

God's Plan For The Future

Titus 2:11-15

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I want to back up to Verse 11 of Titus Chapter 2 where Titus is instructed by Paul that the grace that bring us salvation hath appeared unto all men teaching us, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. So notice that grace of God appeared and brought salvation, Verse 11, which is the Christmas message, we just celebrated it. And that it's teaching us to deny ungodliness, worldly lust. We should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.

"And we should be looking," Verse 13, "for the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and our savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Paul says, "These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority that no man despise thee."

Now, this is a Pastoral epistle written by Paul to Titus, actually the pastorals are 1 Timothy, then Titus, then 2 Timothy. They're in that chronological order. But he's writing to Titus, who was a traveling companion. He was on the island of Crete and he's encouraging him in light of the end of time to live godly and soberly and righteously in these last days. So the question we need to ask tonight in light of the blessed hope, Verse 13, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ is are we living at the end of time?

Now, normally when you do a prophecy message, the tendency today in the church is to first of all, neglect prophecy, your Bible prophecy, or when they do teach it, it's more current events than it is Bible doctrine. So my focus is always what the Bible teaches and that you can make the parallel connections to the culture around us.

But as I look around the world today and in my lifetime, I've never seen the world more demonically energized than I have right now. In every level, in every area of society, there's demonic activity and darkness in our land. And this is what the Bible predicted actually for the church to watch out that in the last days, evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse deceiving and being deceived. And one of the chief signs that we're living in the last days or the end of time is what's called an apostasy or turning away from the faith.

And that's what we see so often today is that people have abandoned the Bible, they've abandoned orthodox Christianity, they've abandoned sound doctrine, and they've apostasized. They've turned their back on Christ and they've gone the way of the world. So we are living, I believe, yes, in the last days and this present time is very, very, very dark. Indeed, very demonically energized.

But as Christians, our faith is by its very nature, is rooted in hope. Our future hope is based on faith in God and the God of the Bible and in Jesus Christ. The God of the Bible is the only true and living God, the all-wise creator of the universe who has revealed Himself in His word and

His sovereign plan in history. So I believe that we can have faith not only in Christ, but we can have faith in God's word.

So when the world gets darker, we need to hang on to God's word stronger. The Psalms says, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and light to my path," and everything that goes on around us need to be filtered through the lens of Scriptures. So our hope as Christians as in Jesus Christ and His coming, Verse 13, look at it with me, looking for the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

This is the blessed hope of the believer. Jesus Christ is coming again, that's our blessed hope. So no matter what is going on around us, no matter what's happening in the culture around us, we have that hope in Jesus Christ that He is coming again. There's a new world coming. But we need to find the answers to how it unfolds in God's word. The place that we turn for understanding and what the future holds is the Bible. That's so important.

Now, why Bible prophecy and why is it so important? Let me give you three quick reasons. Number 1, like all Scripture, it is profitable. Write down 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 where it says, "All Scripture," which would include the prophetic word of God and a lot of the Bible is prophecy is given by what? Inspiration of God as God breathes. And then, Paul goes on to say that it's profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction and righteousness that the man of God may be thoroughly finished and equipped for all good works.

So why would we single out the prophetic word and say that it's not important or it's not necessary or it's not needed when the Bible says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration."? Too many churches today, as I said as a part of the sign of the end of times, have abandoned studying Bible prophecy. They don't teach the first six chapters of the Book of Daniel. They don't teach the Book of Revelation. They don't teach the rapture. They don't teach the second coming. They don't teach about the tribulation. They don't preach that Christ's coming is imminent. We need to be looking for Him. They've abandoned that.

And so then secondly, I think prophecy is important because it encourages us to live holy lives. Write down 1 John 3:3 where it actually says, "Whoever has this hope," referring to Christ's coming, "in Him purifies himself even as he is pure." So the hope that Christ could come at any moment is a purifying sanctifying effect upon our lives. If we don't believe the Lord is coming again, then we become like that wicked servant that says the Lord delays His coming and we begin to eat and drink with the drunken and we miss the Lord's return altogether.

And then thirdly, the study of prophecy brings joy in the midst of affliction and suffering and hardship. 2 Corinthians 4:17 where He says, "That our affliction worketh for us a far more in eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things that are present, but the things which are not seen for the thing which are not seen are eternal. The things that are present are temporal." So in the midst of suffering and sorrow and sickness and pain and bereavement and loss, we keep our focus on that blessed hope that Christ is coming again.

It's not a pipe dream. It's not just some wish. It's a hope that is certain. And sure, when the Bible uses that phrase, "Hope," it's not saying that we cross our fingers and we hang onto our rabbit foot and we hope it's true. It's a settled assurance is what it means. It means a confident settled assurance when we believe that Jesus Christ is coming again.

Now, in our study of Bible prophecy, we must be careful to rightly divide the word of truth. Write down 2 Timothy 2:15. You know the verse where Paul tells Timothy, "Study to what?" "Shew yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed." And then, he used this expression, "Rightly dividing the word of truth." So he uses the imagery of a workman and when he says rightly dividing the word of truth, that literally means to cut it straight. Now, some think that maybe he's talking about a stone mason. When they built walls, they needed to use plumb line and they needed to cut the stone straight and they needed to cut a straight line. Or maybe, he's talking about a workman that cut roads and you don't want a crooked road, you want a straight road. Some say Paul was a tent maker and he used to take animal skins and he would sew them together and he had to cut his seams straight and sew them together.

