

IV. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics Truth in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“The Last Things—From Daniel’s Seventy Weeks to John’s Millennium”

Daniel 9; Revelation 20

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I’m going to start this study by reading from Revelation 20. I’m not going to get a lot done in it but we’re going to get a lot done to get ready for it even as we get our arms around it somewhat in this study. This is the great millennial text. Before I read it I want to let you know what I’m trying to do here. I’m trying to tackle some of the challenging issues and or challenging texts. First I’m looking at what the Bible says about the end times and the technical term is eschatology – the doctrine of the end times. I am doing this a little bit differently than I normally do it and hoping you’ll work your way through it with me. I’m doing this by looking at what are confessedly the three most difficult passages of Scripture in your Bible. One is Daniel 9 which we looked at in the last study as we looked at the seventy weeks of Daniel. In this study we’ll look in Revelation 20 which is the key text on the millennium. The word millennium is an Anglo-sized Latin term meaning 1,000 years. This is a key text that we need to understand to understand the millennium. The third difficult passage we will look will be Matthew 24 in a later study. It is the text where a very famous author wrote a series of books using the title from that text and totally missed what the text was saying because he has wrong people ‘left behind.’

When the Bible gives us some these texts that have these great theologically defines, theologically informed, panoramic sweeps of redemptive history, almost always it is heavily concentrated and saturated with symbolic language or what we also call apocalyptic language. It is language that makes use of metaphors, similes and all kinds of interesting literary genre that’s put together and it’s overwhelmingly symbolic yet it is explaining something that actually happens in history, not in theory but in history. It is communicating the theological definitions of what God is doing in history yet it is in apocalyptic literature and to make matters worse for us the apocalyptic literature that is being used is full of vocabulary that the people in the first century would have been much more aware of than we are today. We may read about scorpions and come up with black hawk helicopters or something and we’re totally missing it because that’s not how the Bible is put together.

For instance as I read in Revelation 20, remember that when John writes it he says that from reading and hearing the words of this prophecy you will be encouraged and comforted. So that tells you that he not only expected us to millennium later, 2,000 plus years later, but he expected the people of his day to be encouraged and one of the purposes according to Revelation 1 and 2 was to encourage the people of that day when this was read, heard and preached. Secondly, they would be aware of the some of the language being used. It would have been common language to them of the literature of the day and the stories of the day. It’s highly saturated with symbolic language. What is that saying to us about literal history through symbolic language that is theologically defined? So that is why we have to be careful not to over interpret or under interpret. We need to be agnostic where it is agnostic meaning you just say ‘I don’t know, I guess

fulfillment will let this one be known.’ What is it saying to us? Then we can understand it with greater clarity.

Having said that let’s look at Revelation 20. The first part of Revelation are the seven churches that lay the ground work for everything that is to come afterwards. Then comes the unfolding of the seven seals and then the seventh seal is explained with the seven trumpets and then the seventh trumpet is explained with the seven bowls of wrath. It’s like a scroll unrolling as each one builds upon the other. Then comes the concluding dynamics of the book of Revelation that begin in chapter 19. After Revelation 19 we’re brought to the edge of eternity. We have this recapitulation in Revelation 20 that gives you the scope of the rule and reign of King Jesus and the Kingdom of God. It introduces it with this concept of the millennium, this one thousand years.

Revelation 20:1–15 says *[1] Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. [2] And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, [3] and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.*

[4] Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [5] The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. [6] Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

[7] And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison [8] and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. [9] And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, [10] and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

[11] Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:1–4 says *[1] Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2] And I saw the*

holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. [4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

