

Lesson 5: Questions About the End Times

- What does the Bible say (and NOT say) about the End Times?
 - We need to ask first, the end of what?
 - Biblical prophecies are directed to many ends -- the end of the Judean kingdom, the end of the Israelite kingdom, the end of the Jewish temple, the end of Rome, the end of the world.
 - And the Bible uses similar language to describe each. For example, the Bible may say that the stars will fall and the sun will no longer give its light to provide a vivid description of an end, but not necessarily the end of the world.
 - Such language is often called Apocalyptic language, where Apocalyptic is from a Greek word meaning to uncover, disclose, or reveal. It is the same Greek word from which we get the title of the last book in the Bible, Revelation.
 - The starting point to understanding Biblical prophecy is to understand that the Bible describes many so-called Apocalyptic events, where by Apocalyptic event we mean an event that is revealed in the Bible prior to its occurrence and that is generally described with vivid, figurative language.
- Key Apocalyptic Events
 - Assyrian Captivity of the Northern Tribes
 - Babylonian Captivity of the Southern Tribes
 - The Three Returns from Babylonian Captivity
 - Return Number 1: 539 BC
 - Return Number 2: 458 BC
 - Return Number 3: 445 BC
 - The Judgment of Israel's and Judah's Enemies
 - Babylon
 - Assyria

- Egypt
- Tyre & Sidon

- Desecration of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes between the testaments
- The Messiah - His birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and reign.
- The Establishment of the Church
- The Judgment of Jerusalem
 - Matthew 24 (and the parallel passages in Mark 13 and Luke 21) begin with Jesus telling the apostles that someday not one stone would be left on another in the temple. They, of course, were astonished and thought such a thing could only occur at the end of the world, so they ask when that great event will happen.
 - Jesus answers both questions. In Matthew 1:1-34, he tells them how to know when the temple was about to be destroyed, and that event happened in AD 70. In the verses following 34 he tells them that there will be no such signs of the end of the world.

- The Judgment of Rome and the Victory of the Church
 - All agree that Revelation speaks about a powerful enemy of God's people, but which enemy? Some say Jerusalem, some say the Vatican, some say Communism, some say Islam. What does the Bible say?
 - In Revelation 17 we see a blood thirsty harlot sitting upon seven hills who is drunk with the blood of the saints.
 - A coin from the time of Vespasian has been found that pictures Rome as a woman sitting upon the seven hills that surrounded the city.
 - If you had lived in the first century and had that coin in your pocket, who would you think that John had in mind? Jerusalem or Rome? Read Revelation 17 and honestly ask yourself that question.

- The Return of Christ and the Judgment of the World
 - Is the world going to end? What will happen when it does?
 - 2 Peter 3:5-13 tells us that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."
 - 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 tells us that "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ... the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 tells us that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
 - When is the world going to end?
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 tells us that "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."
 - Matthew 24:36-44 tells us that "of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" and that "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."
 - Mark 13:32-37 tells us that "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."
 - So will there be signs of the end?
 - No. There will not. If there were signs, then how could Jesus says that the day will come in such an hour as ye think not? If there were signs of the last day, then how could that day come as a thief in the night?

- But what about the signs of the end described in the Bible? War and rumors of wars? Earthquakes? Etc.? They are not signs of the end of the world. Why? Because Jesus has told us plainly there will be no such signs.
 - The particular signs I just mentioned are from Matthew 24, and verse 34 tells us very plainly that they would be signs of something that happened in the first century. And a little study tells us that the event in question was the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70.
 - And yet we hear so much about the signs of the end. Why?
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- Why is there so much confusion about the End Times?
 - There are many reasons, but here are some of the main reasons.
 - People lift verses out of context and view them as descriptions of events they were never intended to describe.
 - People ignore the time-frames of the prophecies given in the Bible.
 - People fail to understand how the Bible uses vivid, figurative language to describe end events.
 - People fail to understand that many end events are described in the Bible, most of which have already come to pass.
 - Does it really matter what we believe on this subject? Yes, and there are both political and theological reason why it matters.
 - The first time I taught a class on Revelation, we were at war with Iraq (the first war) —the site of ancient Babylon. The locusts were then smart bombs and Sadam Hussein was the antichrist.
 - The second time I taught it was in the aftermath of a war with Waco. David Koresh's crazy ideas about the seven seals in Revelation were broadcast by the national media, who seemed to particularly enjoy their opportunity to heap ridicule on the Bible.