So whatever kind of workman he talked about, we don't know. But what he's saying is when we interpret scripture, when he says, "Study to shew yourself approved," he's not telling us to study. He's saying, "Be zealous. Be eager to not only read the word but when you interpret the Word, to actually handle it properly and cut it straight so that it all fits together and makes sense." So as Christians, we need to do that and we need to use what I believe is what's called the plain or literal method of interpretation. Now, I'm still just warming up to what I want to get into tonight. This is why I said, "Buckle your seat belts. We're going to be here for a while."

I figured between Christmas and New Year's, it'd be a smaller group. It'd be a little bit more casual and we could just preach real long tonight. Okay. One person wants me to go. It's been a while since I've gone at least an hour. But don't worry, I won't go that long. But we need to properly interpret Scripture, whether it be prophetic scripture or whether it be historical, narrative, or whether it be didactic epistles, Old Testament, New Testament. Everything we handle in the Bible needs to be cut straight.

And this is the overarching principle of interpreting plain, literal method of interpretation. Plain, literal method of interpretation. When the plain sense means good sense, seek no other sense. Now, that is not to say that the Bible doesn't use parables or allegory or metaphors or similes or word pictures. That's not to say the Bible doesn't speak in poetry or prophecy, that there's different kinds of genre and literature.

But as you approach the Bible, you approach it with a literal interpretation, the historical, grammatical, theological method of interpreting the Bible. That's the way I approach the Bible. That's the way I preach the Bible and I believe that's the way it should be interpreted. And one of the things that I try to do and the way I preach and teach here on Sunday and Wednesdays is to model for the congregation how we should properly interpret scripture.

This is why I like to back up from the text, read beyond the text, set the historical context,

explain it in context, and the primary meaning. The Scripture has one meaning. It doesn't have multiple meanings. It's what's called the authorial intent. What Paul meant when he wrote the Titus, what he was intending to say, not what we think he said or what we want him to say so we don't want to impose our idea. This is what's also called exegesis. That means taking out of the text its meaning. Derive it from the primary meaning. Isogesis is reading into the text what is not intended by the original author. So we want to read the Bible of the plain, literal interpretation or what's called a hermeneutic.

Now, not all Christians do that unfortunately and I want to mention that when it comes to eschatology or prophecy as it pertains to the millennium, and we'll get to that tonight, that there are three basic views and they all are in the realm of Orthodox Christianity but I believe that only one view is correct. And I'll state which one, the last one, the pre-millennial view. But there's three views in relationship to the millennium that Christians hold.

The first is what's called post-millennialism which is just about dead today in the world but it's comes in more subtle different forms. And the post-millennialist believes that Jesus will come back at the end of or after 1000-year reign. And that we as the church, listen carefully, we bring in the Kingdom by bringing Christianity and its influence into the world, by bringing the world to Christ. So that's what's called post-millennialism.

They spiritualize the text that are literally prophesied and they believe that Christ comes back after the church brings in the Kingdom. They want to Christianize the world, banks, everything, and take over the world. There are some popular ministries that hold this view. One of them is the Bethel Church in Redding, California, Bill Johnson. They promote what's called a Kingdom now, take over the world and we're Christ on Earth and they believe that they're going to bring back the King. And I don't believe that's what the Bible teaches, I don't think that takes a literal approach to interpreting. It spiritualizes the text. And after World War I and World War II, a lot of Christians abandoned that idea that the world was going to get better and better and better until it was good enough for Jesus to come back. I mean, if we got to get the world good enough for Jesus to come back, we're in big trouble, right? I don't think it's going to happen.

The second view is quite popular today. It's called the amillennial view or amillennialism. The negative prefix a speaks of fact that there's not a literal millennium. Now, they would argue and say, "We believe there's a millennium but it's not literal." So again, this is why I said we need to have a literal approach to interpreting Scripture. Especially when it comes to prophecy or all Scripture, we should have a literal approach. So basically, no millennial experience on earth. That Christ will just come back at the end of the world. The millennium is now and it's spiritual and we're in the millennium.

Now, we're going to see that during the millennium Satan's going to be bound for 1000 years. So if we're in the millennium right now and Satan is bound, we're in big trouble. So again, they don't take the promises of the millennium in the Scriptures. Literally, they spiritualize them, they allegorize them, and that's a dangerous thing to do. So when it's plainly talking literal, we should interpret it that way. So it's amillennial view that Christ comes back and he just judges the

wicked and that the millennium is right now. The church has replaced Israel and it's called replacement theology that God has done over through with Israel. I don't know how they can study Romans 9, 10, and 11 which covers Israel's election, Israel's rejection, and Israel's restoration and still hold a view of that nature. But the Bible doesn't teach replacement theology. The church is not spiritual Israel. God still has a plan and a purpose for the nation of Israel.

