

# OpenTheo

## Is The Future Pretrib Rapture Taught in Scripture? (Part 1)



### When Shall These Things Be? - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg explores whether the pre-tribulation rapture is taught in scripture. Gregg questions the popular belief in a seven-year tribulation period, noting that biblical references to tribulation refer to an unprecedented global crisis. He examines the use of the term "day of the Lord" in the Old and New Testaments and argues that there is no evidence for a seven-year tribulation period. Gregg also scrutinizes the interpretation of Daniel 9 and argues that the dispensationalist view imports gaps into the text to support their beliefs.

### Transcript

In our lectures about the rapture, which we just completed, I mentioned that the principle views that you hear about most often concerning the rapture and the timing of the rapture have to do with where in a chronological framework where the rapture occurs, usually with reference to a seven-year anticipated tribulation. We have the pre-tribulation rapture view, we have the mid-tribulation rapture view, we have the post-tribulation rapture view, and there is also the pre-wrath view, which is also a reference to a particular point in time in the tribulation, at which point those who hold the view believe the rapture will occur. In all of these views, of course, there is the assumption already in place that there is a tribulation.

The question of whether the rapture comes before, after, in the middle or at some other point with reference to the tribulation is the only thing that is usually even discussed. But the question of whether there really is a biblical teaching that we can anticipate in the future, a seven-year tribulation, is something we need to look at now again. You might say, boy, is there no end to the things that we question around here.

You may have thought we questioned everything there is to be questioned before this, but there is more. Wait until we talk about whether the Bible teaches there is a future Antichrist or not, or Mark of the Beast, or some of those things. Now, of course I have an opinion, and I will share my opinion, but I want you to be as critical of my opinion as you would be of the opinions of those that I'm criticizing.

I want you to look at the scriptures and see for yourself if these things are so. I will attempt to say nothing beyond what the scripture says and therefore leave it to you to see if there is more or less in scripture than what I'm saying. I don't want to add or take away.

But because I don't want to add or take away from scripture, I don't want to say more or assume more about this subject or any biblical subject than is really there. When we hear of the tribulation, when people say, do you think Christians will be here for the tribulation, they are speaking of a particular time period. The word tribulation actually is used a lot of times in the Bible.

There is a Greek word, philipsis, which you would, if you put it in English characters, it would be T-H-L. That's a strange sequence of letters since you normally would have a vowel somewhere in there, but not so. T-H-L-I-P-S-I-S.

Philipsis. This is the word that is always, that is to say, whenever you find the word tribulation in the scripture, it is the word philipsis. The same word is also translated sometimes as trouble, and sometimes it's translated as affliction.

But you would have to, but it's not always the case that when you find the word trouble or when you find the word affliction in the Bible that it would always be philipsis. When you find the word tribulation, it is always philipsis, and philipsis also is occasionally translated by other English words like affliction and trouble, there are other Greek words too that are translated affliction and other words that are translated trouble. The point is that the word philipsis comes from a root in the Greek that means to crowd, and therefore to squeeze or to be under pressure.

And the lexicons will tell you that the word philipsis literally means to be under pressure. Now, a person would be under pressure, for example, if he was put in a vice and it was tightened upon him, and that would be literal pressure. But we realize that being under pressure when it speaks of tribulation or affliction is figurative.

It means we're under moral pressure or that our ability to endure is being pressured. It might be something like what we call stress today. We talk a lot about being under stress.

But generally speaking, we are not far from the meaning of the word if we understand tribulation to mean affliction or trial, hardship. And it is used many times in Scripture, generally not as a technical term for a particular period of time. For example, we have Jesus saying in John 16 in verse 33, these things I've spoken unto you that in me you might have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. Jesus said in the world you will have tribulation, though he said in me you have peace.

We live simultaneously in the world and also in Christ. In terms of our life in the world, we have tribulation. In terms of our being in Christ, we have peace.

These things I've spoken unto you that in me you might have peace. In the world you'll have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

This is John 16, 33. In another place, 1 Thessalonians 3 and verse 4, 1 Thessalonians 3 and verse 4, Paul said, for in fact we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation just as it happened and you know. Jesus said in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 that those who are like the seed that fell upon stony ground and grew for a little while, but when the sun came up burned it up and withered it and it died, he said these are they who received the word of God initially with joy.

But when tribulation, ellipsis, and persecution arise because of the word, they fall away. Matthew 13, 21. Paul said in Romans 5 and verse 3, and not only this, but also we glory in tribulations, knowing this that tribulation worketh patience.

So we glory in tribulations. Tribulation is part of our life. Jesus said in the world you'll have tribulation.

In fact, Paul said, or he preached as a general message in Acts 14, 22. Acts 14, 22 tells how Paul and Barnabas at the end of their first missionary journey were on their way home, revisiting the churches they had founded a few months earlier. And it says in Acts 14 and verse 21 and 22, when they had preached the gospel in that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, we must, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom of God.

So Paul was certainly in agreement with Jesus on this. The church can expect tribulations and tribulation. However, according to dispensational theology, according to John Nelson Darby, there is a particular tribulation that is different from all the times we've just mentioned.

All the references to our being in much tribulation or enduring great tribulation are generic, but there is a more specific technical term, the tribulation, according to dispensational theology. And this tribulation refers to an actual period of seven years, the last seven years, prior to the coming of Christ. In fact, the tribulation will end, on this view, with the actual second coming of Christ to earth.

And as we pointed out, the dispensationalists generally believe that the rapture of the church will occur at the beginning of that seven years, so that this seven years is the span of time at the end of the present age between the rapture of the church and the actual judgment, coming of Christ, the revelation of Christ from heaven with his holy angels. And in that seven years is the time that they call the tribulation. The last three

and a half of those years are considered to be more intense than the first three and a half.

In other words, the second half of the tribulation is the greater tribulation, and therefore, generally speaking, dispensationalists call the last half of the seven-year tribulation, they call that the great tribulation. Now, where do these terms come from? Well, we've already seen that tribulation is a frequently used term in Scripture, though in all the places that I gave you just a moment ago, it says that Christians suffer tribulation. Through much tribulation, we enter the kingdom of God.

We have peace in Christ, but in the world we have tribulation. Obviously, to the dispensationalists, this cannot refer to the great tribulation or even the seven-year tribulation itself, because we're not supposed to be here for that. So there must be some specific tribulation that we are to miss, and where do we find that in Scripture? Well, frankly, we don't actually find in Scripture a reference to a seven-year tribulation, but we will look at the Scriptures that are said to teach such a thing.