- Hal Lindsey has stated that “the world must end within one generation from the birth of the State of Israel” and many believe him. (The State of Israel was officially formed on May 14, 1948.)
- Do misconceptions in this area make any difference?
 - Yes. In fact, misconceptions about the Jews and the end of the world may have effected political decisions.
 - Ronald Reagan said “I sometimes believe we’re heading very fast for Armageddon” and told People magazine in 1983 that “theologians have been studying the ancient prophecies—what would portend the coming of Armageddon—and have said that never, in the time between the prophecies up until now, has there ever been a time in which so many of the prophecies are coming together. There have been times in the past when people thought the end of the world was coming, but never anything like this.”
 - Will a president one day mistakenly see himself as an instrument of God destined to make end time prophecies come true?
- Does it make any difference what we believe about premillennialism? Is it all just a matter of opinion? Should we make an issue out of it?
- Here is one opinion. Listen to what Professor Carroll Osburn of Abilene Christian University has to say on pages 90 and 91 of his book *The Peaceable Kingdom*:
 - There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who believe that Christ is the Son of God, but who differ on ... premillennialism, ... congregational organization, or ... whether baptism is “for” or “because of” the remission of sins.
- Thus, according to Professor Osburn, premillennialism (and the necessity of baptism, for that matter) is just a side issue that is really of little importance.
- Is premillennialism really just a side issue that doesn’t really make that much difference?
- To answer that question, let’s turn to John Walvoord, who is perhaps the leading proponent of premillennialism. Here is what he has to say about its importance:

- If premillennialism is only a dispute about what will happen in a future age which is quite removed from present issues, that is one thing. If, however, premillennialism is a system of interpretation which involves the meaning and significance of the entire Bible, defines the meaning and course of the present age, determines the present purpose of God, and gives both material and method to theology, that is something else. It is the growing realization that premillennialism is more than a dispute about Revelation 20. It is not too much to say that millennialism is a determining factor in Biblical interpretation of comparable importance to the doctrines of verbal inspiration, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection.
- Thus, according to Walvoord, premillennialism is a “determining factor in Biblical interpretation.” And if you read their commentaries, you soon find out that this in no exaggeration. They manage to work it in practically everywhere, even though the ‘1000 year’ figure they rely on occurs only in Revelation 20.
- With all due respect to Professor Osburn (which isn't much), it does make a difference what we believe about premillennialism. It is not a side issue, it is a main issue. Why?
- The premillennialist doctrine has consequences that run counter to the very heart of the gospel.
 - Premillennialists teach that one day the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system will be restored. In this way, they belittle the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice and his eternal priesthood.
 - They teach that Jesus is not presently ruling over Israel – that he is not now king of kings and lord of lords. Thus, they belittle his claim to have all authority in Heaven and Earth.
 - They teach that Jesus’ mission on earth was failure, and that the church (his body) was a result of that failure. Thus, they belittle the plan of God and they belittle the importance of his church. They teach that our Lord and Savior was a failure who caused God to come up with a Plan B at the last minute.
- It makes a great deal of difference what we believe about this important issue. It strikes to the very core of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Premillennialism is false and we must continue to proclaim that.

- By the way, we owe a great debt to Foy E. Wallace for keeping it out of the Lord's church. Foy Wallace (then the editor of the Gospel Advocate) debated Charles Neal (minister of the Main Street Church of Christ in Winchester, Kentucky) in 1933 about the 1000 year reign. He was largely responsible for keeping that false doctrine from infiltrating the church. (What would the situation be like today if he had just ignored the problem? I hate to think. That sort of problem rarely goes away by itself.)

- These Apocalyptic events are often described in figurative language that as we mentioned has come to be known as Apocalyptic language. Is it possible to understand Apocalyptic language in the Bible?
 - a Apocalyptic language is composed of symbols that are often lurid in color, violent in tone, and easily remembered. They strike the imagination and grab hold of the mind.
 - Here is what one commentator has said about the book of Revelation: Beautiful beyond description is the last book of the Bible. Beautiful in form, in symbolism, in purpose, and in meaning. Where in Scripture do we find a more vivid and picturesque portrayal of the Christ, Faithful and True, going forth unto victory, seated upon a white horse, arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood, followed by the armies of heaven?

 - Such language is found in Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Isaiah, and even in the gospels and epistles.

 - What is the purpose of apocalyptic language?
 - It denotes conflict and victory.

 - It is used when God judges and smites an oppressor and vindicates his people.

 - It is used to describe times of crisis and judgment.

 - It is used to denote times when something important comes to an end and something else takes its place.

 - Why does God use apocalyptic language?

