

Getting The Big Picture

Daniel 2 & 9

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Someone said the Christian faith, in its very nature, I like this, is rooted in hope. The very nature and essence of our Christian faith is rooted in and grounded in and centered in hope. A Christian's anticipation of the future is based on faith in God and His Word, the Bible. The God of the Bible is the only true and living God. He's all wise Creator of the universe who's revealed His Word and His sovereign plans in His Word. Someone said history is His story, but it's centered in the hope that we have described in Titus 2:13, write that down, where Paul says, "We're looking for that blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ."

And when you become a Christian, when you are born again, you are born unto hope. It's a living hope and a living Savior. Jesus died for our sins, but three days later, we know He rose from the dead. 40 days later, He ascended into Heaven. He's seated at the right hand of God and He is coming back. And that's what we're going to talk about. What leads up to that second coming and even beyond into eternity, the New Heaven and the New Earth where we are hoping in the basis of our hope is in Jesus Christ. So there's hope for you in Jesus. It's sad that there are so many living today without hope. The Bible says that without God and without hope, and when you're without God, you're obviously without hope. There's hope for us in Jesus.

Now tonight, as I said, we begin a series called The End of Time: How Will It Unfold? This isn't the first time I've taught on prophecy or end times or the Book of Revelation. And you can go to the website and you can access my teaching on Daniel and the Book of Revelation and 1 and 2 Thessalonians and all the prophetic portions of scripture, but I want to do something a little different. I want to systematize this doctrine. I want to lay it out in a very systematic and biblical approach. Now why do I want to do that? Let me explain. Basically, in light of what is going on in the world right now with the coronavirus and the economy collapsing and the whole world is freaking out, there's a lot of questions on people's minds, "Will we be raptured? What is the rapture? Who will be raptured? Will the church go through the tribulation? Who is the anti-Christ? Is he alive in the world right now? And what is the mark of the beast?"

There's a lot of talk about having a cashless society and a global economy and we're almost really there right now and people are wondering, "Is this the tribulation or are we going through the Day of the Lord?" And a lot of people don't really understand the order of events and what will unfold. And then secondly, I believe an overemphasis and focus on current events. Now it's fine to look around the world and be attuned to the situation and what's going on in the world, but we also need to keep our focus on the Bible, the Word of God. And a lot of times, we get all excited about, "This is happening and that's happening," and it's interesting, when Christians went through World War I, they thought maybe they were in the tribulation.

When they went through World War II, they thought Adolf Hitler was the anti-Christ and they were in the tribulation. And all these things that have happened all around throughout the

history of the church and we're going to talk about that perspective, but I think we need to be brought back as believers to the Bible, to the Word of God, what does the Bible say and how do we interpret prophecy and how do we apply it to our lives and to the situation we're in. So I feel compelled to take this kind of approach in looking at the scriptures so that we can have a complete biblical perspective and I want to get kind of a survey of where we're going tonight.

So tonight is basically introduction. I've titled tonight's message, Getting The Big Picture. I think a lot of people try to look at the little individual aspects of prophecy without getting back and looking at the big picture. So this is prophecy from 30,000 feet. This is seeing the forest before we examine the tree. So I'm going to go through a series of points with questions and seek to answer them. Number one, why Bible prophecy is important. If you're taking notes and you want to write this down, why is it important that we study Bible prophets? Let me give you four reasons.

Number one, like all scripture, it is profitable. 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16 and 17, which you want to write down and look it up, it says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Literally, it is God-breathed and it is profitable. I want you to note that statement in that verse, "All scripture is God-breathed." That means that God breathed out scripture. This is the doctrine of inspiration of scripture. We, as Christians, believe that the book we call the Bible is given by inspiration of God, that God breathed out, that, "Men wrote the scriptures as they were carried along," Peter says, "by the Holy Spirit, that all scriptures not have any private interpretation, but holy men wrote as they were carried by the Holy Spirit and all scripture," A-L-L, "all scripture is profitable. It's profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteous."

Now, if Paul told Timothy, "All scripture is profitable," that would include prophetic scripture. And I emphasized that because a lot of churches and a lot of Christians neglect prophecy. The Bible has history, it has poetry, it has prophecy, it has didactic content, it has doctrinal content, but a lot of times, we ignore and a lot of churches today and very little preaching on the prophetic parts of scripture, and yet, so much of the Bible contains prophecy and many of them have already been fulfilled even in the first coming of Jesus Christ, let alone the second coming that we still look forward to. So it is profitable.