If you'll look at Matthew 24, a chapter that we will look at in more detail at another time, this is called the Olivet Discourse, I will just point out that this chapter provides the language for the dispensationalist's reference to the future tribulation. In Matthew 24, in verse 21, Jesus said, "...for then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time. No, nor ever shall be.

And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened." Now, here there are several things worthy of note. One is that we've got Jesus referring to a particular coming time of great tribulation, and it is said that it would be unprecedented.

It says this is like there has never been since the beginning of the world, nor shall ever be. So this is apparently unique in terms of intensity. This is a greater tribulation than general tribulation.

All Christians experience tribulation, but this is a particular tribulation which is greater than any other, before or after. So that singles it out as a special time of tribulation. And it even says that if those days were not shortened, no flesh would survive, which has led many to believe that this must be a global situation, a worldwide tribulation, because otherwise how could all flesh be endangered by it? So here we have the basic elements of the doctrine of the tribulation.

We have something referred to as great tribulation, unprecedented, unique in history in terms of its intensity, and global in its range. Certainly we would have to say, if this interpretation of these words is correct, that the tribulation Jesus speaks of must not yet have happened, because first of all, there's never been a global crisis of unique proportions. There have been international crises which have involved many nations, like

world wars, but there has never really been a truly global crisis, which it could be said of if those days were not shortened, no flesh would survive, where all flesh on the planet were endangered.

And for that reason, the assumption is that this tribulation of which Jesus speaks must be future, because it seems to be unique in intensity and global in extent, and greater than any other tribulation, and that seems to mean something that we have not yet ever seen on planet earth. So this is what the dispensationalist takes to be the basic text for taking tribulation of a special period of tribulation, a particular set time of tribulation, which Jesus speaks of as great tribulation. If you look at Revelation chapter 7, you'll find the term great and tribulation mixed one more time.

There's only three times in Scripture that you find tribulation that is called great tribulation, and it is only those times that really could be pressed into very reasonable service to prove a particular time of tribulation is in view. I mean, there are many times where tribulation is found in Scripture, but in most cases it would be impossible and unreasonable to suggest that they are referring to a particular time of tribulation. They are more generic.

But there are certainly times when particular times of tribulation may be seen in a passage, the words of Jesus being an example that we just read a moment ago. This is another one. John in Revelation 7 has seen an innumerable international company in heaven, and he does know who they are.

He's asked who they are, and he says, Sir, you know, and in verse 14 he is told who they are. One of the elders says to him, these are the ones who are coming, that's the literal in the Greek, these are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation, or in the Greek it's the tribulation, the great one, and washed their robes, made them white with the blood of the lamb. Now, these people have come out of the tribulation, the great one.

Now, obviously in calling it the tribulation, it's not just tribulation generic, it's a particular tribulation, the tribulation. Furthermore, it is said it is the great one. And since Jesus had earlier in the Olivet Discourse spoken of, there will be great tribulation, it is quite natural, and in my mind legitimate, to say that when the writer of Revelation, or when the elder speaking to the writer of Revelation says, the tribulation, the great one, that he is likely referring back to the words of Jesus when he says, the great one, you know, the one Jesus talked about, the great tribulation.

And I am inclined to agree with dispensationalists that yes, Revelation 7, 14 and Matthew 24, 21 are talking about the same thing. It just seems the wording suggests that Jesus didn't say then will be the great tribulation, he just said then will be great tribulation, but forever afterwards, if one wished to speak of the same period of which Jesus spoke, and wished to speak of that great tribulation, he could call it the great

tribulation, implying the great tribulation that Jesus spoke of, a particular time of great tribulation. Now, there is one other time in the book of Revelation and in the Bible where we read of great tribulation.

That is in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 22. This is not very helpful necessarily to the purpose of proving a future tribulation necessarily, because this occurs in the letter to the church of Thyatira, a church that no longer exists. And there is a woman there named Jezebel, or probably symbolically called Jezebel, who is teaching horrible things in the church, and Jesus is very upset with this.

And of her, Jesus says in Revelation 2, 22, indeed I will cast her into a sick bed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. Now here, there is great tribulation. This is the third, well actually chronologically the second, but it's the third of all.

There's only three altogether, and we've considered the other two already. This is the third time that you find in the Bible the expression great tribulation. Now, this one doesn't work real well for proving a future tribulation, since the church to whom this was spoken, and the woman who was prophesying in that church at the time, is long dead now.

And Jesus says, I'm going to cast her into great tribulation. Certainly if this was fulfilled, it must have been fulfilled in her lifetime, and in the lifetime of this church. Now, on the view of the dispensationalists that these seven churches represent seven ages of the church, or segments of the church age, it is believed on that view that Thyatira is the church that represents the papal church, the Roman Catholic Church of the medieval times.

But even that, you know, is a, I mean the papal church still exists, but other churches have come since on this view. You've had the Reformation Church of Cyrus, you've had the Missionary Church of Philadelphia, you've got the Church of Laodicea, and therefore the timing of the great tribulation spoken of that Jezebel will be thrown into is a bit early for what we would call the great tribulation of the future that the dispensationalists look for. I'm not sure whether dispensationalists generally think that Revelation 2.22 is about the future great tribulation, or they just think it's generic, you know, she'll be thrown into great trouble, great affliction.

That is possible. On the other hand, they might say, well, the Roman Catholic Church is still around, and even though other churches have risen since, it's still here, and it still can await, can still look forward to going into the great tribulation. Well, maybe so, but I'm saying that this particular verse is not exactly real helpful, because it's not clear that the Church of Thyatira, the real church, you know, the literal interpretation of the Church of Thyatira, it's not clear that they exist today.

In fact, it's very clear that they do not exist today. And the woman who is prophesying these things in the church in the first century is doubtless not over in that part of Turkey alive, walking around a well, and you know, 2,000 years old now, and waiting for tribulation to come for her to be thrown into. I'm sure that the prophecy must have been fulfilled if Jesus was not a false prophet, and I do not allow that he was.

We have a lot of references to tribulation, but there's only really two places that seem to speak of a particular time of tribulation. That is, the words of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, and the apparent reference back to the words of Jesus found in Revelation 7, 14. Now, obviously, to say that we only have two references to it is to understate the case.