- Some think that the language is used to hide the true meaning from hostile authorities and thus shield God's people from retaliation.
- This makes more sense with the book of Revelation than it does with the book of Daniel. Who are the hostile authorities in Daniel? The Jews in Babylon were not being persecuted. Further, writing the message in Hebrew would no doubt have been sufficient to hide its meaning from the Chaldeans and the Persians.
- I think the reason God uses such language is because of its emotional impact.
 - Apocalyptic books are oil paintings from God. Think about the swirling, colorful imagery in a Van Gogh painting, for example.
 - The vivid and violent language conveys emotional images while also conveying historical facts – just as a painting can convey emotions and facts.
- Apocalyptic language is dramatic.
 - Some today think we need to add drama to the gospel by presenting dramatic plays in the worship service or by adding dramatic music to cassettes of the scriptures. The Bible is already dramatic! It does not need any help from us.
 - Revelation, for example, contains images that outdo much of what we find in the movies:
 - Blood and horror? In Revelation 14:20 we read of a river of blood 200 miles long that comes up to a horse's bridle.
 - Fierce creatures? Seven headed beasts and dragons.
 - Success of an underdog? The church versus the greatest political and military power the world had ever known.
 - Happy ending? The church triumphant.
- How do we interpret apocalyptic language?
 - We need to pay particular attention to numbers and periods of time. They often have symbolic meanings that must be deduced from the evidence.

- 3 is the number of God.
- 12 is the number of God's people.
- 10 is the number of completeness.
- 7 is the number of perfection.
- 8 is the number of renewal.
- These numbers are often combined to create additional symbols. 144,000 for example is 12 times 12 times 10 to the 3rd power, and is used to denote ALL of God's people.
- Another combination gives us 666 -- what is 666?
 - We need to be careful with symbolic numbers, because numbers can be made to symbolize anything if one is willing to work hard enough.
 - For example, let A = 100, B = 101, C = 102, etc. and note that 107 (H) + 108 (I) + 119 (T) + 111 (L) + 104 (E) + 117 (R) = 666!
- Revelation 13:18 tells us that 666 is the number of the beast, a human number. What does that mean?
- The number 7 meant perfection and completeness.
- The number 6 depicted something that had fallen hopelessly short of perfection.
- Man was created on the sixth day and he fell from perfection.
- The number 3 is the number of divinity (the Godhead are three.)
- Thus three sixes depicts something which has fallen hopelessly short of divine perfection.
- Does that accurately describe this beast? Yes! This beast represents the false perverted religious side of Rome. God is 777! Rome is 666!

- We must look at the entire Bible to interpret apocalyptic language, and in particular we must study the Old Testament to understand such language in the New Testament.
 - Revelation has more Old Testament references than any other New Testament book. Out of 404 verses, there are 278 Old Testament allusions.
 - Daniel and Revelation are closely related in some ways, and they must be studied together.
 - One key to choosing a commentary on Revelation: check how many times the commentator refers to the Old Testament. (Not foolproof, but a good indicator.)
- The usual approach to scripture is to understand a passage literally unless we are forced to do otherwise.
 - For example, Jesus told us to cut off our right hand if it offends us. Was this a literal command or should we interpret it figuratively?
 - This is reversed for apocalyptic language – it should be understood figuratively unless we are forced to do otherwise.
- The following additional principles are helpful in interpreting apocalyptic language.
 - Similarity of language does not prove identity of subjects. (There are many judgments in the Bible, but the same language is used to describe each – Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Edom, Jerusalem, Rome, the world.)
 - Dissimilarity of language does not prove distinctness of subjects.
 - Easy to understand scriptures should be used to understand harder passages.
- But shouldn't we just take all scripture literally?
 - No, and Daniel 7 shows us why. Daniel relays a vision in the first part of this chapter and then finds out what it means in the second part of the

chapter. The same events are described figuratively and then literally in this one chapter.

- Of course, when we say that we do not take all scripture literally we do not mean that we do not believe that all scripture is true. We know that God's word is absolutely true and contains no falsehoods or inaccuracies – historical, scientific, or otherwise.
- The question is not whether a particular passage is true, but is instead whether God is using literal language or figurative language to convey the truth to us, and it is almost always very easy to make that determination.
- Perhaps Deuteronomy 29:29 applies to apocalyptic language.
 - “The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”
 - Yet, the word apokalupsis in Greek means unveiled, uncovered, or revealed! Apocalyptic books do not contain secret things, they contain revealed things.
 - The Bible is meant to be understood – and if we don't understand it, we shouldn't blame our inability on God. He wants us to understand his word.
 - Apocalyptic language is meant to convey comfort to those suffering captivity or persecution. What would it say about God if he offered us comfort but worded it in such a way that we could never receive that comfort? He wants us to understand his word.
- A crucial element in any Biblical prophecy is the timeframe of the prophecy.
 - God generally does not simply tell us what will happen; He also tells us when it will happen.