I want to pick up on the phrase 'a thousand years' – the millennium. I think most all of you have been exposed to people who have written on the millennium and have heard one of four views of the millennium. View number one is called pre-millennialism and a particular kind of this is dispensational. The dispensational view of the seventy weeks found in the book of Daniel was that 69 of the 70 led up to Christ and then there is a gap. The 70th week is actually after the church age. In other words, because Israel does not respond to the Messiah, at the end of the 69th week Israel is put on hold and God does this parenthesis where He has another plan for another people and it's called in the dispensational scheme, the church age from the Gentiles. After all of those have been gathered up the 70th week will be initiated at the end and right before the 70th week begins will be a rapture of the church that will be taken out. Then will come a covenant made with Israel in the middle of that 70th week and that 70th week will be seven years of tribulation. Then after the seven years comes another second coming of Christ and then comes a literal one thousand years in which God resumes the covenant work with Israel. So there is a rebuilding of the temple, sacrifices, priesthood and all of that is put back in place. Then at the end of that time Satan will be loosed and there will be a great battle at a place called Armageddon. Then will come another second coming of Christ.

So in the view of the dispensational pre-millennial view you have an actual literal one thousand years. We are told that you need to take it literally. The seven years of tribulation is the 70th week and then comes the strong covenant with Israel where God goes back to the plan with Israel. Then comes the conclusion of that with a great rebellion and Christ comes again. At the end of this study I will give you a chart on all of this but for now I want you to try and think your way through it.

The second view is called the pre-millennial or the covenantal or the historical pre-millennial view. Again historical view says it is a literal one thousand years that is set up by the second coming of Christ when He no longer reigns in heaven but reigns upon the earth for one thousand years. The covenantal view believes that the seventy weeks were all done up to the coming of Jesus Christ so they don't put the 70th week right before the second coming of Christ. They say the seventy weeks were fulfilled at the first advent of Christ and then comes this period of time where God's covenant of grace is at work. As this grace extends and expands and evil extends and expands at the same time then Christ shall come again and set up a one thousand year millennial reign upon the earth, from the heavens now to the earth. Then will come a final rebellion at the end of that thousand years. So instead of two and half second comings they just have two second comings.

In the dispensational view you have a half second coming where the Lord comes, almost but He doesn't come all the way and takes the church out. Then seven years later He comes and sets up the millennial reign. Then He comes again at the final rebellion. In the historic pre-millennial they don't have the half. They just have Him coming back to set up the millennium for one thousand years and then He returns at the end and ushers

in the new heavens and the new earth with the final victory at Armageddon or the broad plain where the battle would take place. So there are the two pre-millennial views that are there.

Then there is the post-millennial view. The pre and the post are directly related to where you put the second coming of Christ. So prior to the millennium, Christ comes. In the post-millennial view you are in a work of the Gospel and somewhere the Gospel is so powerful it is going to start spreading throughout the kingdoms of this world and it will usher in a millennial, glorious Gospel age in which the effects of sin are going to be diminished, removed and disappear. You will begin to find all those disappearing around us and evil is subdued. This golden age of this millennial reign is put into place. Not all post-millennialists believe that will be a literal one thousand but a long period of time. Many of the forbearers who found this country were post-millennialists. They saw this as being the catalyst of the coming of such a great, Gospel age in which the Gospel would subdue the effects of sin. Gospel words and deeds would do great works throughout the age.

Then there is the fourth position which is the a-millennial position. "A" means no but the position doesn't mean that there is no millennium, it just means there is no literal one thousand year reign. One of the things that all three of the first positions have in common is they believe the thousand years is literal. The argument of the a-millennial position is that when you go to the text what else in Revelation 20 do you deal with as literal? Is Satan going around with a chain on him and how would that work since he is a spiritual being? Is it an actual abyss, a prison with the language being used there? We see all of those with theological symbolism of what it means about what Christ has done to Satan. So everything else in the text you deal with as symbolic. Then why would we not see the numeric symbolism of 10 times 10 times 10, declaring a perfect era that God knows the beginning and end in His sovereign hand?

The a-millennial position is that this represents the rule of Christ and His Kingdom from His first Advent to His second Advent. Will it be an era of perfection? No, the pre-millennial and post-millennial positions all have certain views of perfection being before the new heavens and the new earth in the millennium. The a-millennial position says no and that there will be an ever growing rule and reign of Christ and His Kingdom throughout all the kingdoms of the age and many will be coming to Christ but at the same time the kingdom of Satan will get more and more and more evil. In fact, God will step back in and loosen it and there will be a cataclysmic event at the end. So there is growing tribulation in this kingdom as the evil empire strikes back from the defeated Satan.