It is true that we only have the terminology, great tribulation, in two places, but these references are really part of a larger discussion of a period of time, which period of time is discussed on other occasions as well without that terminology. In other words, there are lots of passages that probably talk about the same period of time that Jesus and Revelation are talking about, but don't necessarily use the language. Therefore, we need to find what passages those are, and find out what we are told about this period of time in the passages that discuss it.

Now, the best way to do that, of course, is to look at the context of Matthew 24 and of Revelation. Because those are the two books, the two places, in which the term is used. And we can certainly say, with some certainty, that if we can look at the context of Matthew 24 and the context of Revelation, and if we can see that they are both talking about the same context, the same period of time, then we could conclude a lot of things.

We can get a lot of detail about the so-called great tribulation that Jesus and Revelation spoke of. Now, there are other passages in other parts of the Bible that are often applied by the dispensationalists to the great period of tribulation that is anticipated. It is not so easy in these cases to be sure that the passages referred to are talking about the same thing as what Jesus and the book of Revelation talk about when they speak of the great tribulation.

They may be, or they may not be. The burden of proof would rest upon those who wish to show that passages in Daniel or Thessalonians or some of these other places in the Bible, that these are also talking about the same period of time that Jesus and Revelation were talking about. They may be, or they may not be, but we'd have to find some evidence for that.

We shouldn't just assume it. I will say that I once was not aware how little there is on this subject in the Bible to support the idea of a future seven-year tribulation, and so once looking for the complete biblical material on the subject, I picked up a book by John Walvoord, one of the leading living dispensational scholars, and it was a book about the tribulation. I forget exactly what the label was of the book, the title, but it was

specifically a book about the great tribulation.

So I figured, now here, one of the leading evangelical scholars in the world today, in a book exactly directed toward the subject of the great tribulation, here we'll have tremendous documentation, scripturally, of where the Bible talks about this. And what I found was that all the scriptures he used I already was aware of, with the exception that there were long lists of scriptures, almost paragraph-long lists of scriptures. It says, the Bible speaks of a future tribulation, and then you have in parentheses all these scripture references, maybe 20 or 30 references.

I said, my goodness, I was not aware there were so many references to this, and so I decided to look them up, and what I found, when most of these were in the Old Testament, what I found was that all he had done is go into a concordance and look up the references to the day of the Lord, and all the places in the Old Testament that speak of the day of the Lord, he listed as references to the tribulation. Well, if you look at the term day of the Lord in the Old Testament, and you look at the context of it, you'll find that the Bible uses the term day of the Lord as a generic term for a day of reckoning, a day of judgment upon someone. You have the day of the Lord upon Babylon, you have the day of the Lord upon Egypt, you have the day of the Lord upon Philistia, on Moab, on Ammon, on Edom.

Most of those nations are extinct today, and yet the Bible speaks of the day of the Lord coming upon them, which, by the way, scholars, I think generally, if they're not dispensational, and even if they are, many of them would say these prophecies were fulfilled in history when Edom was judged, when Edom became extinct, when Moab and Ammon were destroyed, when the Philistines became extinct peoples. That was the day of the Lord to them. That was the day of God's reckoning and judgment upon them.

The term the day of the Lord is a generic term used widely in the Old Testament, but speaking of specific judgments on specific nations. Now, I will agree with some who would argue that in the New Testament, the term day of the Lord often refers to the second coming of Christ. I know some scholars who would deny even this.

I know of some who would say the day of the Lord in the New Testament speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and I frankly think that there may be some cases where it does, but I also think there are contexts in which the day of the Lord in the New Testament seems to speak of the future coming of Christ. What I do not know of is any place in the Bible where the day of the Lord speaks of a tribulation period. Never heard of a passage like that.

Never found a passage like that. I've looked them up. I do not see any place in the Bible where the term the day of the Lord is synonymous with a seven-year period of tribulation.



It is always a time of judgment, but in virtually every case in the Old Testament, it's temporal judgment through armies coming against some nation that has outlived its usefulness, and God has run out of patience with them, and so God sends some army against them, and that's the day of the Lord on Egypt, or whatever. That is universally the case if you'll simply look at the context of these passages. In the New Testament, it's not so easy, because sometimes it looks like the day of the Lord is the destruction, again, a military destruction upon a nation, particularly Jerusalem.

But other times, the day of the Lord appears to be used as a reference to God's judgment of the whole world at the second coming, but never can you find a place where exegetically it would be sound to say, okay, here the day of the Lord is synonymous with a seven-year tribulation. Yet Dr. Walvoord, and perhaps others following him, or maybe others that came before him, have taken all the scriptures that speak of the day of the Lord and put that in parentheses as, the Bible speaks of a future seven-year tribulation. Well, I would suggest to you, when people tell you that the Bible speaks of something, give you a long list of references, that you actually look up those references.

I remember once, years ago, reading a book by a man who was trying to prove that God doesn't know the future, doesn't know all the future. He had a chapter in his book that said, I think it was 1,100 scriptures that proved that God changes his mind. He meant to prove by this that if God changes his mind, it must have been a time earlier he didn't know something, and he must have gotten new information, so he changed his mind.

So he had a chapter, 1,100 verses of scripture that showed that God changed his mind, and it was just, the whole chapter was reference, reference, reference, reference. I mean, 1,100 of them. I did not have time to look all these up, but I did have time, I mean, I just took a random sampling through the whole list, not the first ones on the list, but I took about 20 of them, sampled throughout the whole thing, and not one of those scriptures said God changes his mind.

Now, I'm not saying God doesn't, I'm just saying those scriptures didn't say that he does. And yet, I'm sure the author of that book did not expect anyone to look up all those scriptures, but just to be intimidated by a long list of scriptures, 1,100 scriptures, my goodness, it must be the major teaching of scripture, with all these scriptures to prove it. But, I mean, be careful about that.

When a man says, oh, the Bible's full of references to a future tribulation, look up the references and see if he's pulling something over on you. Now, I'm not saying these teachers are trying to deceive you. I believe these people are probably honest men, but I believe they have a blind spot.

I believe that, like everybody else, they have a grid that they see through, and they believe a certain thing is taught in scripture, and therefore they see it in places where a person without the presupposition would not necessarily see it. In fact, a lot of times

they see it in places where there's a much better way of looking at the scripture than the way they're looking at it. So, I want to say that when we look at the scriptures that people tell us are about a future tribulation, we should look at the context and see if that scripture is about that subject or not, or whether it's on some other topic and not relevant to the topic.