- These so-called time-frame verses are crucial in properly interpreting a Biblical prophecy, and if we ignore them we should not be surprised when we reach the wrong interpretation.
- Let's look at two examples:
 - Matthew 24
 - In Matthew 24:29–30 Jesus speaks of a time when: “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.”
 - That sounds like the end of the world, doesn't it. But if we keep reading, we find something interesting in verse 34: “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”
 - Verse 34 provides a time frame—the most important feature of any prophecy. Whatever the coming was in verses 29–30, it must have happened in the first century!
 - The language in Matthew 24 is the language of judgment. It is used throughout the Old Testament to describe judgments against Egypt, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, etc. Who was judged by God in the first century? Jerusalem. Jesus came in judgment against them in A.D. 70. (This is not the judgment with which Revelation is concerned.)
 - But wait, you say. My Bible has a footnote that says that the word generation in verse 34 can mean race. The footnotes tell you what the translators wish that the verse said so that it would fit better with their theology. The word for generation in verse 34 is the same word that is used in Matthew 1:17 to describe the generations from Abraham to Christ (genea). There is a Greek word for race and we find it in 1 Peter 2:9 where the church is called a chosen race (ghenos). That is not the word used in Matthew 24:34. (This is a classic example of how modern versions are driven by the theologies of their translators.)
 - The phrase “second coming” does not occur in the Bible. (Hebrews 9:28 is close— “Christ shall appear a second time.”) Perhaps instead of second

coming we should say “final coming” or “second literal coming” to be more precise. Implying that Christ will only come twice causes difficulties with passages such as Matthew 24. (Two of the comings are literal; the others are figurative.)

- Revelation
 - Why was Revelation written? The book of Revelation was written to provide comfort and encouragement to the people of God. The book was written to convince the church that God had not abandoned them.
 - The book itself answers this question:
 - Revelation 6:10 they cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?”
 - The theme of the book is found in Chapter 17:
 - Revelation 17:14 they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”
 - John says that all of the events dealt with in the book would occur shortly after the book was written. See Revelation 1:1; 1:3; 22:6; and 22:10. Also, see Revelation 10:6 where the time frame is alluded to indirectly. John gives us a time frame in five separate passages -- 2 at the beginning, 1 in the middle, and 2 at the end!
 - Revelation 1:1
 - The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:
 - Revelation 1:3
 - Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

- Revelation 22:6
 - And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

- Revelation 22:10
 - And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

- Revelation 10:5-6
 - And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, 6 And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer

- The meaning of these passages would not be disputed in any other context. In Revelation, however, the passages conflict with men's interpretation of the book and instead of changing their interpretation many change the clear meaning of these important verses.

- Daniel received a vision in 550 B.C. (described in Daniel 8) that was fulfilled 400 years later in 165 B.C. when the sanctuary was restored after the desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. In Daniel 8:26, Daniel was told to shut up the vision because its fulfillment was a long way off. In Revelation 22:10 John is told just the opposite— Don't seal up the vision because the time for its fulfillment is at hand.

- What about 2 Peter 3:8 where we see that to God 1000 years appears as 1 day? Time does not mean the same thing to God as it means to man yet in Revelation 1:1, 3 God is not talking to himself— God is talking to man. Which time frame do you think he would use? In Daniel 8 he said that 400 years were "many days."

- Revelation was written to provide comfort to first century saints suffering fierce persecution at the hands of the Romans. The Holy Spirit inspired

John to write 5 times that the prophecies in the book would shortly come to pass. What should that tell us about any theory that places the fulfillment 2000 years (and counting) into the future?

- In addition to ignoring the time frame, such an approach makes the book to be of little significance to its initial readers. Further, it quickly becomes absurd in its attempt to match historical details to the visions in the book. As in the popular book by Nostradamus, something in Revelation can be found to fit almost any historical fact if the context and time frame are ignored.