And then, the third view of which I hold is what's called the pre-millennial view or pre-millennialism. And in Revelation 19, we have a reference to the second coming of Jesus Christ, the Bible old and new is full of references to the second coming of Jesus Christ. But then in Chapter 20, we have the millennium. So even sequentially in the chapter... Now, I realize that Revelation has chapters that are parenthetical and you need to understand that.

But you go from chapter 19 to Chapter 20, it's hard to have the kingdom without the king, right? It's hard to have Davidic Kingdom come if you don't have the King of David, the Messiah coming here on earth. So I believe in a pre-millennial coming of Christ, that means that the second coming will take place before the millennium, the 1000-year reign of Christ. And you can see that on the chart on the screen next to me or above me, that we have the kingdom age called on the chart which is actually the 1000 years which is the millennium. And that the second coming up above Revelation 19 takes place at the end of the tribulation and is before the kingdom age and then before the new heaven and the new earth of the eternal state.

We're going to cover what's in that chart tonight as we look at these points but I hold a pre-tribulational rapture view and I hold a pre-millennial view. Christ comes back before the millennium and the King brings in the kingdom of God. This and this only is the view that has a literal method of interpretation that takes the promises God made to Abraham. It's called the Abrahamic Covenant, promises of the land and so forth and the promises to David that your son will sit on my throne forever and ever takes them literally. It doesn't spiritualize them and find them fulfilled in the church. So Genesis 15 promise to Abraham, there's a whole bunch of references to that in Genesis but Genesis 15 is one. And then 2 Samuel 7 is a reference to the Davidic Covenant. God promised David his son would sit upon his throne.

Now, real quickly before we get started, remember that there are three groups to keep in mind when you're studying Bible prophecy, that you keep them in their proper place and that you don't get them confused. And those three groups are, number one, Gentile nations. You're going to see that in the chart behind me. And then number two, the nation of Israel, God's purpose, God's plan, God's word to them, and program for them. And then thirdly, the church.

Now, write down one 1 Corinthians 10:32. That's a great, great verse that describes the three categories: the Gentiles, the nation of Israel, and then the church of Jesus Christ. And we're going to talk about the church and the church age. So we need to remember that it's super, super important. Now, what is God's plan for the future? You can't believe what a challenge this was today to put together. This is actually with all the sermons I preach, on all prophecy for all these years, I've never done what I'm doing right now. So I took from all these different sources and put it all together and my only frustration is that there's a lot that we can't cover tonight.

But I wanted to keep it simple, I started with ten points. I got it down to six and it's consistent with the graphic in front of us up on the screen. So here's number one. I want you to write them down. We're going to put them as best I can in sequential order. What is next? What is the next event in God's prophetic plan or calendar? And it's pretty simple. It's actually the rapture of the church. And we could spend the whole night talking about the rapture preaching on the rapture, but I believe with all my heart that this is the next event and that the church has had supposed to be living in constant continual vigil expectation of the imminent, write that word down, imminent coming again of Jesus Christ called the rapture of the church.

It involves the church. And I want you to notice on the graphic on the screen that I have depicted the cross, and then the chart moves from left to right and it's not proportionate to the periods of time, but you see there the church age. So this chart is what is called a dispensational approach to prophecy. Now, you can become what's called a hyper-dispensationalist. You go to a radical extreme there, or you can actually reject dispensationalism altogether. A dispensation means a period of time in which God is dealing a certain way with people on earth. So you at least have two. You have the old Testament and you have the new Testament, the old Covenant and the new. But I believe that the church is a period of dispensation of the church age or the age of grace. And this right now is where we're living.

So we're living in the church age after the cross waiting for the rapture of the church. But I want you to understand it as a dispensation or a time period in which God is dealing. And what he's doing is that he's pulling out a bride for himself of the earth. So the church is made up of Jews and Gentiles. In Ephesians chapter two, he talked about the breaking down to the middle wall of partition and that we become one new humanity. It's like a third race. We're not Jews. We're not Gentiles. We're brothers and sisters in Christ with the church, with the body of Christ. We're new humanity. And when the church is complete, then he will take the church to heaven in the rapture before the second period of time or dispensation, which is known as the tribulation period. And then we move to the kingdom age and then the eternal state, which is the new heaven and the new earth or what's called the eternal state.

So those are the different categories that will unfold, but we're right now living in the church age. So the rapture pertains to the church. It pertains to the new Testament body of Christ, the church. It's not the second coming. Don't confuse the two. This rapture is not the Lord's. Second advent, it's a catching up of the church to meet Christ in the air. Now it's becoming more popular and more fashionable today in churches to just completely reject any doctrine or teaching of the rapture altogether or to mesh the two scriptures together and say there's only one event, the second coming, and that all the rapture verses are not the same as the second coming. But if you pay attention, listen to me very carefully. If you pay attention to the details which is important for a Bible student to do, you'll see the differences between the rapture and the second coming.

We did a little handout when we did our study on prophecy back in 2020, which gave two columns which contrasted the rapture with the second coming second coming, every eye will see him second coming, the world will be evolved. Second coming, Christ will come down to

earth instead of his kingdom, the rapture, we don't see him unless you're a Christian and you're caught up, you meet him in the air and you'll forever be with the Lord. And so it's not really a coming, it's a catching up to be with the Lord forever and ever. So it's two separate events. They are not the same at all. So I believe that the rapture is the imminent hope of the church. Now that word is super important imminent and what that word means, it doesn't only mean that. It doesn't mean that it could happen at any moment, but what it means more is that nothing has to happen before it happens.