Now, using a variety of scriptures from different books of the Bible, dispensationalists have put together a big picture, a big scenario of what the seven-year tribulation will be like. And some of the major characteristics of the great tribulation are supposed to be as follows. First of all, it's a global crisis involving plagues, the plagues of Revelation usually associated with this, famines, persecution of the believers who, by the way, are not Christian believers but are Jewish and Gentile converts to follow Christ but not included in the Church after the rapture, and that this is of unprecedented proportions.

It is widely said that there is going to be a cashless economy and a one-world government under a man called Antichrist, who is depicted as a political world dictator. It is said that Israel will be prominent as the major focus not only of God's dealings but also world focus, that the Antichrist himself will be targeting Israel as the people to persecute. In fact, initially he will feign friendship with them.

He'll make a covenant with them under which they will be allowed to rebuild their temple and reinstate a system of animal sacrifices. But according to this view, after about three and a half years of that, he will double-cross them. He will have a statue of himself to be made and place it in the Holy of Holies of the temple.

This will be the ultimate profanity of the temple, referred to as the abomination of desolation. It will mark the middle of the tribulation and begin the great tribulation, so that after the Antichrist sets up his image in the temple, you then have the greatest of the plagues poured out by God on the world and on the throne of the beast. And then, of course, at the end of the tribulation, you have the battle of Armageddon.

This battle is considered to be the battle that will be in progress when Jesus actually returns. In fact, it will be the return of Christ, the actual physical return of Christ at the end of the tribulation, that will determine the outcome of the battle of Armageddon. Apparently, it is thought that the battle of Armageddon will be characterized by all the armies of the world coming against Jerusalem.

And the battle of Armageddon will be fought in a plain which is called Megiddo. Armageddon literally means the mountain of Megiddo. Mount Carmel overlooks the valley of Megiddo, and so it is thought that that is where this battle will be fought, and that this will be essentially World War III.

I mean, the assumption, even in the secular newspapers, the word Armageddon is used, because in our culture, people have come to think of Armageddon as the great last

battle. Most people, in writing about it, are not shy about calling it World War III, although I'm not sure why they couldn't be sure it wouldn't be World War IV or V or VI. I mean, in other words, there might be many world wars between now and Armageddon, but it is because the conviction is strong among many that the second coming of Christ must be very near.

There can't be time for very many world wars between now and then, probably World War III. In fact, not only probably, many dispensationalists will say, as if there's no doubt about it, Armageddon will be World War III. Well, that takes a lot of things for granted, but the question is, what verses of Scripture, what portions of Scripture are the basis for these thoughts? Well, there are primary passages, and then there are not-so-primary passages.

There are peripheral passages. The primary texts that are thought to tell us about the future tribulation are Matthew 24, and it's parallel. See, Matthew 24 is what's called the Olivet Discourse.

There are parallels to it in Mark and in Luke. In Mark, it's Mark chapter 13. In Luke, it's Luke 21, and portions of Luke 17 mixed in there.

So you've got, in Matthew, it's chapter 24. In Mark, it's chapter 13. In Luke, it's a combination of chapters 17 and 21, mostly 21.

This is called the Olivet Discourse and provides most of the imagery that people tend to associate with the Great Tribulation. You've got wars and rumors of wars. You've got famine and earthquakes in diverse places.

You've got pestilence. You've got false messiahs and false prophets, and you've got persecution of the godly. You've got the abomination of desolation mentioned in there.

You've got the second coming of Christ, it is thought, there. And so we have actually the flight of those in Judea into the mountains, which is thought to take place, dispensations think that will take place when the Antichrist sets up his image in the temple, that the faithful of Judea will flee out to the rock city of Petra. There is no mention of Petra in any passage about the flight, but it is nonetheless almost universally assumed that that's where they will go.

These are the elements mentioned in Matthew 24, and of course it is in Matthew 24 that Jesus uses the expression, Great Tribulation. There will be Great Tribulation. So certainly it is a key passage in understanding the time called the Great Tribulation.

The other major passage is the book of Revelation from chapters 4, but especially chapters 6 through 19. Chapters 4 and 5 would generally be applied to that period, but they are mainly just a heavenly vision. The action really begins on earth in chapter 6 of Revelation, and you have the breaking of seven seals on a sealed scroll.

You've got the sounding of seven trumpets. You've got two beasts, and you've got a dragon, and you've got a woman, and you've got a man-child, and you've got two witnesses, and you've got Babylon the Great, and you've got the pouring out of seven bowls of wrath. This is basically what Revelation chapter 6 through 19 contains, and the imagery from those chapters are usually applied to the Great Tribulation also, and seemingly for good cause.

It is in Revelation 7.14 that we're told the people there are coming out of the Great Tribulation. So the two passages that mention Great Tribulation, Matthew 24 and Revelation, are the passages that provide the most information for us about the Great Tribulation. Now, there is also thought to be relevant information on the Great Tribulation in the Old Testament.

Some people think Paul alludes to the Great Tribulation in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and in a few other places, but we must say that the term Great Tribulation is not found in any of these other places, and therefore there's no absolute link between these additional passages and the passages I just mentioned. But Daniel in particular is thought to tell us a lot about the Tribulation. In fact, the idea that the Tribulation will be seven years long comes from Daniel, largely, and is thought to be confirmed by the book of Revelation.

Now, what I want to do, I want to actually go through, I'm going to take several days talking about the Tribulation, probably four altogether, not four days, but four sessions. And in this session and the next one, I would like to go over the material that's in your notes where the page is titled, Is There a Worldwide Tribulation Predicted in Scripture? And the material in this page will take easily two sessions. And then I'm going to take probably two sessions talking about the all of it this course in detail, because that is the principle, along with the book of Revelation, the principle passage on the subject that we need to look at.

But what I'd like to do in this session and the next one is take detail by detail the things that are believed to be taught in Scripture to be related to the future Tribulation, and just look at what the biblical basis is for these claims, and look at the Scriptures themselves and see whether this is what is taught or not. Now, I gave you this page of notes, but as I look at it this way, I thought I want to really cover things in a different order than I gave them in the notes. Virtually everything I'm going to say is on these notes, but in different order.