- Question #1: What are the 70 weeks in Daniel 9?
 - Daniel 9:24-27 is one of the most commented upon sections in the entire Bible.
 - The Hebrew usually translated "70 weeks" is literally "seventy sevens" which denotes 70 weeks.
 - What is the setting? Daniel had just been reading about a 70 year decree upon the Jews found in Jeremiah. God uses that decree as an opportunity to tell Daniel about another decree regarding the Jews – a decree of seventy sevens, a decree of 70 weeks.
 - What do the 70 weeks denote?
 - Before we examine the various theories, we need to look at the history of the various returns of God's people from Babylon.
 - The Three Returns from Babylonian Captivity
 - Return Number 1: 539 BC
 - In 539 BC Cyrus gave a decree that the Jews should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. (Some scholars think the decree was given in 538 BC. We will use the 539 date.)
 - This decree can be found in Ezra 1:2–4 and 2 Chronicles 36:23.
 - The leaders of this return were Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, and Jeshua.

- After their return, work on the temple was begun, sacrifices were made, and the Feast of the Tabernacles was celebrated.
- The Samaritans had prospered during the Jewish deportation, and they were not happy when the exiles returned. Their guerrilla tactics stopped work on the temple for 19 years until 520 BC.
- The temple was completed in 516 BC.

- Return Number 2: 458 BC
 - Ezra, a descendent of a High Priest killed by Nebuchadnezzar, was concerned about the spiritual condition of the Palestinian Jews.
 - There was great disparity between the rich and the poor.
 - Most of the exiles had been men, so mixed marriages with non-Jews had become very common. Many of the children from these marriages did not even speak Hebrew.
 - The Jewish law had been neglected. Prophets from this period speak of murder, adultery, perjury, and injustice. Ezra led 1500 men with their families to Jerusalem.
 - He read the law to the people, who were very moved when they realized how far they had strayed from the law of God.
 - He commanded that the mixed marriages be dissolved, that the non-Jewish wives be sent back to their own lands, and that the walls be rebuilt.
 - Some have suggested that the commands to send the women out of the city and to rebuild the city walls may have had some relation!
 - The Samaritans again caused trouble. They reported the treasonous rebuilding of the wall to Persia and they then proceeded to tear down the wall.

- Return Number 3: 445 BC

- Nehemiah, a cup bearer in the court of Artaxerxes, asked the king to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
 - The king agreed, perhaps because he wanted a fort close to the Egyptian border.
 - The Samaritans ridiculed their efforts and spread rumors that Nehemiah planned an insurrection and wanted to be king himself.
 - The wall was rebuilt in 52 days.
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- The Millennial Chronological Viewpoint
 - The starting point for this view is the decree given 445 BC by Artaxerxes to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. (That is, the starting point is the third return.) This is the decree found in Nehemiah 2.
 - Verse 25 tells us that, from this point, it will be 69 weeks (7 + 62) until the Messiah comes.
 - Using the so-called 'universal prophetic Day equals a Year' principle (more on this later...) they add 69 weeks (69 x 7 or 483 years) to this starting point.
 - Here is where things really get complicated. If we add 483 years to 445 BC we arrive at the year AD 39, which misses Jesus' ministry and death by a wide margin. (Keep in mind when you add years to a BC date to obtain an AD date that there is no year 0. For example, 6 BC + 12 years is 7 AD.)
 - The solution? Instead of counting 483 solar years (containing 365 days each), they count ahead 483 lunar years (containing 360 days each) to reach the year AD 32, which they claim is the year that Jesus was crucified.
 - After the 69 weeks (483 lunar years), the prophetic clock stopped and has not ticked once in the intervening 2000 years. Instead, we have been living in a prophetic gap period that they call the church age.
 - The last of Daniel's 70 weeks will occur when the Rapture begins. The final 3.5 years of these 7 years will be the Great Tribulation when the Antichrist will reign on earth. Following these 7 years, Jesus will return to reign for 1000 years on Earth.

- Arguments Against the Millennial Chronological Viewpoint
 - There is no proof that the so-called 'Day Equals a Year' principle is in operation here.
 - Although this principle is sometimes claimed to be some sort of 'Universal Prophetic Principle,' it is in fact only used (with certainty) twice in the Bible.
 - Numbers 14:34 According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.'
 - Ezekiel 4:6 And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah; forty days I assign you, a day for each year.
 - How do we know the principle is in operation in these two passages? God tells us each time.
 - Does that mean God couldn't use it elsewhere without telling us? No, but it does cast doubt on the idea that he would.
 - But could it be a universal principle? No. There are many cases where it is clearly not in use. The creation account leaps to mind. Was the creation week a 7 year period? I know of no one who believes that it was. (Notice that the first of the above two passages occurs in the Books of Moses.)
 - Conclusion: There is no universal principle of Biblical interpretation that requires us to view days as years. To take that view here is just an assumption since God does not tell us here (as He does elsewhere) that the principle is in effect. (Our conclusion at this point is not that this principle is not used in Daniel. Our claim at this point is simply that the principle is hardly universal.)
- Beginning with the 445 BC decree from Nehemiah is just an assumption.
 - The prophecy clearly has a starting point, but what is it?
 - Verse 25 tells us that the starting point was the time when the word went out to restore and build Jerusalem. When was that?