So it doesn't mean it could happen any moment, which it can because this is the reason, is because nothing has to happen before the rapture. So if you believe that the antichrist comes before the rapture, then you're not looking for Jesus Christ, you're looking for the antichrist. That's not what the Bible tells us to do. If you believe that we're going to go through the tribulation before the rapture, then you're looking for the moon to turn to blood. You're looking for the mark of the beast. You think that if you get the COVID shot, you get the mark of the beast and you're going to go to hell and you're freaking out. But if you're looking for Jesus Christ, then your heart is at rest, then you know that he's going to catch you up to meet him in the air, and that's all that really matters. Amen. So it's living with a constant expectation and when you read verses about the rapture, I'm going to give you the classic passages. It doesn't talk about signs, it doesn't talk about wonders in the earth. It doesn't talk about tribulation or famine or moon turned to blood or none of that. The rapture is not found. This stuff you can write down and take to the bank. If you don't agree with me, that's fine, but I'm going to let you have it.

The rapture is not found in Matthew twenty-four and twenty-five. It's called all of the discourse. So if you find the rapture there, you're going to confuse yourself. When the disciples asked the Lord, when shall these things be? What should be the sign of thy coming? They were talking about the second coming. They weren't talking about the rapture. They didn't even know about the rapture. The rapture is a new Testament revelation. It's a mystery hidden in the old Testament revealed in the new. If you find the rapture in the old Testament, you haven't found the rapture in the old Testament. It's not there. It's a new Testament revelation given to Paul and to the church. It's the mystery that is revealed one Corinthians 15. So don't confuse the two and keep them distinct and understand that the church is involved with this doctrine of the rapture, the catching up to be with the Lord and because it's imminent.

This is a very strong argument for a pre-tribulational rapture. Any other view, you're not looking for Christ to come again is inconsistent with Scripture and is not leading to living in His expectation and His coming. It's not the imminent coming of Christ. You're looking for the antichrist, for the tribulation, or for signs and other things. Many of the signs that people talk about today for the end of time are signs for the world, for the Jews of the second coming, not for the church. So the Lord says he's going to come. Now, here's the verses that I want you to write down. John 14 is, I believe, Verses 1 to 3, a reference to the rapture of the church. "Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be..." What? "Afraid. You believe in God, believe also in me," and what did Jesus say? "In my Father's house," which is heaven, are many what? "Mansions." It's interesting you quoted the King James there. Literally, it means abiding-places but I like

mansions. I can dig that.

"If it were not so, I would've told you. I go to prepare a place for you," and listen to what Jesus said, "If I go to prepare place for you, I will do..." What? "Come again. And I will receive you," that's the rapture. "I will snatch you up, catch you up. I will receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also." I love it. That's the rapture.

Jesus said, "I'm going to my Father's house." I love that term for heaven. I'm going to get a place all prepared for you and I'm going to come back and I'm going to snatch you up. Now, he doesn't mention earthquakes, he doesn't mention pestilence. He doesn't mention wars and rumors of wars. He doesn't mention the moon turning to blood. He doesn't mention the abomination of desolation. He just says, "I'm coming back so be ready because I'm going to take you to heaven, where I am there you may be also."

And He also says to them, "Don't let your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid." So believing in the rapture, believing He's coming for us calms my fears and takes away my fear and keeps my heart steadied on Him. The second verse that's classic rapture is 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. And by the way, I've done a whole in-depth series just in the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians and you can find the study in it there. But 1 Corinthians 15:51 and the whole chapter is about what? The resurrection. The whole chapter is about the resurrection. Why is the rapture in a chapter about the resurrection? Because the rapture involves the resurrection of the dead saints and then the translation of living saints.

If the rapture happened right now and somebody you know as a Christian died a month ago, they would be resurrected. If it happened right now and you're alive, you will be translated. That's why we pray, "Even so, come Lord Jesus," so that we're not resurrected but we're translated. But either way, it's a win-win situation. Those that have died in Christ are with the Lord right now. They're in his presence. Then, their bodies will be resurrected and reunited with their soul and spirit in heaven and they will come with the Lord. So when we get raptured and we're caught up to the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, we will then see our loved ones in their glorified bodies. And this is why Paul said, "Comfort one another with these words." There's a reunion.

But in 1 Corinthians 15:51 he says, "Behold, I'm showing you a mystery." There's the word. "We shall not all sleep," metaphor for death, "But we shall be changed..." In what? "A moment in the twinkling of an eye. For this corruptible will put on incorruption. This mortal will put on immortality. Then should be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death swallowed up in victory.' O, death where is thy sting? Oh, grave where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God for the victory is ours in Jesus Christ." How does he close 1 Corinthians 15? He says, "Therefore, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for you know that your labor's not in vain in the Lord. So when you get a chance, I'm just giving you the verses, write them down and read them.

