and new truths have been constantly unfolding” (4SP 123.1).

Truth, vital to specific times, has lain unseen in the very same, familiar pages, until the time is ripe. We will never understand Daniel chapter 12 with minds closed to “unfolding truth”.

The “wise”, however, will understand. The master key to the otherwise-unsolvable enigma of the 1335 days lies in recognising that all the events described from Daniel 11:40 to 12:13, without exception, happen at the end of time. It simply isn’t possible to conclude these time periods “have been fulfilled prior to 1844” without violating Daniel’s record and Jesus’ own words. Most objectors studiously avoid addressing this fundamental fact and seek, what are really trivial and highly-nuanced issues, to distract attention away from the proverbial “elephant in the room”.

In seeking to evade the pachyderm some have tried to redefine the “end of time” to mean, “long ago”, feeling free to place it well over two centuries (227 years) in the past — a triumph of wishful thinking also employed by Preterists to skirt inconvenient facts.

The History of the traditional understanding of Daniel 12 is enlightening in this respect. It shows how two followers of William Miller, Charles Fitch and Apollos Hale, had believed “the time of the end” was the 45 days/years between 1798 and 1843. Because the Millerites had at first concluded Jesus was to appear in 1843 they surmised the period in which they were living and anticipating the fulfilment of their fond hopes, must surely be the Time of the End. They produced an exceedingly complex prophetic chart in support of their convictions. Notwithstanding the Great Disappointment, many dyed-in-the-wool supporters of the Accepted Position today still rely on the Fitch-Hale chart’s long-discredited assumptions. The flock follows trustingly along, “thinking other men’s thoughts after them”.

A later chart (1850), with both James and Ellen White’s involvement, removed any reference to the time prophecies of Daniel chapter 12 because they conceded their application was future (since God’s hand at that time was evidently still “covering a mistake in some of the figures” and would be removed at the appropriate time in the future). “But the path of the righteous is like the bright morning light, growing brighter and brighter until the full light of day” (Proverbs 4:18).

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