Number two, we study Bible prophecy and it's important because it encourages us to live holy lives. In 1 John chapter 3, verse 3, it says, "He that has this hope," there's our word, "He that has this hope in himself, purifies himself even as he is pure." So the idea that the Lord is coming soon is a motivation to holiness and to godly living. And then number three, it brings joy in the midst of affliction. Write down 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 17, where Paul says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment." "So what we're going through right now, Paul says, is like a light affliction. Then he says, "It works for us a far more and eternal and exceeding weight of glory." So whatever we pass through in the area of affliction or trials, it works for us to bring glory to God. It brings us joy in the midst of affliction.

And then fourthly and lastly, it causes us to worship God who is sovereign and in complete control. One of the effects that studying prophetic scripture has on you, it's already done it to

me, as I spent this week preparing to teach tonight, it fills you not only with hope, not only with the desire to live holy, but it also fills you with a desire to worship God, a desire to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. The God who is in control of all things. The God that sets up kings and takes down kings. The God that sets up governors in California and can take down governors in California. God is in control. He sits on the throne. So when you read His prophetic Word and you realize that history is His story, you worship the God who is sovereign and in control.

Now secondly, I want to move to the fact that some people say that we can't understand Bible prophecy. I run into this quite often, you can't understand prophecy, "It's so convoluted and so hard to interpret and there's so many symbols and metaphors and different analogies and things that are hard to interpret, so I just avoid Bible prophecy all together." Well, number one, the Bible is the Word of God as I've already referenced in 2 Timothy 3:16. And I believe that we should have a high view of scripture, that we should believe that God's Word is inspired, that it's inherent and that it's infallible. And we should also believe in the clarity of scripture.

God didn't give us a book that's clouded or hard to understand, but He gave us the word of truth. He gave us the Holy Spirit of truth to lead us and to guide us into all truth. And God said what He meant and meant what He said. So all scripture is profitable and I believe that God has given us understanding in His Word. And then secondly, we can rightly interpret Bible prophecy. Write down 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 15. Paul says these words, "Study to show yourself approved unto God a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." That applies to biblical prophecy. Now he's talking to Pastor Timothy there who's to preach the Word, and when he does that, he's to handle it properly.

Now, when it says there, "Rightly dividing the word of truth," the word phrase there means to cut straight. Now we're not sure if Paul's thinking of making tents and cutting the cloth out for the tent straight or he's talking about a masonry, a mason who would build a wall and he would have to plummet and cut it straight or some feel that he was maybe referring to road builders. He would make a road. They would cut it straight. Whatever he is referring to, it means rightly cut and divide and handle the word of truth. And I know of nowhere where it's more important to properly interpret rightly divide and accurately handle the Bible than when it comes to prophetic scripture.

We must use what theologians call proper hermeneutical principles and we must take it in context. We must look at the context, but we must use what I call, thirdly, the plain or literal method of interpretation. Now, I understand that there's a lot of different views when it comes to prophecy and that's another reason why people abandon it and give up on it, but basically like we would with any other portion of scripture, whether it's history or poetry or the gospels or whatever it might be, we should use what we call the plain or literal method of interpretation.

Someone said when the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense. Now I know that prophecy might have allegory, might have metaphors and might have symbols, but yet we can understand that in its context. What do we mean by the plain or literal method of interpretation?

It means that we consider the history, we consider the geography, we consider the theology and the grammar and we take it in its historical context when we interpret scripture and we understand that there's figurative language in the Bible, but we must interpret in a literal sense, not impose, spiritualizing the text or allegorizing a text that God intended to take literally.

Now thirdly, I'd like to say this, there are three major systems of eschatology. Now don't freak out, we're going to get to Daniel in just a moment, but I really believe that if you're going to properly rightly divide the word prophetically, that you need to understand these three systems of eschatology. Now I used the word eschatology. It's a term that we use for future things, eschatological things, "What happens after we die? When will the Lord return? What is the rapture, the second coming, the tribulation? What about the judgements and the resurrections and the end of time, Heaven and Hell and eternal things and the second coming?"

Now these three positions involve the doctrine of the second coming and what's called the millennium and this is all going to tie together systematically as we go over this the next few weeks. So these three categories you need to understand there, three groups of interpreting future things are first to what's called the postmillennial view, postmillennialism. What is postmillennialism? It's that they spiritualize the Old Testament prophecies, which I just pointed out we don't want to do, and they view the church as bringing in the kingdom, the millennium on Earth which will usher in the second coming of Jesus Christ.