And then, I want you to turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4:13. Again, I could quote it but I want

to read it together. This is the quasi-central classic text on the rapture of the church. Paul says in Verse 13 of 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4, he said, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep." Again, he used the same metaphor for death. By the way, when the Bible uses the word sleep, it's referring only to the body and it's only for believers and it's a temporary state. It's nothing to be feared.

So the body is sleeping but the soul and spirit are with the Lord. He says, "I don't want you to sorrow not as others who have no hope." So Titus mentioned the hope, Jesus mentions the hope, and then here we have the hope once again mentioned by Paul. "For if we believe that Jesus, died rose again even so them also which sleep or have died in Jesus," catch this phrase, "will God bring with Him." There's your loved ones who have died coming back with the Lord.

"For this, we say unto you..." How? "By the word of the Lord." It's not just speculation, it's divine revelation. "That we," now notice that little we right there in verse 15, Paul believed in the imminent coming of Christ for the church so much so that even he thought it could be in his lifetime. "We who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep." So the reason Paul wrote these words is because some of the believers in Thessalonica were dying and Jesus hadn't come back yet. So they were worried about them thinking that they had missed out, that they were at a disadvantage.

So he says, "No, no, no, no, no. We're not going to precede them for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven." He breaks it down. Verse 16, "With a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trumpet of God," and then here they are, "the dead in Christ shall rise first." Those who died believing in Jesus, they will be the first to be resurrected. "Then we," again Paul says, "who are alive and remain shall be," and here's our word rapture, "caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord..." Where? "In the air so shall we forever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

Now, again, I can't get into everything about the rapture here but I encourage you to go to the website, look up the text and I go deeper when I speak on it as an individual topic but this is the classic verse. So the Lord descends from heaven, the dead in Christ rise first, their bodies are resurrected. We which are our alive and remain shall be caught up. The word caught up is the Greek word *harpazo*. It means to snatch up or to take it by force and we'll meet the Lord together in the air.

Now, the question is often asked, will the church go through the tribulation? By the way, even though I have six points, we're only in still number one. We'll get through this. I'm not going to tear this long into every point. Man, if all six points are this long, I should have stayed home and watched it on TV so I can fall asleep halfway through. Will the church go through the tribulation? My answer to that is no.

Let me give you six rapid-fire reasons. Number one, the unity of Daniel's 70th week. I'll come back to that on the screen. Number two, the Doctrine of Imminency. Number three, Christians are not appointed to wrath, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. Number four, the promise to the church of

Philadelphia, Revelation 3:10. Number five, the church not on earth in Revelation 4 through 18. The church is on earth in Chapters 1 and 2. It's in heaven in 4 and 5. Then, chapter 6 through 18 to the 19th chapter, it's in heaven. It comes back in Chapter 19 with Christ and the second coming. And then number six, the restrainer needs to be removed. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10, and there Paul talks about the need for the restraining force, the Holy Spirit to be removed, for the antichrist to be revealed, for the antichrist to make a covenant with Israel, for the tribulation to start.

Now, look up at the screen with me if you can for just a moment. Over to the left, and I haven't planned on getting into it in any depth tonight and across the top of the screen I have the 70 weeks of Daniel. This is one of the greatest prophecies in all the Bible. This prophecy of the 70 weeks of Daniel appears in the 9th chapter because it's viewed by Bible students as being the ABCs of Bible prophecy or the backbone of Bible prophecy. So you need to understand this prophecy and I've taught on it. You can check it out on our website. But if you notice in the far left top corner where this dotted white line arches across and starts over, that on top of that we have 77, 70 times 7, 490 years. It arches all the way over to the end of the tribulation or the second coming.

So the beginning of this timeline in Daniel 9 which is called the 70 weeks or 70 sevens of Daniel, the word sevens or heptad in the Hebrew, it means a unit of seven. Starts in 445 BC when Nehemiah... King Artaxerxes gave the commandment for Nehemiah to restore and rebuild the walls of the city and the temple in Jerusalem. So that's the date of the beginning.

Now, this is a very detailed prophecy and it would just bog us down completely to dig into it and turn there but it's divided into these three sections. The first is 7 sevens, 49 years. The second one is 62 sevens, 434 years. And those combined, see the date on the bottom of the yellow section, 483 years. That 483 years goes from 445 BC right up to the date where Jesus is crucified, where he rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and then he's crucified on the cross.

Now, if you look at the prophecy of Daniel, Daniel's prophecy was given in context there. When Daniel was praying about the end of their captivity in Babylon, he wondered what the future held for the nation of Israel and God brings an angel to answer his petition about the future for Israel. So the whole 70 weeks of Daniel, as I talked about the three categories, Israel, the Gentile nations, and the church deals primarily with Israel and God's purpose and plan for them.

The whole prophecy and covers a 490 period. While Messiah was cut off after 483 and there were 7 years left to fulfill the 490 years. You see underneath the tribulation, seven years or 1-time seven or 1 seven? So this is the 70-week prophecy of Daniel. Now, again, I'm probably totally confused you but you do the math. I'm horrible at math but I'm pretty sure that's all straight. There's different ways to interpret it.