You might think how can Satan strike back if he is chained and there is a lid on it? Have you been paying attention to the war of terror? While Osama Bin Laden was held up in a cave was there any destruction taking on from him throughout the world? Have you ever read the books on the mafia and how they ruled from prisons? So while these are limitations on Satan and assurances of victory it does not mean he is not active. It does mean that while he has not been obliterated he has been defeated. So there is tribulation growing from the kingdom of Satan until Christ comes and there is the assured victory of Christ's Kingdom from His first Advent that will be brought to fruition at the second Advent and the thousand years is the 10 times 10 times 10 that is used to describe that era. That's the way the a-millennial approaches the text.

We will dig down deeper into that text but before we do, in order to make sure we're all together we're going to take a look back at the text that looks to this text in Revelation and that's the seventy weeks of Daniel. This will be a brief review here. In Daniel 9 we have a panoramic sweep from the establishment of the theocracy of Israel in the Promised Land, with the capital city of Jerusalem, the building of the temple to its destruction which is Daniel's vision here. Daniel 9 starts off with a prayer. The prayer is Daniel having read in the Bible from the book of Jeremiah where it says two times that this captivity that they are in is only seventy years in length.

Other passages of Scriptures tell us why it was only seventy years in length. It was because from the time they went into the Promised Land and the expanse of 490 years they had rebelled against God and His law. One of the manifestations was they did not observe the seventh year of the Sabbath. God telescopes those 490 years down and takes them out of the land for seventy years which they should have given rest but they didn't because of their rebellion. II Chronicles 36 says that God took them out to give the land its seventy years that had been neglected with their disobedience. The Babylonian captivity is the result of this seventy years which will end with their repentance so Daniel in his prayer confesses his sins, the sins of his people and the sins of his fathers.

As Daniel is praying God sends the answer through a messenger, Gabriel. Daniel 9:20–24a says [20] *While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, [21] while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. [22] He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. [23] At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision. [24a] "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city...*

What had Daniel been asking for? This is what is going to happen to your people and Jerusalem has been overrun for it had no more walls. The Solomonic temple has been destroyed. What will happen to my people, the holy city and the temple? Now Gabriel comes with a message from God to take the moment of his request of those three things to bring him to an understanding of the coming Kingdom of God and of the rule and reign of the Messiah. Now He reverses the telescope from 490 years down to 70 to take seventy sevens to stretch out 490 years to the coming of the Messiah, to the restoration of the people back to Israel, back to Jerusalem for the building of the walls, the establishment of the temple all the way to its utter destruction at the time of the coming of the Messiah. He divides the 490 years into three uneven sections – seven sevens of years which would be 49, then sixty two sevens which would then total 483 years including the first section and then a one seven at the end of it. So what is going to happen in those three sections of uneven definition but of distinct purpose?

He says all seventy will be used to accomplish six things. Here they are. Number one is that it will finish the transgression. Number two is to put an end to sin. Three is to atone for iniquity. Four is to bring in everlasting righteousness. Five is to seal both vision and Prophet. Six is to anoint a most holy place or it could be translated to anoint the Most Holy or a Most Holy.

Daniel 9:24–26a says [24] *“Seventy weeks are decreed about 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. [25] Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. [26a] And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.*

In these seventy weeks there are three negatives and three positives. The negatives are the finishing of transgression which is a death blow to sin will be delivered, two will be to make an end to sins and three a reconciliation for iniquity. Interestingly, these three things all have to deal with the sin issue being conquered in this seventy weeks. There are three words translated in your Bible for sin – sin, transgression and iniquity. All three of these words show up right here in Daniel 9. So the issue of sin will be dealt with in a victorious, triumphant way in these seventy weeks.