So they basically believe that after the millennium, Christ will return, but will have the millennium because we will Christianize the world, that we will bring the spiritual influence of the church upon the world. We have a popular church up in Northern California in Redding, it's called Bethel and it's popular for its music and they may do some beautiful songs, but their theology is off an askew. They basically have a kingdom theology and they go out and heal, seek to heal people and emphasis on healing and so forth because they believe that we're bringing in the kingdom. They're postmillennial. They believe the church will Christianize the world and the world will get better and better and better.

And before World War I, there was a lot of Christians that held this view, but after World War I and then World War II and all of the things that are happening in the world, a lot of people have abandoned this view that the world is going to get better and better and better. Nowhere in the Bible does it indicate the world is going to get better before Jesus returns. Quite the opposite and we'll see this over the next few weeks. The Word of God teaches that the world will get darker and darker and darker and darker. In the years that I've been a pastor and walked with the Lord as a Christian, I have seen progressionally the world get darker and darker and darker and darker.

And the Bible says, "Because iniquity will abound the love of many will wax cold." So there's the position of post-millennialism. They believe that the second coming is after the kingdom age. Then there's a second view, it's called amillennialism or sometimes all-millennialism. That is basically the view that there's no literal millennium at all in the future. The negative prefix A indicates no millennium. The kingdom is now right here in the church and they have what's

called replacement theology. I'm going to talk about that more in just a moment, but they believe basically that God is finished with the Jewish people and the nation of Israel and His promises to them are nil and void, that they've been transferred to the church and in the church and that the church is now spiritual Israel and they spiritualize. See this all ties together. They don't take a literal plain historical interpretation of prophecy.

They jump from other areas of theology where they literally interpret the Bible to spiritualizing and allegorizing the scriptures, and again, they teach that the church is spiritual Israel and there's no millennium. The world is going to basically get bad. Christ will come back, judge the wicked and reward the righteous and there'll be a New Heaven and New Earth when the Lord returns. But there's no literal thousand-year reign above Christ upon the Earth. Now it's important that we understand these positions so we know what the Bible teaches.

Then third view, and this is the view I hold, it's called premillennialism. Premillennialism. It's the premillennial view that Christ returns before, pre, or prior to the millennium. It's hard to have the kingdom on Earth without the King, right? If the King doesn't come back, then it's hard to have the kingdom. But this is the view that the second coming of Christ will occur before the millennium. The second coming takes place and we're going to see it in the next few weeks, Revelation 19, and that Christ will, well not the church, establish His kingdom on Earth. Jesus will actually and literally reign over a restored Earth for 1,000 years.

Write down Revelation 19 and Revelation chapter 20. In Revelation 19, you have the second coming of Christ. Just as the Bible predicted His first advent and Christ came, so the Bible predicts His second advent and Christ will come. We're living between the two. How exciting is that? And then in chapter 20, we find the kingdom on Earth, the thousand-year reign, Satan is bound and Jesus reigns on Earth for 1,000 years. Jesus will come back to fulfill God's covenant promises to Abraham and to David given in the Old Testament. Now put in my own words, I want to say this, in Revelation chapter, Romans chapter 9, 10 and 11, write this down, you have in chapter 9, Israel's election. God has a purpose and a plan for the nation of Israel.

In chapter 10, you have Israel's rejection. They have been temporarily and partially, only temporarily and partially blinded and set aside and it's not totaled either. There are many Jews that believe in Jesus today and are part of the church. And then chapter 11 of Romans, we have there restoration. So God is not finished with Israel yet. So the premillennial view is the only view, mark this down, that interprets prophecy literally. It's the only view that interprets prophecy literally. It has a consistent hermeneutic through all areas of scripture and including when it comes to prophecy.

Now I want to move to my fourth point and that is the importance of God's covenant with Abraham and David. I mentioned the covenants that God made in the Old Testament with Abraham and David. Now listen to me carefully. A lot of times people don't focus on this or think about this, but tonight's foundation, if you don't understand that in the Old Testament God called Abraham and made promises to him, made a covenant with him and one of those promises included the land of Israel, from the river down in Egypt, the Nile perhaps all the way to the

Euphrates river, never in their history have they really possessed this whole area that God promised Abraham. So it's important that you understand God made a promise to Abraham and God made a promise to David.

First of all, the Abrahamic covenant, write down Genesis 12 verses 1 to 3, Genesis 13, verse 14 to 17, Genesis 15, verse 1 to 7 and then Genesis 17 verses 1 to 18. Now if you want to flip real quick in your Bible, you could look at it in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 18. There's a whole lot of times that God reiterated his covenant to Abraham, started in chapter 12 of Genesis and then progressed all the way to chapter 17. But in Genesis 15 in verse 18, I want to pull one little promise out. It says, "In the same day the Lord God made a covenant with Abraham saying unto him, 'Thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river of Euphrates,'" as we called the Promise Land, God gave it to Abraham. He said, "Go journey into a land that I will show thy of."