So bear with me if I change the order of subject matter from what's in your notes, but you will find the material that I'm talking about here on the page. What I'd like to talk about first of all is the question of the seven-year duration. On your notes, that's on point number eight, but I want to take that as number one.

The seven-year duration, that's the first thing we need to question, because an awful lot of the popular views on the Rapture hinge on the assumption there is a seven-year

Tribulation, because the mid-Trib suggests that it comes in the middle of seven years. The pre-Rapture holds the view that it comes three-quarters of the way through seven years. The pre-Trib Rapture believes that it comes a full seven years before the coming of Christ, but all of these assume seven years, and based on the actual seven-year length of the Tribulation, people set their expectations on how long they think we're going to be here or not be here, and how long the Rapture is before the end of the world, as we know it, or to the second coming of Christ in judgment.

Now, when I was asked a few years ago, several as a matter of fact, more like 16 years ago, by a dispensational friend, and I was still kind of dispensational in some ways, but not entirely. I was in process. I was changing.

But a friend of mine asked, Where do we get the notion in the Bible of a seven-year Tribulation? And he's a Bible teacher himself. He's a Calvary Chapel elder. He's the director of a YWAM base.

He's memorized verbatim most of the New Testament. He can quote it. He spent many years memorizing Scripture.

He's a man of the Bible, but he often asks me where things are found. He actually knows the Bible better than I do in some ways, but I've systematized my thinking about the Bible more than he has, and that's, I think, the difference. He knows.

He can quote more verses of Scripture than I can, but I can tell you how, you know, all the verses that relate to a certain subject a little better. And so we have fruitful times of fellowship. We just always fellowship over the Word.

It's a really enjoyable thing to do. But he said once, Where do we get the idea of a seven-year Tribulation? And I had not really answered that to my own satisfaction previously. I always assumed that it's taught in Scripture because I'd never met anyone who ever challenged it.

I had met people who were not millennial. I had met people who believed in a mid- and post-Trib rapture. In other words, I'd met people who were not fully dispensational, but I had not met people who didn't believe in a seven-year Tribulation, or if they didn't, I hadn't heard them say so.

Therefore, I was not aware there was any option but to believe in a seven-year Tribulation. I began to search in my mind the Scriptures, and while my mind is, I don't have total recall, I do have, this is just something I've observed and noticed, I do have the ability to kind of scan the whole Bible in a few moments' time, and, you know, like a computer would be in a find mode, you know, find this and just search through and find all the references to a certain thing. Now, I'm not saying my mind is as comprehensive in its search as a computer would be.

It's not perfect, but generally speaking, if there are any major passages on a subject, I can catch them in a quick search in my mind. And I could only think at the time of two things. When I really set myself to search for that, I could think of two things that were the basis for my belief that there was a seven-year Tribulation to be expected.

One was in Daniel 9, where we have the 70 weeks of Daniel. And the 70th week, which is seven years long, was believed to be future. So that was one of the reasons I believed in a future seven-year Tribulation.

The other information that stuck in my mind was Revelation itself, where we find five different references to a period of three and a half years. And my assumption was that although there are five references to a period of three and a half years, if you really understood it correctly, there are two periods of three and a half years, one following another, and together they make up the same thing as the 70th week of Daniel, a period of seven years. And at the time I told Danny this, I said, these are the only things I can think of off the top of my head.

But since that time, that was 16 years ago, I've done a more thorough search, because I've wondered, is there more than that? My mind doesn't catch every detail when I'm doing it in my mind. And so I've done a more thorough search over the years. I've also talked through the Bible about 15 times since then in this school, not 15, but 13, 14.

And with it in the back of my mind, is there any information on this subject? And to tell you the truth, there isn't. There's nothing more to suggest a seven-year Tribulation than an interpretation of Daniel 9 and an interpretation of Revelation. Now, when you look at Matthew 24, there is no mention of a duration.

Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse doesn't say seven years, three and a half years, or any number of years. It doesn't give any time indicators as to how long the period of Tribulation will be. Revelation itself might not.

It depends on how one understands the three and a half years. Is there one period of three and a half years, or are there two, or are there five? You actually have five different references to three and a half years. There is no obvious reason why these have to be linked into two sequential periods.

If one would argue that it's not always the same three and a half years, but that different references to three and a half years are different three and a half years, then there might be as many as five three and a half years. There is simply nothing in Revelation to necessitate that we see two periods of three and a half years in that book. It is possible to, of course, but it is not at all called for.

There is nothing in the book of Revelation which would give us that impression. We have to bring that interpretation, and then we can see it there. Now, my question is always,

when I begin to challenge my old beliefs on any subject, my question is, why do I bring this assumption to the passage? Is there grounds to it? Now, I want to make it clear.

I'm not against bringing some assumptions to a passage. If there are other clear passages in the Bible on the same subject, and they supply information that is not in this particular passage on the same subject, then the information I get on the subject from passage A can be imported to passage B if it's on the same subject. We do this all the time, and that's a reasonable way of systematizing and of collecting and pooling data on a certain subject.

The thing is, though, when I say, well, why do I assume that the three and a half years in Revelation really is two periods of three and a half years? Now, I just want to tell you so you won't wonder, and I don't want you to get distracted by wondering where I stand on this. My view today is that the three and a half years, every time it's mentioned in Revelation, is always the same period of time. It's always referring to the same period.

And I don't believe it's literal, but we'll talk about that another time. The point is, I don't believe that there are two periods of three and a half years, but there are simply a period of time, five times referred to, and called that length of time. But I didn't always feel this way, and when I believed it was two, I asked myself, why do I do that? Why do I import into the text the assumption there are two such periods? And I realized that the only reason I do so is because of my presuppositions about Daniel chapter 9. Because my presuppositions are that Revelation, the book of Revelation, is expanding on the so-called 70th week of Daniel.

If this is true, then it is safe to say Revelation describes a seven-year period, because the 70th week of Daniel certainly is seven years long. But if Revelation is not talking about the 70th week of Daniel, then there's no reason to import the idea into Revelation that there are two periods of three and a half years. It is an assumption which is based on our assumptions about Daniel 9. Therefore, let's look at Daniel 9. This is perhaps one of the most important, well, it is the singular most important passage in the Bible in determining whether there is a seven-year long tribulation to be anticipated.