I realize it and it gets very complex but this is the backbone that it's God prophesying. Now, the reason I took that arch all the way over to the end of the tribulation is because before the kingdom comes, Daniel said that it will fulfill all righteousness, that it'll establish the Messiah,

bring an everlasting righteousness. So God's master plan, God's mega plan or narrative is all going to be accomplished, all going to be fulfilled at 490 years.

There's seven years still unfulfilled. The first 483 years had been perfectly fulfilled. Messiah came. He was cut off not for himself but for the sins of the people. So there's seven years missing and it's almost like this, it's almost like God had a big time clock in his hand. And when Artaxerxes gave the commandment to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem, he started the time clock, started clicking off to 490 years. When Messiah was crucified, the time clock in God's hand stopped and there's seven years left.

At seven years is now seeing the gap of the church age and then we'll see the gap of the seven years and it won't start at the rapture and the antichrist revealed with that last seven years. So these are the categories or the dispensations that bring together and fit all the pieces of the puzzle. So that overarching prophecy in Daniel 9. It's interesting too that in Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a large image of a head of gold, breasts and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet and toes of iron and clay which symbolize all the Gentile world ruling empires from Babylon to Rome.

The ten toes at the bottom of this image represented the revived Roman Empire at the end of time, in which time Christ would return and set up his kingdom. So it fits with this graphic that I have and we don't have a graphic of the image on the screen but I say that to just point out that the church is a distinctly different period of time when they will be raptured and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And then, God will begin the tribulation period. He'll hit the stopwatch again and the seven years will begin to tick down. And then, the second coming will take place, the kingdom will be established and then it will usher in the new heavens and the new earth.

Now, we're going to move faster. Second thing, and this is a little bit of an issue, I wrestled with whether to combine two and three or to just give you two and then three but let me explain. I'm not sure whether two happens before three or three happens before two but let me tell you what it is. Number two, Russia with Iran and other Muslim forces invade Israel, Ezekiel 38 and 39. So just write down the reference a lot of questions people have about Russia's invasion of Israel. It's predicted 2,600 years ago by the prophet Ezekiel and it will happen.

The most likely scenario, and I can't be sure about it or dogmatic about it, is that it will happen after the rapture, just before the antichrist is revealed and that it will actually make allowance for the antichrist to come to power in Europe and take over the world because Russia will be dealt with and taken care of by God himself.

So the Russian invasion of Israel with Iran and other invading forces of Muslim nations that will be co-aligned with them or allied with them and invade Israel. God intervenes, destroys Russia, and I believe that then the antichrist is able to come to power. And again, it's a whole study even of itself. So that's number two.

So let's move quickly to number three. Number three is the emergence of the antichrist and the

beginning of the tribulation. So we have the church raptured, then the nation of Israel invaded by Russia and other Muslim allies, and then the antichrist coming to power from Europe out of a coalition of ten nations represented in the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Chapter 2 coming to power.

Now, write down Daniel 2:27. This is at the end of the 70 weeks of prophecy in Daniel 9:27 it says, "And he who is the antichrist shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." This is that last seven year period, one heptad, one seven year period. "And in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." Now, again, it confuses people when you read the word week, but the word week, heptad, is like our word dozen.

When I say the word dozen, what do you think of? 12, right? But we don't know if it's 12 eggs or 12 donuts, which I think would be pretty cool, or 12 apple pies or what it is. But if you study the prophecy, I believe it's easy to come to the conclusion. I realize there are other views that it's seven 7-year periods. So there's 70 7-year periods, 490 years but there's one last period broken down as one 7-year period and it's broken down into two categories in the midst of that period. So there's three and a half years and then the abomination of desolation and then another three and a half years to the end of the tribulation and the second coming.

Now, the 7-year tribulation is called the time of Jacob's trouble, Jeremiah 30:7. Which, again, in my estimation is another reason why the church is not here during the tribulation. It's a different dispensation. It's a different purpose. The tribulation isn't designed to purify the church and prepare it for heaven. Christ has already done that for us, His righteousness is given to us. But the tribulation is given to humble Israel to prepare them for Messiah and they will see Him whom they've pierced and they will repent and be restored during that time.

There will be the greatest time of Jewish evangelism in all history during that period of the tribulation, that last 7-year period. So it's called the time of Jacob's trouble, Jeremiah 30:7. It's also called the Day of the Lord, Isaiah 13:9 and 6. It's also called the Day of Wrath, the Day of Desolation, Day of Darkness, the Day of Thick Darkness, Zephaniah 1:15.

Now, I want you to turn to 2 Thessalonians 2:1. This is one of the most graphic descriptions of the antichrist given in the Bible along with Revelation 13. Now, I want you to look at it with me. Chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians. "Now, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, by our gathering together unto Him that you be not soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit nor by word, nor by letter as from us that the Day of Christ or literally the Day of the Lord is at hand."

So he's saying, "Don't be freaking out thinking you're in the tribulation." This is a paraphrase. I'm trying to move a little faster because I just saw what time it was. Don't be freaking out thinking that you're in the tribulation. This is so bizarre to me because we have Christians all the time in a panic thinking we're in the tribulation. During the whole COVID thing, people were freaking out, "We're in the tribulation." No, we're not. We're not appointed to wrath.