So Abraham had a tent, built an altar. God gave him this whole land and He made a promise that, "Not only you have a seed that will bless the whole world and I'll bless you, those who bless you, I will bless them. I will make your name great," whole series of promises, but it involved the promise of the land. God promised Abraham the land. Now the question is, will we believe that to happen literally? Will God faithfully keep His promise to Abraham? So our view of that covenant that God made, will He keep His promise to Abraham? Then there's a second covenant that was made, there are more than two, but I singled these important ones out. It's the one made to David. So we have the Davidic covenant as well as the Abrahamic covenant.

And the story for that is 2 Samuel chapter 7 when God told David, "You can't build Me a house, but I will build you a house," talking about the temple. David said, "God lives in a tent. He was still in the tabernacle. I live in a beautiful palace, so I want to make God a house." I read today just popped in my brain that Bill Gates and his wife just bought a beach house in San Diego only for \$45 million. Just a little place to hang out on the beach. But David wanted to build God a house and it would cost a lot of money. It would take many years. And Nathan the Prophet said, "Go for it, David. Do what's in your heart."

And then when the prophet was leaving the king, God spoke to him and said, "No, you go back and you tell David he can't build me a house." But then God made a promise to David, "But I will build him a house and through his son, Solomon, the house will be built, but through his own lineage, through his own seed, his own son, Messiah would come, the Savior of the world. And then He will sit on David's throne." And then God really blew David's minds and said, "He will reign forever and ever and ever and ever, and of His kingdom, there will be no end." That's amazing.

So God made a covenant promise to David that his seed, who would be Messiah, Jesus, and when Jesus came the first time, all the disciples thought, "This is it. This is it. This is it. He's going to set the kingdom up. He's going to sit on the throne of David. We're going to reign with Him. I'm going to be the greatest in the kingdom. It's going to be awesome," and they expected it to happen, but Jesus got crucified. And all their hopes were dashed. They had no hope until

Jesus rose from the dead and gave them the commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel and then sent the Holy Spirit to empower them as they would go out.

And we're going to talk about how the church fits into this whole picture, but God has a purpose and a plan for Israel. He's promised to give them a seed. So the question is, are we going to literally interpret that? Are we going to literally interpret that God made a promise to Abraham, that they would have the land in all that area and they've returned back to the land, but they don't have all that ... They don't even have the West Bank right now, let alone all the way to the Euphrates River and all the way into Egypt. Do we want to take it literally that God will keep His word, that God will keep his promise? He already has. There's no reason to doubt Him or disbelieve Him. God's faithful.

Do we believe that God will actually bring Christ back to sit on David's throne and that He will reign on the Earth on the throne of David for a thousand years and then that kingdom will flow into the New Heaven and the New Earth? So at the second coming, Jesus will sit on David's throne, I believe, and this will be literally fulfilled. This is why it's consistent with a premillennial return of Jesus Christ, that the King Jesus returns, the son of David, and sits upon the throne and fulfills God's covenant promise to David and gives them the whole land that He promised to Abraham.

Now number five, there are three groups of people to keep their proper place in interpreting and understanding Bible prophecy. There are three groups or categories of people that you need to always keep in mind and put in your proper place. They're mentioned by the way in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 32, but the three groups are, if you're taking notes, the Gentile nations. Number two, the nation of Israel, the Jewish people, and number three, the church. Those are the three main groups. And the reason why people get their prophecy all confused and mixed up is because they don't keep God's purpose, God's plan and God's program for each one of these groups separate and distinct and see how they relate to one another.

So we have the term, the times of the Gentiles. And in Luke chapter 21 verse 24, Jesus said that Jerusalem will be trodden under the feet of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled as well as we have the children of Israel, God's chosen people, the Jews, and then we have the church, the called out assembly and God's new purpose and plan for them. Let's look at them briefly for just a moment, and if you haven't turned in your Bibles, turn to Daniel chapter 2. Now in Daniel chapter 2, we have an outline of the times of the Gentiles. So I'm going to take every one of these individually and give you some references for them.

Number one, the Gentile nations, the outline for them prophetically from the time of Babylon all the way to the second coming is laid out for us in Daniel chapter 2. Now in Daniel chapter 2, the King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and he woke from his dream, but he forgot what it was. He had a dream, but he didn't know what he dreamt. So we asked all his wisemen and the magicians and all the astrologers, "Tell me what my dream was and also tell me what it meant. And if you can't do that, then I'm going to get rid of you all." So they told the king, "That's

unreasonable. No king would ever ask anyone to do that. You tell us what your dream was and we'll tell you what it means." They were hoping they could make something up to save their heads.