And this is the famous passage, though only four verses long, they're very long verses, each of them, and they carry significance disproportionate to their length. Daniel was fasting and praying and seeking God about the deliverance of his people from Babylon. He had been reading earlier in the chapter, the prosody of Jeremiah, that the Babylonian exile would be 70 years long.

And it was time for that to end. And an angel appeared to him and told him, although that the 70 years was over, there was another 70 times seven years to be fulfilled before certain purposes of God had been accomplished. The 70-year Babylonian exile was over, but now Daniel was told of another period of time, which is 70 times seven years.

And it is called in verse 24, 70 weeks. And we should be aware that weeks here in the Hebrew does not mean weeks of days. When we think of a week, we're thinking of a 52nd division of a year.

There's 52 weeks in a year, and these weeks have seven days. That is not what the word here means. In the Hebrew, it just means 70 sevens, 70 periods of seven.

It does not say what the sevens are, but all virtually every commentator who is evangelical and believes in inspiration scripture believes that each week is not seven days, but seven years. So that it's not 70 years like the Babylonian captivity, but 70 times seven years that the final purposes of God will require to be fulfilled. Now it says, the angel said to Daniel in verse 24, 70 weeks or 70 sevens, that'd be 490 years are determined for your people and for your holy city to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

Know therefore, and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah, the Prince, there should be seven weeks. That's seven times seven years, 49 years and 62 weeks. That's 62 times seven years.

That'd be 434 years. So there's going to be a period of 49 years and a period of 434 years. If you add that together, that brings the total number up to 483 years.

That's seven weeks plus 62 weeks, a total of 69 weeks. The street shall be built again in the wall, even in trouble sometimes. And after the 62 weeks, which means after a total of 69, because there are seven weeks before the 62 weeks, right? In the previous verse.

So after the 62 weeks, which themselves began after the first seven weeks. So you've got a total of 69 of the weeks elapsed here. Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.

And the people of the Prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be a flood with a flood until the end of the war. Desolations are determined.

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week. That'd be the 70th week. But in the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

And on the wing of abomination shall be one who makes desolate. This is the verse from which we get the expression of the abomination of desolation or the abomination that makes desolate. Even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

Okay. Hmm. What should we do with this? Well, we've got 490 years under consideration, 70 weeks.



This 490 years is broken into three pieces, seven weeks, 62 weeks, and one week. If you add up the simple math, that makes 70 altogether weeks, but each week is seven years. So what we have is three periods of time mentioned 49 years, then 434 years, and then seven years.

The last week is seven years, just like all the other weeks. Now, when you take the seven weeks and the 62 weeks together, which are mentioned together, and not much is said about the difference between them, you have 69 of the weeks elapsed. 69 weeks is 483 years.

And only one of the weeks remains to be discussed after verse 25. And that week is discussed in verse 27. He should confirm the covenant with many for a week.

So that's the final seven years. Now, the assumption of all evangelicals is that this 70 weeks began with a particular decree from a Persian king, allowing the Jews to go back and rebuild and restore Jerusalem, which had earlier been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. There were three such Persian decrees, but notice it is from the going forth, verse 25, of the command to restore and build Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, there were three such decrees, one by Cyrus, made in 539 BC, allegedly, and two decrees by Artaxerxes. One was in 458, and the other in 444 BC. And scholars cannot agree among themselves very well on to exactly which of these decrees begins the 490 years ticking away.

There are very good arguments, in a sense, for each of them. And I will not at this point try to determine the answer to it. But it is agreed by all evangelicals that the time begins with one of these decrees.

These decrees all were made within the space of about 100 years of each other, about 90, about 100 years of each other from the earliest to the latest of them. And so even if we cannot decide which of them, and I think it could be decided, but we don't have time to look at all the details on that right now, it's not important. If we could decide which of those it began, then we start measuring 490 years from there.

And certain things are supposed to happen within that 490 years. What are they? Well, six things are mentioned in verse 24. These weeks are determined on your people, the Jews, and your holy city, that's Jerusalem, to what? A, to finish the transgression.

B, to make an end of sins. C, to make a reconciliation for iniquity, to bring an everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. It could be translated the most holy one or the most holy place, either one.

If it's the most holy place, it's referenced the holy of holies. If it's the most holy one, it's probably referenced to Jesus, the Messiah, because he's mentioned in the next verse. But suffice it to say this, there are two opinions as to the fulfillment of these six

purposes.

The dispensationist believes these things have not yet happened, that it is yet future. The finishing of the transgression, the ending of sins, the reconciling for iniquity, the everlasting righteousness being brought in, sealing up the vision and prophecy, anointing the most holy. These are all our future and have not yet been accomplished.

Therefore, the 70 weeks cannot have fully run their course, according to dispensational theology. Historically, Christians have believed, and frankly, I think there's still every reason to believe, that these events were all fulfilled in Christ. That Christ did finish the transgressions.

Christ did make an end of sins. Christ did make reconciliation for iniquity. Christ did bring in everlasting righteousness.

Christ did seal up vision and prophecy. And Christ is the most holy one who was anointed, or alternately, he went into heaven according to the book of Hebrews and anointed the most holy place there at his ascension with his own blood. But you can find, and I don't have time to look at them now because it's not my purpose, Daniel will be studied separately in detail, but you can find New Testament references and Old Testament references confirming that all of these things are accomplished at the first coming of Christ.

And therefore, there are two opinions. One is that the 70 weeks ran out at the first coming of Christ and all these six things were accomplished at that time. The other view, which is the dispensational view, is that these things were not accomplished at that time and they have not yet been fulfilled either.

So the 70 weeks have not yet run out. Now there's a bit of problem with this because everyone agrees that the 70 weeks began to run back four or five hundred years before Christ. And since there's only 490 years to run, it would seem clear that they would have run out by now.

And yet the dispensationalist says that these things have not happened yet. And so because of his insistence that the purpose as mentioned in verse 24 have not occurred, even though the Bible says they have, they have to somehow stretch out the 70 weeks to include not only the 490 years until Christ came, but also the 2,000 years that have elapsed since then and any time that may yet remain before the fulfillment of these purposes. Now, in other words, they have a major taffy stretching act to perform here.

They've got to take 490 years and stretch it out to almost five times that long, at least 2,500 years. How do you do that? Well, these are literalists, remember, they take the Bible literally. So they believe there really are only 490 years.

Although they say that since they began. About 2,400 years have run their course. But

they do take the Bible literally, and therefore they have to say there is a hidden gap somewhere in here that the prophecy doesn't run 490 consecutive years, but it runs actually 483 consecutive years.

