

God's Blueprint of the Ages.

What the Bible teaches about the End Times.

Session One: Opening the Plan.

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BEFORE BEGINNING ANY NEW ENTERPRISE, detailed plans need to be drawn up. The designer, architect, or engineer draws his original plans in detail, and then smaller individual plans are provided for every person who will undertake to carry out the various tasks. In the 19th century a process was developed which produced copies of each plan, or part of the plan, from which each Artisan was able to work. This process produced copies with the lines and instructions reproduced in blue on white or white on blue—which quickly became known as "blueprints".

The plan and purpose of God for the world is revealed in the Scriptures, which provide for us "God's Blueprint of the Ages". The Bible is not a treatise on theology, morality, history, or science. It is a revelation of God, and of his purpose throughout time.

Our main concern in this series of studies is to look at the prophecies concerning the "end times". Before we do this however, it is desirable to look at the overall plan. This will help us to see things in their proper perspective.

THE SCRIPTURES WERE GIVEN TO US "*at sundry times and in divers manners.*" Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, during a period of about 1600 years, extending from about 1492 BC to 100 AD. The Bible consists of 66 separate books which were written by about 40 different authors—by kings such as David and Solomon; by statesmen, like Daniel and Nehemiah; by priests, like Ezra; by Moses, learned in the wisdom of Egypt; by Paul, trained in Jewish law.

Others whom God used to reveal his will and purpose were the Evangelists—Matthew, a tax-collector; Peter, James and John, fishermen who were described as "unlearned and ignorant" men; Luke the physician— as well as the mighty Prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and those whom men we know as the "Minor Prophets".

While the Bible has been compiled like this, it is not a "jumble" of ancient history, myths, legends, religious speculations and superstitions. There is a progress of revelation and doctrine in it. The judges knew more than the Patriarchs, the Prophets than the judges, the Apostles than the Prophets. The Old and New Testaments are not separate and distinct books, the New taking the place of the Old—they are the two halves of a whole. The New is "enfolded" in the Old, and the Old is "unfolded" in the New. One cannot understand Leviticus without Hebrews, or Daniel without Revelation, or the Passover or Isaiah 53 without the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE is of three kinds—*Figurative*, *Symbolic* and *Literal*. Such expressions as “Harden not your heart,” “Let the dead bury their dead,” are *figurative*, and their meaning is made clear by the context.

Symbolic language, like the description of Nebuchadnezzar’s “Colossus”, Daniel’s “Four Wild Beasts”, or the description of Christ given in Revelation where he is seen standing in the midst of the Seven Candlesticks is explained, either in the same chapter, or somewhere else in the Bible.

The rest of the language of the Bible is to be interpreted according to the customary rules of grammar and understanding—that is to say, we should read the Bible as we would read any other book, letting it say what it wants to say, and not allegorizing or spiritualizing its meaning.

There are two things that we must avoid in handling God's Word. They are: the *misinterpretation* of scripture and the *misapplication* of scripture.

ACAREFUL APPRAISAL of the history of God's dealings with man reveals that this falls into distinct periods of time. It began with God and Man in the Garden of Eden, which period closed at the Fall. Then, for a while men were left to their own devices, until the Flood came, after which God made his Covenant with Abraham in which God promised that Abraham's descendants would be the source of God's blessing for the world. Following the Exodus from Egypt God brought in the Covenant of Law enshrouded within which were pictures of Messiah’s life and ministry.

Yet when Christ was born the nation rejected him and a new period was brought into being, the Day of Grace, in which we now live and which is known as the Church Age. This present period will end at the Return of Christ when he takes the throne of David and establishes his Kingdom which will last for 1000 years. This we know as the Millennial Reign of Christ. Ultimately time will end, and, as we re-enter Eternity, Christ will hand the Kingdom over to God.

MUCH OF WHAT WE HAVE TO LEARN about the return of Christ and his kingdom is to be found in the book of the prophet Daniel. This book has been called "*the Apocalypse of the Old Testament*". This is an appropriate title, because the book corresponds to the last book of the New Testament.