Well, they couldn't come up with anything, so it was off with your heads. Well, that would include Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So word came to them that all the wisemen are going to put to death and Daniel actually said, "Go tell the king just give me a little bit of time and I'll turn to the God of Heaven and pray to God and I'll give the king the dream and the interpretation." So he ran down to his three friends and says, "Hey, we got to pray." "Why is that?" "Because I just told the king that we're going to give him the dream and it's meaning." They're like, "Thanks a lot, Daniel. Well, it's either that or die. We got to do something."

So they get down and they pray to God and God gives to Daniel the dream and the interpretation of this dream. I just want to point out some of these verses for you in your Bible, beginning in verse 31, "Daniel says, 'Thou, O king, sees or sawest and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was awesome. The image head was a fine gold. His breast and his arms were silver. His belly and his thighs were brass. His legs of iron, his feet were part iron and clay,' Verse 33. "And you saw till a stone cut without hands," this is a reference to the second coming of Jesus Christ, "which stone smote the image upon his feet where iron and clay and break them into pieces.

Then was the iron and the clay and the brass and the silver and the gold broken into pieces together and became like chaff of the morning threshing floor, the summer threshing floor. And the wind carried them away and no place was found for them and the stone that smote the image," notice, "this became a great mountain and filled the whole Earth." I love it. Daniel says, "This is the dream and we, not I, but we, including three Hebrew friends, we will tell you the interpretation thereof before the king." So Daniel gets the dream and now he's going to give him the interpretation of the dream.

Now I hope you can see there at home or wherever you're at on your phone or your device, I hope you can see the image that we put in the screen behind me. I'm going to use this tonight and then another image in just a moment and then we're going to go through it the next few weeks. But in this dream that Nebuchadnezzar had, there was a large statue and the statue had ahead of gold. Look at it with me in verse 37, "Thou, O king, are the king of kings, for the God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power and strength. And wheresoever thy children of men dwell, the beast of the field and the fowls of the Heaven," excuse me, "hath he given into thine hand and have made thee ruler over them. Thou art the head of gold." So he saw this large statue and the head of gold was representing Babylon.

Then notice the second area of the statue was the breasts and arms made of silver. Verse 39, "And after thee shall arise, another kingdom inferior to thee and another third kingdom of brass which shall bear rule over the Earth." So in verse 39, you have the second kingdom, which is Medo-Persia, the breasts and arms of silver and then you have the belly and thighs of brass,

which is a reference to the Grecian empire. Later on in Daniel, they're referenced once again. "And then the fourth kingdom," verse 40, "shall be strong as iron forasmuch as the iron breaks and pieces and subdues all things and the iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." This is the kingdom of Rome. This is the Roman Empire.

So Ge's given these gentile nations and sequentially from Babylon all the way up to the Roman Empire. Now it says in verse 42 and it says that, "It had feet and toes of iron and clay, part of clay. So the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave." So it's going to be a divided kingdom, one to another, "even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these king," verse 44, "shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest the stone that was cut out of the mountain with without hands and the broken pieces, the iron, the brass and the clay, the silver, the gold, the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter."

Notice the God of Heaven, the true and living God, the God of the Bible, the sovereign God has made known to you what shall come to pass hereafter. The dream is certain and the interpretation is sure. Now I don't want to tarry on this because we're going to go to Daniel chapter 9, but this is the area of the Gentile nations. So this is the category of the Gentile nations, the world-ruling empires that will be all the way up from the Babylonian empire, the head of gold, and then moving to the Persian empire, the Medo-Persian empire, actually the breast and arms of silver, down to the thighs and belly of brass. The Grecian empire started there with Alexander the Great's conquest and then the Roman Empire, which is represented in the legs, which was divided. And then you have the feet and toes of iron mixed with clay.

Now the thing that you don't see in this prophecy, and this is why you have to keep the categories in their place and position is that you do not see that there is the church age. So remember there's the Gentile nations, then there's the nation of Israel and then there's the church. So now we're in the category of the Gentile nations. We're not talking about the church, we're not really talking about the kingdom of Israel, we're talking about the Gentile world-ruling empires. And it comes all the way down to the Roman Empire, which fell apart. But the feet and toes represent a revival of the Roman Empire that said that the children's nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty was actually based on man's attempts to revive and put together again the Roman Empire. They've all failed.