- If it were not for the efforts to make a chronology fit this prophecy, there would never have been any question as to the starting point: it is the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC.
- Let's consider the facts:
 - God had prophesied that Cyrus would rebuild the city. Some deny that he did, but listen to Isaiah:
 - Isaiah 44:28 who says of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfil all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built, and of the temple, `Your foundation shall be laid.'"
 - Isaiah 45:13 I have aroused him in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward," says the Lord of hosts.
- Cyrus gave a decree relating to Jerusalem in 539 BC.
- Daniel received this vision around 539 BC.
- Put yourself in Daniel's place. Which decree would you have thought God was speaking about? The only decree you knew of! The decree that Cyrus had just given must have been the one that God was referring to.
- Objection: Premillennialists say that the only decree ever given to rebuild the city was issued in 445. (This is the one found in Nehemiah.) But is that what God said? No! Look at Isaiah 44 and Isaiah 45 again. God said that Cyrus would issue the decree to rebuild the city.
- Conclusion: The context virtually demands that we take the starting point of this prophecy to be the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC. Take this as the starting point , and you will never reach the cross in 69 weeks (483 years).
- The use of lunar years to reach their target date is baseless.
 - Going back to the lunar calendar to make the numbers work out is (pardon the pun) sheer lunacy.

- No country (ancient or otherwise) has ever used lunar years to count out long periods of time without including some method of intercalation [the insertion of days into the calendar] to reconcile the lunar and solar years.
- At the time of Daniel, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Sumerians, Persians, and Egyptians all had methods in place for reconciling lunar and solar calendars.
- They miss the date of the cross – perhaps by as much as several years.
- This inaccuracy is particularly troubling based upon their own comments regarding the accuracy of what they call the Divine Chronology.
- Here is what one leading proponent had to say:
 - And accuracy as absolute as the nature of the case permits is no more than men are here entitled to demand. There can be no loose reckoning in a Divine chronology; and if God had designed to mark on human calendars the fulfillment of His purposes as foretold in prophecy, the strictest scrutiny shall fail to detect miscalculation or mistake.
- I agree that the strictness scrutiny will not detect an error on God's part. However, even a casual scrutiny is enough to leave the premillennialists' theory looking like a piece of Swiss cheese.
- The Non-Millennial Chronological Viewpoint
 - This view, which is very popular in the church, begins with the decree of 458 BC when Artaxerxes gave Ezra approval to rebuild the city. (This decree is found in Ezra 7.)
 - Again, verse 25 tells us that 69 weeks will elapse before the Messiah comes. Applying the 'Day Equals a Year' principle to the 69 weeks gives us 483 years, as before.
 - Taking the starting point of 458 BC and adding 483 (solar) years, we arrive at the year AD 26, which is about the year that Jesus was baptized (the coming of an Anointed One).

- Verse 27 tells us that in the middle of the 70th week, the sacrifices will cease. This, they claim, occurred when Jesus died on the cross and ushered in the new Christian age.
- Again, this seems to fit chronologically since Jesus' earthly ministry lasted about 3.5 years.
- Most in the church rightly reject the millennial approach, but this non-millennial approach is very popular. Let's consider a few arguments against the non-millennial chronological viewpoint.
- Arguments Against the Non-Millennial Chronological Viewpoint
 - Again, there is no proof that the 'Day Equal a Year' principle is in operation here. There are only two places in scripture where we know it is used, and the reason we know is because each time God explicitly told us it was being used. (See our earlier comments.)
 - Verse 25 requires that 7 weeks (49 years) elapse from the decree in 458 BC until the city is rebuilt. That is, verse 25 under this interpretation would have the city rebuilt in 409 BC. But, Nehemiah suggests that the city was rebuilt in 444 BC during the reign on Artaxerxes.
 - There is no particular reason to begin with the decree in 458 that is found in Ezra 7, except that it seems to work. As we mentioned earlier, there is much more reason to believe that the prophecy begins with the original decree of Cyrus in 539 BC.
 - Verse 26 clearly suggests that the 70 weeks includes the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus in AD 70. There is no way to make this fit with a 490 year chronology beginning in 458 BC.
- The Non-Chronological Viewpoint
 - The non-chronological approach assumes that the 'seventy sevens' refer to a state of affairs (rather than a period of time) that symbolically describe the events in the prophecy.