Then there are the three positives. Everlasting righteousness will manifested in these seventy weeks and two there will be a sealing up of vision and Prophet. The second positive is speaking of the Old Testament for the Old Testament came through us through Prophets. What was the major way God revealed Himself to the Prophets? It was through visions. So prophetic vision, that is visions for Prophets will be finished by the finishing of these seventy weeks. There are visions in the New Testament but those are given to the Apostles, not Prophets. The third positive is there will be an anointing of the Holy One. When will this begin? It will begin with a decree to return to the city. When will this end? It will end with the anointing of the Holy One which I think is referring to the baptism of Jesus. These six objectives will be accomplished in this moving forward and then it will end in the 70th week with what occurs there and we’ll get to that in a moment.

People want to know when the decree happened and I don’t know for sure because actually there were three decrees for Israel to return from Babylon. One was given by Cyrus and two were given by Artaxerxes. I personally think it is the second decree from Artaxerxes that was given to Ezra. You will find the three decrees in the Bible – in Ezra 1, Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 1 and 2. I think it is the decree from Artaxerxes given to Ezra that starts the building of the city and temple under Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest and then brought to fruition with Nehemiah. Then comes the continuation of those seven sevens with the next sixty two week and there will be troubled times of Israel now dealing with this for 483 years. Then it will come to that last seven that will take place which will be the 70th week. What will occur then? What will happen in the middle of that 70th week? Here is what happens.

Daniel 9:26–27 says [26] *And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. (I believe this one refers back to the Anointed One, Jesus) [27] And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.*

So the Anointed One shall be cut off and shall have nothing in the middle of the week. Jesus has a three and a half year ministry and then He is cut off. That is language for death but in the cutting off He has made a strong covenant, an unbreakable covenant for the many. As He brings in the New Covenant He not only shuts up the Old Testament visions and Prophet through fulfillment, He now shuts up all of the sacrifices. Any sacrifices after that veil being rent in two through His sacrifice, is an abomination. Yet the Israel who rejected Him continued the sacrifices. So the generation that was there when He was cut off in that 70th week where He made an end to sacrifices, before He was cut off said “Before this generation passes away the temple and the city will be destroyed and this kingdom shall come to a conclusion. It is done.”

His name is Titus. There is a gate in Rome that depicts the event of Him coming in. The siege from 66 to 70 AD of Israel and all that Jesus said “Pray that you will not be found in those cities for whatever you do, flee” and as He prophesied cannibalism was taking place and all manner of evil was taking place as people were turning upon one another. Treason and traitors were constant until Titus came in where he is not the flood but his people are the flood, speaking of the Roman army. Now Daniel there is no more city, no more temple, no more people in this nation and he brings it to a conclusion. Now the King has come and the Kingdom of God has now come. This is where I’d like to conclude in this study.

When the Bible talks about rule, reign and realm there are four kingdoms that are referred to here. This will set us up to dive back into Revelation 20 in the next study. One kingdom that the Bible talks about is the kingdom of Israel. It begins with Saul and up until then Israel was not a kingdom but a theocratic nation where God directly ruled over them. They didn’t want that and that is why God said to Samuel “They are not rejecting you but Me because they want a king like the other nations.” God in His sovereign purposes are going to use that as He sets up the kingdom of Israel and a kingdom tribe that He has already prophesied, Judah and a kingdom line which will be David. That kingdom of Israel is then put into motion and it will go forward century by century ebbing and flowing with an Assyrian Captivity, a Babylonian Captivity, under the assault of the Greek Empire, under the assault of the Roman Empire and it will constantly be assaulted. It will be back and forth throughout the next 490 years and then that kingdom is brought to a conclusion in 70 AD.

Another kingdom in the Bible are the kingdoms of this world, referring to the nations of this world. A third kingdom in the Bible is the kingdom of Satan. This kingdom is spreading throughout the world and up until the coming of Jesus the Bible describes, unless God sovereignly steps in for selected moments, that he has his way with all the nations but no longer when Jesus comes. He will be a defeated king, not an obliterated and destroyed king but a defeated king in a defeated kingdom. When Jesus comes, there will come a fourth kingdom. This is the Kingdom of God. All of this is given for us in Daniel.