In our studies we shall be referring to both of these books as well as to the other prophets.

In Daniel chapter 2 we are told of the vision of King Nebuchadnezzar, in which he saw a mighty statue, a "colossus", which the prophets revealed to be a representation of human government throughout the world over the centuries. It is a representation of what the Bible calls "*the Times of the Gentiles*".

The significance of this will be made clear as we pursue our study. But first of all, we will look at another of Daniel’s predictions.

Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks: and threescore and two weeks, it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and his end shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and for the half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolator.

—Daniel 9:24-27 RV.

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place. "Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

—Daniel 9:24-27 NIV.

THIS PROPHECY IS NOT A VISION NOR A DREAM, but it is a direct message to the prophet from the angel Gabriel. This is the same angel that appeared to Joseph and to Mary, as recorded in the opening chapters of the New Testament. He was sent to the prophet Daniel to give him a clear and undisguised look into the future in answer to a prayer of the prophet. It pinpoints **the exact moment in history** when the Jewish Messiah would present himself to the Jewish people, and it does so over five hundred years before the event took place! It is so plain and detailed that it has always been an acute embarrassment to Jewish commentators.

It occurred, Daniel tells us, "*in the first year of Darius the king, the son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede.*" Therefore, at this time the Medes and the Persians had taken over the former empire of Babylon. By this time Daniel was an old man, almost ninety years of age. He had been reading the prophet Jeremiah. From his study Daniel realized that he was nearing the time of the end of the predicted seventy years of Babylonian captivity. He had lived through this whole period for he was just a teenager when he was captured and taken to Babylon. Now, almost seventy years later, he realizes that the time of predicted deliverance was near, and so he begins to pray on the basis of the promise of God:

"And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation. So I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations.'" (Jeremiah 25:11-13).

For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10).

DANIEL HAD BEEN TAKEN UP with Jeremiah's prediction of seventy years of exile; now the angel brings him a new "seventy"—seventy *weeks*. There is almost universal agreement among Bible scholars and commentators that this refers to seventy sets of seven years, or "weeks of years." This seventy weeks therefore is a period of four hundred and ninety years.

There are two general parts to this prophecy. It occupies just a few verses, and is divided into two sections. There is first a listing of the objectives that are to be accomplished, and, second, there is a three-fold division of the time set forth. "*Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.*"

Notice that Daniel was told it was "for *your* people and for *your* holy city: the seventy weeks are focused upon Daniel's people (the Jews) and his holy city (Jerusalem). The church is not Israel, so it is not in view here. The seventy weeks are "God's calendar for Israel" so that it does not focus on the Gentiles or the church.

Now, these seventy year-weeks are divided into three parts. The first part consists in seven weeks, that is seven times seven, 49 years. During these 49 years the street and the wall of Jerusalem was to be rebuilt and the complete restoration accomplished. The reckoning of this time begins in the month Nisan, 445 B.C., when the command was given. (Nehemiah 2:1-20).

THEN FOLLOWS THE SECOND DIVISION consisting of 62 weeks of years, that is 434 years. At the close of these 434 years, or 483 years reckoned from the month Nisan in 445 B. C., Messiah the Prince should be cut off and have nothing. Messiah the Prince is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Here then is a startling prediction of the death of Christ, the Messiah rejected by His people and not receiving the kingdom which belongs to Him as the Son of David. The sixty-two weeks, or 434 years, expired on the day our Lord rode into Jerusalem for the last time; during that week He was crucified.

FINALLY WE HAVE A REMARKABLE PREDICTION concerning the fate of Jerusalem after the nation rejected the Lord Jesus Christ:

"And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with an overflow, and unto the end war, the desolations determined."

Who is "the prince that shall come?" This is a prediction that the Romans were to take the city and burn the sanctuary. This has been fulfilled!

And all this was revealed when the Roman Empire was not yet in existence!