Hitler tried to make the Mediterranean see a German lake and he failed. And men today want to unify the world. One of the indications that we're living in the end of time is globalism. And the Bible says that before Christ comes back in his second coming, keep that in context, that the world will be unified. There'll be a one-world government and there'll be a one-world apostate church, false church. But what I want to point out here is that there's no reference to the rapture. The church is not in view. Church is not mentioned here. Now I keep saying I'll get into it more in the weeks to come and that's because I tend to try to get ahead of myself, but you need to

make this clear, the church is in New Testament, Revelation. You don't find the church in Old Testament prophecy. You don't find the rapture in Old Testament prophecy.

Now I know people try to find it and they squeeze it in there and they press it in there and they try to make it happen, but that's not the way to interpret scripture. We need to keep it all in its proper category. So important that we understand that. But this is a reference to that from the time of Babylon up to the second coming of Jesus Christ, these are the world-ruling empire. So where are we on this image? We're right down in the ankles somewhere and the very ankle somewhere where I believe again and we're going to talk about it next week, the rapture will happen first. The anti-Christ will be revealed. There'll be a coalition of European nations, 10 nations confederated, the iron and clay, the 10 toes, and which time the second coming will take place. Christ will return and He will establish his kingdom.

So this rock cut without hands is the second coming of Jesus Christ, strikes the Earth and grows into a kingdom. Again, we have premillennialism. Christ comes in power and glory to set up His kingdom. So very important. But the second category I mentioned and we could spend weeks on it is the category of the nation of Israel. Turn in your Bibles to Daniel chapter 9 and I want to look at what is called the ABCs of Bible prophecy. Now if you want to learn to read, what do you start with? Your ABCs, right? The other day I was doing ABC, I'm thinking, "Oh, man, I don't know. I think I've almost forgot my ABCs." My little two-year-old grandson was saying ABCs and I thought I better work on mine.

So if you want to learn to read, you learn your ABCs. If you want to learn Bible prophecy, you need to learn the alphabet, you need to learn the ABCs of Bible prophecy. Now, a lot of different places we can go, but I believe the image is behind me on the screen. We passed this out a few years ago when we taught on this here on Wednesday night at the church, but it has to do with the nation of Israel. Now in Daniel chapter 9, begin with me in verse 24, Daniel is in Babylon. They've been taken away captive. They've been in Babylon for 70 years. He's reading the prophets.

And guess what he did? He took the prophecies literally, the prophecies that said that they would be in captivity for seven years in the Book of Jeremiah. When you take God's Word literally as true and you believe it, you're miles ahead of everybody else. So he took it literally. He says, "Wow." He looked at his watch and he figured, "It's almost time for us to be freed from the captivity, return to our Promised Land." And so Daniel begin to pray that God would give him understanding of what the future of the nation of Israel would be. So keep this in context. In chapter two, the image that Nebuchadnezzar had in his dream is the Gentile world powers.

In chapter nine, we're now re dealing with the nation of Israel and God's prophetic plan. And this is an overarching plan that involves from the time of Nehemiah all the way to the coming of Christ and beyond to the second coming of Jesus Christ. But it all revolves around the nation of Israel. Israel is God's time clock. So 77 or 70 weeks, verse 24, and I'm going to cut to the chase and just explain it to you. We don't have time to give you all the rationales to how you come up to this, but 77 or 70 weeks in the King James Bible are determined upon, notice the statement,

"Thy people, the Jewish people of Israel and upon thy Holy City, the city of Jerusalem, to do these things, six things, to finish the transgression, to make an end, number two, of sins. Number three, to make a reconciliation for iniquity. All three of these involve Christ first coming.

When Christ would come, He would die on the cross and He would give His life for the sins of the world. But then notice the fourth thing, "To bring in everlasting righteousness." These next three things involve the second coming of Jesus Christ. The prophets of the Old Testament saw the mountain peaks of scripture. They saw the birth of Christ, they saw the death of Christ, they saw the second coming of Christ, they saw the tribulation, but they didn't see the church age. They missed that. That was a revelation given in the New Testament. So again, notice, to finish transgressions, to make an end of sins and to make reconciliation for iniquity, Christ came the first time, suffered and died up on the cross.

And then it goes beyond that, "To bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecies and to anoint the most Holy. That's the son of David, the king of his Israel returning, sitting on David's throne and reigning for a thousand years." Then verse 25, "Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." Now God is going to give to Daniel the beginning of this time period in which he'll chart out Israel's future. Know their understand from the going forth a commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem and Daniel was praying about returning back to the city of Jerusalem, the Promised Land, "unto the Messiah the Prince," until the coming of Messiah, Jesus Christ, "shall be seven sevens," or seven times seven, which is 49 years and there'll be another period of threescore and two weeks or 62 times seven, which is 434 years.