So he gives them some reasons why they shouldn't be freaking out thinking the Day of the Lord is in hand. Notice Verse 3, "Let no man deceive you by any means for that day." What day? The Day of the Lord, the tribulation. "Shall not come except there come a falling away first. And then, that man of sin," that's the antichrist, "be revealed." He's called the son of perdition. So there has to be an apostasy, falling away, and then the revelation of the antichrist being revealed.

"Who," referring to him, Verse 4, "opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshiped so that he ask God sitting in the temple of God shows himself that he is God." Now, this parallels Revelation 13 when the antichrist comes to power, sets up an image of himself in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, commands everyone to worship him and says, "You can't buy or sell unless you get a mark on your right hand or your forehead," and the number of the man is 666, right?

So all this electric funds transfer, this digital age, this cryptocurrency issue that's going on right now, it's quite interesting. The government's going to come in and regulate it more strictly and we're going to find that sooner or later there's going to be a world of cashless society and you're going to have a mark on your right hand or forehead. You can't buy or sell without that mark. So this is describing this antichrist that comes after the church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air so he is worshiped so that he is god sitting in the Temple of God which is rebuilt in the tribulation. Showing himself that he is god. "Remember you not that when I was with you, I told you these things and now you know what is holding him back, that he," that is the antichrist, "might be revealed in his time."

So there's something holding back the coming of antichrist. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work. Only he who now hinders will hinder until he be taken out of the way. And then, shall that wicked be revealed," Verse 8, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders. With all deceivableness of unrighteousness and them that perish because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved. For this cause, god shall send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie that they might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

And notice the contrast in Verse 13, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord." So there's a contrast between those who will be damned, those who will be deceived, those who will be here during the tribulation, and those who are believers who know the truth and will not be deceived by him.

So you could go into all these verses and see and understand a lot about this man of sin who's called the antichrist who comes to power through ten revived European nations which is a revived Roman Empire. And we see that in Daniel and the ten toes, Daniel 2 and Daniel 9, the different kingdoms that are revived by the Roman Empire in the rise of this man of sin we call the antichrist.

But the scripture that really describes him is 2 Thess 2:1-12. "So there'll be the emergence of a ten nation confederacy revived Roman Empire." Daniel 2, the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw had ten toes of iron and clay when the second coming took place. Revelation 13 describes it as well. The antichrist comes to power, Daniel 7:8 and then the covenant of peace with Israel, Daniel 9:27 which is that 70th week or last 7-year period and the church is described as being on earth in the tribulation during Revelation 6 through 18.

Here's number four, and again, this is a massive subject. I'm going to have to... I'm just going to burn through this. The second coming takes place. So half the rapture at the end of the church age. Church age is described by the way in Matthew 13 in the kingdom parables. And then, the tribulation period, the antichrist comes on the scene, takes over the world, institutes the mark of the beast. First three and a half years are a time of peace, second three and a half years, a time of God's wrath poured out upon the earth.

And then at the end of the tribulation, Christ comes in a second coming. I believe this is the spot where we have in Revelation 19, we have the second coming of Jesus Christ. At the end of the tribulation, during the battle of Armageddon, now, it's not on the chart, but at the end of the tribulation, at the time of the second coming, there will be the battle of Armageddon. All the armies of the world gathered together to fight against the antichrist. And then, again, turn their fighting against Jesus Christ.

Now, this theme of the second coming is a major theme both in the Old Testament and the New and it will be the greatest event in all human history, the greatest revelation, unveiling of God to man. I know that's a pretty bold statement for me to make. I could be wrong but I don't think so. The second coming of Jesus Christ is going to be the grand finale. It's going to be the biggie.

When He came the first time He came, a little baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying humbly in a manger. When He comes back the second time, He's coming back as the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. Every eye sees him. His eyes like a flame of fire. His hair as white as wool. Out of his mouth is sharp, two-edged sword speaking of his judgment coming. His feet like polished brass. And marvelous, marvelous descriptions we have in the Bible.

Now, listen to me carefully, the doctrine of the second coming, not the rapture but second coming, is all through the Old Testament and the New. It's all through the Old and the New. Some say, and I haven't taken up the challenge to check it out, that 1 out of every 25 verses in the New Testament refers to the second coming. It's all through the Old Testament as well. So it's a major theme.

We pray in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come," this is what happens when Christ returns. Now, some facts about the second coming. It was the first prophecy uttered by man Jude 14 and 15. He says, "The Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied of these saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all.'" But unlike the rapture, it's found both in the Old and the New Testament. Number three, it happens immediately after the tribulation. Matthew 24:29 and 30, Jesus said, "Immediately after the

tribulation of those days, sun shall be dark and the moon shall not give her light. The stars will fall from heaven and they shall see the son of man coming in power and great glory." Jesus said, "As the lightning that shines from the east to the west so shall the coming of the son of man be," so He spoke about this.