And then there's a gap and the remaining seven years come after the gap. This gap, they say, began when Jesus came and has not yet ended. We are living in the gap.

They call it the parenthesis that the church is not really the major fulfillment of God's purposes. As a matter of fact, the church is a parenthesis in God's dealings. Israel is God's real first love, and he's going to get back to them later when he gets done with us.

But we're in the meantime, while he's waiting for the right time to deal with Israel again, he's working with the church in the interim. And so this is an unforeseen gap in the 70 weeks. On this view, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday on the very last day of the 69th week.

And when he did so, this marked the proper time for the Jews to acknowledge him as a Messiah. But they did not. And therefore, the 70th week, instead of being fulfilled, was postponed.

And it will be fulfilled, but it is postponed for now until the proper time, until the rapture of the church. When the church is raptured, then the 70th week will begin. That is the dispensational view.

And the 70th week is the Great Tribulation. Now, does Daniel ever say that the 70th week is the Great Tribulation? Does he even say anything at all that links it with the passages that talk about Great Tribulation? Actually, no. We just read all the verses here.

I don't see anything here that mentions a Great Tribulation. I do see a war. Maybe this is supposed to be the Great Tribulation, but Daniel doesn't link it with that.

There have been many wars. And to suggest that this particular war mentioned here has to be the same war that Revelation is talking about or Matthew 24 is talking about may or may not be valid. We simply can't argue that on a basis of a literal approach to Scripture.

It is simply a guess. It's simply a suggestion. But anyway, what I want to point out is that in order to have a seven-year tribulation, you need to pretty much say that the 70th week of Daniel has been postponed.

And it will happen during the tribulation, and that is where we get the number seven years, because every week of Daniel is seven years, and the 70th week is seven years. Now, I grew up under this teaching, and it never crossed my mind to question for a moment any of the things I've just said. But as time went on, and I talked through Daniel verse by verse many times, I began to say, you know, every time I mentioned there was

this big gap between the 69th and 70th week, I got a little uncomfortable.

Not because I didn't believe it, but because I felt like my listeners might not believe it. And I knew I couldn't prove it, because I began to be painfully aware it's not there. I realized that though I thought I was taking the Scripture literally, I was actually importing into the Scripture things that were, if anything, contrary to what was actually stated.

Because the statement is that there will be 490 years. That seems like a complete period of time, 70 weeks. And between the time a word goes forth to restore and build Jerusalem until the coming of these purposes that will be fulfilled is 490 years, or 70 weeks.

I had to mangle the Scriptures, basically, to find some way to make a period that is stated to be 490 years. I had to somehow make it 2,490 years, and that seemed like a very long stretch. And it was a stretch that I began to become aware was not justified by anything in the passage.

Now, it is argued, but look, I mean, notice the 70th week is set off by itself in the passage. The 70th week is not mentioned until verse 27. The other 69 weeks are mentioned together in verse 25.

But notice also, the whole 70 weeks is broken into three parts, 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week. No one has ever suggested that there's a gap between the first 7 weeks and the next 62 weeks, even though they're mentioned separately. All people agree that after the 7th week came the 8th week and the 9th week and on through the whole 69 weeks.

No one has ever suggested seriously that because the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks are mentioned separately, that they don't follow immediately after one another. Nor would it be natural to assume that the 70th week did not follow naturally after the 69th. If it were the case that it did not, we should hope to see some evidence of it in Scripture.

We do not. There is no evidence in Scripture for it, certainly not in Daniel. And there's nothing in the New Testament to say so either, as we shall see.

It took me many years to sort this out because I didn't have anyone telling me anything. I didn't have any books. I just had to read my Bible.

It took a while for me to come around to what the church always saw before 1830, but I didn't know that anyone had seen it before I did. I thought I was the first, and I realized that I just stumbled on what the church always believed was there until 1830, when Darby came along and made up this idea of an invisible gap. By the way, Darbyites love to have invisible gaps whenever necessary.

There's an invisible gap they postulate in Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2, a gap of 2,000 years between two phrases of a single sentence. And there's other gaps. It's just part of the

Darbyite system that when the Scriptures don't fit what you say is supposed to happen, you just import a gap.

If what the Bible says is going to happen doesn't happen when the Bible says it's going to happen, in your interpretation of things, you simply find a convenient gap to stick in there, and then you can say, well, it will happen when the gap is over. And we're always living in the gap. Now, historically, before Darby came along to solve these problems, the early church didn't know there were problems to solve, because Christians have historically believed that the passage in Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2, that it was fulfilled, and that Daniel 9, verses 24 through 27, were in fact fulfilled.

And the New Testament says so. And therefore, there wasn't a problem to solve. There was no need to import gaps.

But the assumption that prophecy was not fulfilled when it said it would be fulfilled, which is, by the way, not a very God-honoring assumption, not a very high view of Scripture, has necessitated the dispensationist coming up with gaps that do not exist, or at least were never mentioned in the Bible. Now, I told you the other day that it would be very deceptive for someone to talk as if it's only 490 years until something happens, and then it turns out to be really 2,490 years. It'd be as if my kids said, you know, when are you going to take us on our special time? I have special times with my kids usually once a week, each child individually.

And if Timothy said, when's my special time coming up? I said, well, it's coming up in three days. And when I tell him anything like that, he counts the days. And suppose the third day comes, and I don't take him there.

Fourth day, fifth day, sixth day, two weeks, four weeks pass. And he says, hey, I thought you said my special time was in three days. I say, well, it is in fact in three days, but I didn't tell you that between the second and the third day, there's a gap of six months.

Now, that would be analogous to an angel telling Daniel, from this point in time to this point in time will be 490 years. And then really secretly, meaning really, I mean, 2,400 years, but I'm not telling you that. This would be, in fact, a lie.

Therefore, to suggest this gap is to make the angel a liar. I'm sorry, I can't put it any more delicately than that. It makes the angel a misleading messenger who says a certain period, an exact number of years are going to pass.

And when those years pass, certain things will have been fulfilled, but it really didn't happen. It's not God's fault because the Jews rejected the kingdom and therefore it had to be postponed for a few thousand years. But didn't God know that would happen? If that was going to happen, if that's how we'd understand it, then why did he lie? Now, frankly, of course, no one believes that God lies.