It's on the graph behind me and it says, "The street should be built again in the wall, even in troublous times." You can read about that in the Book of Nehemiah. "And after threescore and two weeks," or after the 62 weeks or the 434 years, it says, "Messiah shall be," notice in verse 26, "cut off, but not for himself, but for the people," talking about the people of Israel. "And the prince that shall come," is referring there to the Roman General Titus, who would come in 70 AD and destroy Jerusalem, "that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary and the end thereof shall be with flood and under the end of the war in desolation shall be determined."

And then in verse 27, "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." Now this is the last period, it's one times seven. One week is one time seven, which is seven years or number seven. "And in the midst of that week," that seven-year period, "he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and for an overspreading of the abomination, he shall make it desolate even into the consummation and the determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Now I'm sure you're all kind of wondering, "What in the world is going on? What is he even talking about?"

Well, let me try to make it as simple as I can. Go back to verse 24, the word weeks is a Hebrew word heptad and it's like our word dozen. When we say dozen, we mean 12, but we don't know if we mean 12 days or 12 weeks, 12 donuts or \$12, but just a unit of 12. That's the same way with this word heptad. It means a unit or a number seven. Well, I believe if you study the

prophecy and you are taking it literally and you take the premillennial position that it's seven 70-year periods. So that's 490 years. So this first period of time, verse 24, is 490 years, 70 times seven. That is the whole picture. This is the panoramic view. This is the picture of what God will do. The Messiah comes, dies for sins, atones for sins and then He will come back the second time, sit upon the throne of David and bring in the kingdom.

Now when did this time period start, the 490 years? The answer is in verse 25, "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem," which was March 14th, 445 BC, given by King Artaxerxes, that they could go back to Jerusalem and restore and rebuild the walls and the city of Jerusalem. So from that time to the coming of Messiah was all laid out and to the second coming of Jesus Christ, but we're going to see how this all works. And then there's the seven times seven, 49 weeks, verse 25 or sevens, which is 49 years and then there's a threescore or 62 times seven, 434 years. So if you add the 49 years and the 434 years, you have 483 years.

I want you to look with me if you can see it on the screen, on the chart, 445 BC in the bottom left-hand corner, Artaxerxes gave his commandment to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem under the Messiah the Prince, 70 times seven, 490 years, Christ will return. But you have the first two units there, seven times seven, 49. 62 times seven, 434, adding up to 483 years. Actually to the very day the Messiah rode in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, 173,880 days. And then a week later, Christ was crucified. Notice he says, "He shall be cut off, but not for Himself, but for the people," in verse 26. It's referenced to the Messiah being rejected by the nation of Israel.

Now if you look at this chart, you say, "Well, why hasn't the Lord returned yet?" Because after the death of Christ represented in the cross, we have the church age. Remember the church is the third group. We have the nations of the Gentiles, we have the nation of Israel and then we have the church. The church is a unique group of people, the called out assembly, and I believe that in the 490 years overarching time, the church is a parenthesis. It's a parenthetical section, a pause where God started the time watch on 445 BC and to the coming of the Messiah the Prince 483 years and He was cut off, He was crucified. There's seven years left in God's time chart for the nation of Israel. The seven years are the tribulation period, the time of Jacob's trouble. It's all part of God's plan for the nation of Israel.

You say, "Well, how do you know it doesn't run successively?" I believe that the church comes in this period where he is not seen in the Old Testament and that, now for 2,000 years plus, God is building His church, the bride of Christ, the body that He's the head of and that the church will be caught up to meet the Lord and the Heir. We have the rapture mentioned on the chart. We're going to talk about that next Wednesday and then the tribulation is that last seven years. So when the Messiah was cut off, God stopped His time watch at 483 years on the 490. When the church is caught up, the anti-Christ will come on the scene. He will make a covenant with the nation of Israel for seven years. That's in our passage here in Daniel chapter 9.

I want you to notice that in verse 27, the he there at the beginning of verse 27 is a reference to

the anti-Christ, not Jesus Christ, and he makes a covenant with many for one week or one seven-year period. So that's the tribulation called the time of Jacob's trouble and it's a seven-year period, the last seven years of Israel's history. In the midst of that week, which is three and a half years, we're going to see that in Revelation 13, "He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation deceased." Jesus spoke about this in Matthew 24. It's known as the abomination of desolation spoken by the Prophet Daniel.