And then fourthly, it happens before the millennium. Now, I want you to turn to Revelation 19 and we're getting to the home stretch so hang on. Revelation 19, and here's the great classic reference in Revelation to the second coming. John says, "I saw heaven open," Verse 11, Revelation 19:11, "and behold a white horse and he that sat on him was called faithful and true and a righteousness he doth judge and make war." This is the second coming of Jesus Christ. "His eyes were as a flame of fire. His head was many crowns." These are diadems, kingly crowns. "He had a name written that no man knew but he, himself. He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood. His name is called The Word of God." Put that along John 1:1 "The armies that were with him in heaven followed upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." I believe that's the church you and I coming back with him.

"And out of his mouth went a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron. And he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. He hath on his vesture and on his thigh name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords." That is a reference to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Now, when Jesus ascended on Mount Olivet in Acts 1 says, "When they had spoken these things, they beheld as He was taken up and the cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly to heaven and He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel," which also said, "You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing into heaven?" Listen to His words. The same Jesus which you've seen taken up into heaven shall come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.

You say, "Well John, you just went from Revelation 19, the second coming at the end of the tribulation, back to Acts 1 to the ascension." Yes, I did because I want to give you rapid fire. I want to give you four facts about the second coming based on Acts 1. It will be visible. They saw Him taken up. It will be glorious, a cloud received Him out of their sight. It will be personal. The same Jesus that you saw go will come back and fourthly, it will be literal in like manner.

I love that. So he have these truths about the second coming found in Acts 1 when Christ ascended back into heaven. It will be visible, glorious, personal, and literal. There are so many people today that don't even believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ. They don't believe in a visible, literal, glorious coming again of Christ. It will be the greatest appearing of God to man ever in history. Now, at His first advent, we just celebrated Christmas, He was God and flesh. The Godhead see. Hail the incarnate deity.

But in the second coming, He will come back in power, majesty, and glory and people will see Him for who He is. The minute the world sees Him coming back, they're not going to say, "Well, who's that? Who does He think He is?" They're going to melt like wax. It's going to be powerful

and glorious. As Jesus himself said, "As the lightning comes out of the east and shines to the west, so shall the coming of the son of man be." So that's the second coming.

Now, number five, the millennial kingdom and I'm going to have to go even faster. We just celebrated Christmas, right? Say yes.

Yes.

And we sang joy to the world the Lord has come? Get a chance. Look the song up. I was going to quote it all to you but I won't. It's all about the second coming. It's not a Christmas song. We sing it at Christmas and it's one of our favorites but Isaac Watts wrote that song about the second coming of Jesus Christ. And every word in that song, when you read it, you'll see that it's a reference to this glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ as He comes back in the second coming.

Number one, he'll destroy the antichrist and the false prophet and I'm just going to give you the references, Revelation 19:17-21. Number two, he will bind Satan for 1000 years, Revelation 20:1-3. I don't know about you, but that sounds pretty good to me. Number three, he will resurrect tribulation saints, Revelation 20:4-6. Number four, at the end of the thousand years, he will loose Satan and cast him into hell as he comes out to tempt people who are there during the millennium and they will be given opportunity to choose to follow Christ. Then, he will be thrown into the lake of fire. And number five, he will sit on the great white throne at the end of the millennium and he will judge all the unsaved wicked, Revelation 20:11-15.

Now, some of the characteristics of this millennial kingdom, Jesus will sit as king on the throne of David Israel will be restored, possess the land of God that he promised in Romans 11, the restoration of the Jews. And then thirdly, Jesus will receive his crown of David and sit upon the throne and He will reverse the curse.

Isaiah 11:6 and 7, "The wolf will dwell with the lamb. The leopard shall be laid down with the young goat and the calves and the lions and the fattened calf together. It talks about the reversing of the curse and all of nature living in harmony and the church shall reign with Christ for 1000 years. Revelation 20:6, "There'll be peace on earth, justice, and righteousness."

And here's the last category. You'll see it in the chart on the screen and this is it, number six. The eternal state at the end of the thousand years, the new heaven and the new Earth, running from Revelation 21 to Revelation 22:5. Now, I just want to read a couple verses as quick as I can because they're so good we can't miss them.

Revelation 21, "And I saw new heaven and the new earth and the first earth were passed away. There was no more sea. I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people. And God Himself shall be with them and be their God.' And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death nor sorrow, nor any more pain for the

former things are passed away. And as He sat upon the throne, 'Behold,' he said, 'I make all things new.' He said unto me, 'Write for the words are true and faithful.' He said unto me, 'It is done. I'm alpha, omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things. I will be his God and he should be my son.

"But to the fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death." Now, jump down with me to Chapter 22. "So show me a pure water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of the river on either side, there was the tree of life which bear 12 manner of fruits and yielded a fruit every month. The leaves were for the tree, for the healing of nations. There should be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. His servants shall serve him. They shall see His face," Verse 4, "and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there should be no night there, no need of the candle, neither light of the sun for the Lord God giveth them light."

Now, I had every intention of reading a whole lot of other verses. I've gone unbelievably long.

Amen.

Somebody said amen. My voice is gone. But guess what? There's coming a new heaven and a new earth. Amen. So as we say goodbye to the old year and we say hello to the new year, the future's bright. No more tears, no more crying, no more sorrow, no more pain, no more sin, no more suffering. No more sin, no more death, no more Satan. All those former things are passed away. That's the blessed hope of the believer, looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.