- Before we consider what state of affairs is being described here, let's consider what the symbol of 'seventy sevens' might depict.
 - The number 7 as we have suggested depicts perfection. The creation completed in 7 days was perfect. The number 10 denotes completeness, and thus, 7 times 70 could depict the completion of divine activity.
 - The number 7 is used all throughout the book of Revelation to denote the total and complete judgment of Rome and victory of the church.
 - The figure of 'seventy sevens' is also found elsewhere in the Bible.
 - Genesis 4:24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold.
 - Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."
- In each case, the '70 by 7' figure denotes something that is total and complete. (Total and complete vengeance and total and complete forgiveness.)
- What was total and complete about the decree that Daniel received in Chapter 9? The decree in Daniel 9 was God's final decree with respect to the Jews under the Law of Moses.
- This decree represented the completion of his work with regard to the Jews.
- This decree embodied all of the elements that were needed to completely fulfill all of God's promises to the Jews.
- As far as God was concerned, this decree was his final word with regard to the Jewish Age.
- The '70 by 7' symbol was the perfect way to denote this statement of God's completed activity. God is telling Daniel that this is a final decree. One day the Messiah will come and the city will be destroyed.

- Question #2: What are the 10 horns in Daniel 7?
 - Daniel 7:7-8 describe 10 horns that are followed by a little horn. Revelation 13 and 17 describe 7 kings followed by an 8th king.
 - It is my opinion that this little horn and this 8th king represent the same person -- Domitian, the 11th Emperor of the Roman Empire, who reigned from AD 81 to 96. It is also my view that Domitian is the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2:13.
 - Daniel 7:23 “Thus he said: `As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.
 - This is an accurate picture of the Roman empire which grew from a dusty village on the Tiber River in the 8th century BC to control virtually the entire known world.
 - This fourth beast is Rome, which was different than all the other kingdoms in its organization and unity.
 - This kingdom breaks things into pieces, unlike Greece which was itself broken into pieces. The fourth kingdom is not Greece; it is Rome.
 - Although Rome eventually broke apart and fell, it is pictured here in its prime and at the height of its power.
 - Daniel 7:24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. 25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time.
 - Here we again meet the ten horns and the little horn. What do we know about the little horn? Let’s consider the clues:
 - He is of the fourth beast. (verses 7–8 and 24)
 - This would mean that he would be a king of the Roman empire, which is represented by the fourth beast.
 - He is the 11th king. (verses 7–8 and 24)
 - The 11th Roman emperor was Domitian.

- **Aside: Why not take these numbers figuratively?** Domitian is given a figurative number in Revelation, but it is not 11, it is 8. More about this below.
- **He is a braggart. (verses 8 and 20)**
 - Listen to what Suetonius had to say about Domitian in his Lives of the Twelve Caesars: From his youth he was far from being of an affable disposition, but was on the contrary presumptuous and unbridled both in act and word.
- **He claims to be deity. (verse 25)**
 - Verse 25 says that he would think to change the times. In Daniel 2:21 we read that God changes the times. Thus, this little horn claims to be in the place of God.
 - Suetonius wrote: With no less arrogance [Domitian] began as follows in issuing a circular letter in the name of his procurators, 'Our Master and our God bids that this be done.' And so the custom arose henceforth of addressing him in no other way even in writing or in conversation.
 - William Barclay wrote: But with the coming of Domitian there came a complete change. Domitian was a devil. He was the worst of all things – a cold blooded persecutor. With the exception of the mad Caligula, he was the first Emperor to take his divinity seriously, and to demand Caesar worship.
- **He is a persecutor of God's people. (verses 21–22 and 25)**
 - The persecution of the church by Rome was particularly intense during the reigns of Nero and Domitian. In A.D. 66 a fire destroyed much of Rome. A rumor spread that Nero had set the fire to further his plans to rebuild the city. To dispel the rumors Nero blamed the Christians who, as everyone knew, predicted a fiery end of the world. (Historically, most religious persecution starts in this manner. In the middle ages, the Jews were blamed for the plague, and of course in Germany they were blamed for everything.)