Now I'm, I'm trying not to put too much information in here because we're going to look at all of this each week as we go through, but it's recorded for us in Revelation chapter 13. Now, Israel is God's time clock and God's purpose and plan for Israel, as I've laid out in Romans 9, 10 and 11, God elected them, chapter nine, God temporarily impartially blinded them and set them aside in chapter 10, but God is going to restore them. Isn't it interesting that Israel in 1948 returned back to the land and they were born again as a nation? The stage is set for them in the land to see their Messiah coming in power and glory.

So the tribulation is purposely to punish the world with God's wrath, and secondly, to prepare Israel this last seven-year period of Daniel's prophecy to prepare them for Messiah and the second coming of Jesus Christ. Now again, I want to mention it, I'm going to wrap this up with this point on the church, the church is not mentioned or referred to in the 70-week prophecy of Daniel. The church is not there. Again, that's because the Old Testament prophets, they saw His birth, they saw His death, Isaiah 55, they saw His second coming, they saw the millennial reign of Christ, but they didn't see the church. This is why Paul calls it the mystery revealed, something that an ages past was concealed, but now is revealed.

You must understand God's purpose and plan for Gentile nations, the nation of Israel and the church and you must all keep them separately in their rightful place. So let me mention thirdly in closing the church and I do this purposely because it's going to segue into my message next week. We're going to talk about the church age, the characteristics of the church age, what the church is and then how the church is caught up in another event, which I believe is number one on God's prophetic calendar. I haven't even gotten to the sequence of events yet. This is all background and that is the rapture of the church, the body of Christ.

In Ephesians chapter 3, the church is called the new humanity. Read Ephesians chapter 3. It's all about the church. Chapter 2 and then chapter 3, God's broken down the middle wall of partition between Israel and the Gentiles, the Jew and the Gentiles and he's made one new humanity. The church is the body of Christ, the church is the bride of Christ. What a glorious truth that is. Now, as I pointed out in the image behind me, we have the church age mentioned there. I actually should put a parenthesis on that because there there's no timeframe there where God is gathering together both Jew and Gentile, creating the church and God. At this time, we live in this time of the church, the age of grace. God is saving people by his grace through faith in Christ.

But the next event in God's prophetic plan for the church is the rapture, to catch the church, the bride up. And the minute that happens, the anti-Christ then can come on the scene and be

revealed. And the minute he makes a covenant with Israel for seven years, that's the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy, God starts his time clock again and that time clock starts and then comes the second coming. Now, the first revelation of the rapture is in John 14 where Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. And if We're not true, I would've told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place, I will come again and receive you and to Myself that where I am there, you may be also."

Right now, we're waiting for the rapture of the church. God has a plan for Israel. God has a plan for the kingdoms of the world, but God also has a plan for the church. And in that sense, it's what's called the fullness of the Gentiles. Not the times of the Gentiles, but the fullness of the Gentiles. When they come in, when that last person gets saved, the church is complete, the church will be caught up and we will be with the Lord in the Father's house. It's interesting in John 14, Jesus in that upper room, and I'm going to begin here next week, when Jesus was in the upper room teaching His disciples that he was going to go away, but that he would send the Holy Spirit, that the kingdom wasn't going to come right now when they thought it would, that He was going to leave and go back to the Father, they thought, "What? We thought the kingdom was going to be now. We thought you were going to establish and sit on the throne."

"No, I'm going to be crucified, but I'm going to come back someday and I'm going to take you to My Father's house, that where I am there, you may be. Peter's going to deny Me. Judas is going to betray Me. You're going to be really sad, but I'm going to come back. I'm going to take you to My Father's house." And Jesus was talking about the Father and the Father's house. Philip said, "Lord, if You just show us the Father, we'd be satisfied," and Jesus said, "Have I been with you so long, Philip, you not see Me? He did see Me have seen the Father." Jesus came to reveal God the Father to us.

And then Thomas said, "We don't know where you're going and how can we know the way?" And Jesus said, "I am the way. I am the truth and I am the life." John 14:6, "I am the way. I am the truth and the life." And he said, "No one comes to the Father except by Me." The only way to get to Heaven is by Jesus Christ. He came from Heaven and died and rose and went back to Heaven so that He could take us to Heaven with Him someday. So if you haven't trusted Christ tonight, if you haven't put your faith in Jesus Christ and received Him as Lord and Savior, you need to do that. You need to do that right now. If you die without being born again and trusting Christ, you will be separated from God for all eternity.

But if you repent tonight and trust Jesus, put your faith in Him and ask Him to come into your heart and forgive you of your sins and believe on Him as Lord and Savior, He will make you his child. He will come again to take you to Heaven and you can have hope in Jesus Christ. There is hope beyond the grave. There is hope beyond this world, but it's only found in Jesus Christ.