Let’s look at Daniel 2. Here Nebuchadnezzar has had a dream and nobody can interpret it but they find out Daniel can interpret it so he becomes the interpreter. This will set up his ministry that will take place through multiple dynasties. Nebuchadnezzar not only wants the interpretation of the dream but he wants Daniel to tell him what the dream was. No one could do this but Daniel and so he comes to give him the dream. Then Nebuchadnezzar says he will listen to his interpretation.

Daniel 2:31–45 says [31] “You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. [32] The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, [33] its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. [34] As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. [35] Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

[36] “This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. [37] You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, [38] and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. [39] Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. [40] And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. [41] And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. [42] And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. [43] As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. [44] And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, [45] just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”

He is telling him that here he is and here are the kingdoms of this world. You have the kingdom of Israel under your bondage but God is going to let the kingdoms of this world as He brings selected empires into this picture. Gold was the kingdom of Babylon. After that would come the Medo-Persians and then the Kingdom of Greeks. After that will come the kingdom of Rome and in the midst of this kingdom with its splits and splintering shall come a stone cut from a mountain and no human hand cut it. It is of Divine origin. As the stone comes it becomes bigger and bigger and totally crushes the kingdoms of this world until they become the kingdom of this stone that becomes a mountain. Here is the very picture that is given to us of human history. In Daniel 12 the title for that King for that kingdom, represented by that stone, coming from a mountain to become a mountain, and all the kingdoms of this world shall become that kingdom, is the Son of Man. What was Jesus' favorite term He used to describe Himself? It was the Son of Man and He used it far more than any other title.

So what do we have? We have the kingdom of Israel, the kingdoms of this world, and the kingdom of Satan. They are all temporary and two are spatial. The kingdoms of this world have realms. The kingdom of Israel had a realm. God promised them a Seed,

a nation, a land and that through them would come a Seed that would bless all the nations and kingdoms of the world. Our God gave it to them even though they did not want it. They were given their land during the days of David and Solomon. They were given a Seed through the line of David, who was Jesus through which would come the King. That kingdom will have served its purpose and it comes to its end in the 70th week. Out of that comes the Kingdom of God.

So when Jesus starts His ministry where He'll be cut off in the middle where He makes the covenant that will last forever, what is it that Jesus preaches? He preaches that the Kingdom of God is at hand. It is now here like it never was before. Now the Kingdom of God has arrived and when He is cut off He strikes the death blow to sin. He provides a perfect righteousness that is forever. He seals up Prophet and vision from the Old Testament. He is anointed and then cut off. Then He is raised from the dead and then that generation that rejects it that kingdom now comes to an end. The Kingdom of God begins to spread throughout all of the earth.

The kingdom of Satan, like the Kingdom of God, is not defined by realm but by reign and it moves to all the kingdoms of the world. At the coming of the Kingdom, the kingdom of Satan cannot move as it wills throughout the nations and that's why the Disciples said "even the demons are subject to us" and Jesus said "I saw Satan fall from heaven. I have bound the strong man. Go and plunder his house. Take the Gospel of the Kingdom to the nations of this world." There is coming a day when those kingdoms will be done away with and the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our God. The description of the rule and reign of that King and His Kingdom is found for us in Revelation 20 and I can't wait to dig into it with you in the next study. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Father for the way that You give us this glorious scope of history. I pray that You would help us to grasp it, embrace it and be grateful because it brings confidence and comfort even in a broken, fallen world. Even though Satan has not been destroyed he has been defeated. Even though he is still allowed through his henchmen, his snares and schemes to invade the kingdoms of this world, now Father You have made evident through Christ what has been true throughout the ages and that is Satan is our God's Satan. Our King is and will reign forever, in Jesus' Name, Amen.