- Tacitus describes the situation as follows:
 - “To scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts’ skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his circus, mixing with the crowds in the habit of a charioteer, or mounted on his car. Hence, in spite of a guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man.”
- This fierce persecution was reduced for awhile after the death of Nero but began again with renewed intensity when Domitian came to power.
- Tertullian called him a “limb of the bloody Nero” and that name was associated with him even into the third century.
- Domitian began an empire policy of persecution that did not end until 311 AD under the Edict of Toleration by Galerius and Constantine.
- Eusebius called him “the successor of Nero.”
- He is depicted as the 8th king when 3 others are removed. (verses 8 and 20–24)
 - Why was it important to depict Domitian as number 8 rather than number 11?

- Eight is the number of renewal.
- There are seven days in a week, and then a new week begins on the 8th day.
- Circumcision occurred on the 8th day.
- The Year of Jubilee when everyone got the chance to begin all over again, followed seven sevens of years.
- The leper who had been excluded from the congregation was given a new beginning on the 8th day. (Lev. 14:10)
- In early Christian literature, Christ was referred to as 888.

- How does the number 8 fit with Domitian?
 - Nero was the first to actively persecute Christians.
 - Tertullian wrote: Consult your annals, and there you will find Nero, the first emperor who dyed his sword in Christian blood.
 - Tertullian later referred to Domitian as a “limb of the bloody Nero.”
 - A rumor arose during the reign of Domitian that he was literally Nero, raised from the dead. How else would he be described except by the number 8?

- Who are these three kings that are uprooted?
 - Galba, Otho, and Vitellius all reigned within less than a two year period of time.
 - These are the three that are pushed out of the way so that the actual 11th emperor can be seen as the symbolic 8th emperor.
 - They are ignored in Revelation and are mentioned but are then uprooted in Daniel.

- How was Domitian “different from the former ones” as verse 24 says?
 - As we mentioned, he was the first to make it a policy of the empire that all who refused to worship him be persecuted.
- What does it mean in verse 25 when it says that the saints would be given into his hand for “a time, two times, and half a time”?
 - This phrase denotes 3.5 years, a period of time that is also found in Revelation 11:2, 11:3, 12:6, 12:14, and 13:5.
 - In each case it denotes a state of affairs in which God’s people would be persecuted yet be sustained. It denotes a temporary state of affairs – something that would not last.
 - Why is 3.5 used to denote this? It is a broken seven, and seven denotes perfection – something that will last. Thus, a broken 7 denotes something that is temporary.
- If you agree with our conclusions about this chapter, then you have absolutely undeniable proof of Biblical prophecy. Why? Because we have copies of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls that predate the Roman empire. Even the late date critics are unable to push the book of Daniel past 160 BC. That is why they deny the obvious internal evidence that the fourth empire is Rome.
- Question #3: Who is the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2:3? Who is the anti-Christ?
 - I think that Domitian was the man of lawlessness that Paul talked about in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.
 - 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.
- In 1 Thessalonians, Paul told the people that one day that dead would be raised and Christ would judge the world.

- The Thessalonians thought it was about to happen so they quit working.
- In the second letter, Paul told them that Jesus was not going to come back immediately. How did he know that?
- Inspiration, certainly, but his readers should have known it anyway! Jesus could not return until Daniel's prophecy regarding Rome had been fulfilled — and Daniel had prophesied about Domitian!
- Misconception: the apostles mistakenly thought that Jesus' return was imminent. That idea is absolutely false. Paul, for one, taught just the opposite.
- Question #4: Is the war in Iraq a fulfillment of prophecy?
 - It forms the basis for virtually all of the predictions by the end-is-near prophets.
 - Many feel that the Middle East and especially Israel will play a special role in the end of the world.
 - Recent book titles include: Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East, Iraq in Prophecy, Holy War for the Promised Land, Prophecy 2000: Rushing to Armageddon, The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times, Global Peace and the Rise of the Antichrist, The Coming Russian Invasion of America, The New Millennium by Pat Robertson, Road to Armageddon by Billy Graham, 88 Reasons why the Rapture is in 1988 and its much anticipated (and unexpected!) sequel, The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989, and The Late Great Planet Earth by Hal Lindsey.
 - Hal Lindsey has said that:
 - "Some time in the future there will be a seven year period climaxed by the visible return of Jesus Christ. Most prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled concern events which will develop shortly before the beginning of and during this seven year countdown. The general time of this seven year period couldn't begin until the Jewish people reestablished their nation in their ancient homeland of Palestine."
 - God owes the Jews absolutely nothing that has not already been completely fulfilled by Jesus Christ! All of their promised blessings are provided by Jesus and

are available in his eternal kingdom. Jews are saved just like anyone else is saved. There are not two plans of salvation.