Even dispensations don't believe that. They just don't realize that their interpretation of the passage actually turns the messenger of God into a misleading messenger. Now, how did the dispensations understand the actual details of this passage? Well, look in verse 25, from the going forth of the command to restore Bilger's until Messiah, the prince, this is the first coming of Christ.

All agree about that. That's the first coming of Christ. It shall be seven weeks and 62 weeks.

In other words, 69 weeks total from the going forth of the decree until Christ comes. 69 weeks or total 483 years. Now, since people do not agree exactly which of the decrees marks the starting point of this period, it's kind of hard to know precisely what event in the life of Christ is referred to.

It's also not 100% sure whether we're talking about Babylonian years or Jewish years, because Daniel was in Babylon. He might have used Babylonian years, but because he was a Jew, he might have used Jewish years or the angel might have. It's hard to know.

So it's very hard to know exactly when the time began or when it ran out, but we can certainly say within a general framework, it happened right around the time of Christ that this ran its course. Now, the dispensations following Sir Robert Anderson's work in a book called *The Coming Prince*, he calculated mathematically that from the second decree of Artaxerxes in 444 or 445 BC, if you use lunar years, which are 360 days each and measure forward 69 weeks, you come to 32 AD, which he thought was the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. However, most scholars believe that Jesus died not in the year 32 AD, but in the year 30 AD.

So this isn't quite right. The ministry of Jesus, we don't know when it started and we don't know when it ended. All we know in scripture is that Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his ministry.

About 30 could be 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, that's about 30. We don't know. We also don't know exactly how long his ministry was, though most believe it was three and a half years, though there's not certainty on that either.

Some scholars from the same data of scripture think it might've been only two and a half years. So we don't know when Jesus' ministry actually began or ended. It is most widely held by scholars that the ministry of Jesus began around the year 27 AD because it was by one way of reckoning, the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar and Luke places the beginning of John's ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar.

Okay. Well, we, we, what we have to live with is some uncertainty about exact dates. We don't need these dates in order to get the message.

The message is that Jesus came sometime in the second decade or near the end of the

second decade of the, what we call the first century today. And it so happens that by reckoning various ways from these, these different Persian decrees, the 70 weeks runs out in the lifetime of Jesus. Now the dispensationalist thinks that only 69 of those weeks ran out then.

And, and the 69th week brings us to the end of the ministry of Jesus and the triumphal entry followed a week later by his crucifixion. So that the 70th week is still, you know, has to follow that sometime. And they believe there's a big gap.

The more traditional view held by the church throughout most of history was that all 70 weeks ran out. And that as soon as the 69th week was over, the 70th one began, but the 69th week did not bring us to the end of the ministry of Christ. But the 69th week brings us to the beginning of the ministry of Christ.

After all, it says, you know, till Messiah, the Prince, till the appearance of the Messiah. When Jesus began his public ministry is when traditionally Christians have held the 69th week ran out. And then Jesus confirmed or sought to confirm with many the covenant for a remaining week, the 70th week.

But in the middle of the week, that is after three and a half years of ministry, the Messiah was cut off and caused an end of the sacrificial system. Now, of course, the Jews still offered sacrifices for a while after that, but Jesus brought the system to an end as far as its legitimacy is concerned. Jesus put an end to the sacrificial system.

You can prove that to yourself easily enough by reading Hebrews chapter 10. And therefore, the belief of the church has been historically in verses 26 and 27. And I believe I came to this on my own without knowing that anyone in the church would believe that this is just my exegesis of the passage that the Messiah came at the end of the 69th week.

He, his ministry began the 70th week. And in the middle of the 70th week does after three and a half years, he was put to death. It says in verse 26, after the 62 weeks or after the 69th week, the Messiah should be cut off.

Now, it does not say that verse how much afterward he appears in the 69th week after 69 weeks. And then sometime after that, he's cut off. But it is in verse 27 that tells us how long after that, because it says in verse 27, then he, which has historically been understood to be in the Messiah, shall confirm a covenant with many for one week.

That is, he came to establish and reconfirm God's covenant with his people. The many are the remnant of the Jews who followed him, the disciples and so forth, who became the church. But in the middle of the week, that's three and a half years later, he shall bring an end to the sacrifices and offerings, which he did.

Okay. Jesus ended the sacrificial system three and a half years after he began his

ministry, probably. And therefore he was cut off in the middle of the 70th week.

The 70th week already was started. Now people say, what happened to the other three and a half years of the 70th week? There's a lot of ways to look at that. One is that we don't know when it ended exactly.

Some people believe that the conversion of Paul or Saul might have marked the end of the three and a half years after Christ. We don't know exactly when he was converted, but there's, it can be suggested that he may have been converted about three or three and a half years after Christ was crucified, or it might've been the stoning of Stephen, which resulted in a scattering of Christians throughout all the world preaching the gospel. Notice the end of the 70th week is the end of God's dealings with Israel.

And we do know that all evangelism was directed toward Israel until Stephen was stoned and people began out to go out and preach to other people as well as Jews. And maybe the conversion of Saul would be more significant because he's the first apostle whom God called specifically go to the Gentiles, which might mark the end of God's distinct dealings with only the Jews. Because we know for several years after Pentecost, only Jews were evangelized.

God was still dealing only with Israel for a while. We don't know how long exactly three and a half years might be the length, but we couldn't prove it. All we can say is it's a reasonable suggestion.

Some people think there is in fact a gap between the last half of the 70th week and the first half. Now admittedly, there's no mention of a gap and there might not be, but some feel there's about a 40 year gap and they believe that after Jesus was crucified, God gave Israel 40 years, one generation, just like he did when they came out of Egypt before they went into the promised land, gave them 40 years to get their act together before he realized his promises to them, that there was a generation of transition between the generation that left Egypt and that which came into the promised land. Likewise, it is suggested from the time that God made the new covenant at the cross till the time he actually caused all of his wrath on the disobedient Israel to come down in 70 AD, there was a generation.

And we know for a fact that the war of the Jews that ended up in the destruction of Jerusalem was three and a half years long. It began just three and a half years before it ended. And therefore, some think that the second half of the 70th week was postponed for a generation.

Now, if we're going to take that position, then we have to perhaps moderate the mockery of those who say there's a gap of 2000 years. However, I would dare say that if there is a gap at all, it is much more reasonable to suggest a single generation than 50 generations gap in the period of time. But I'm not sure that I would go with that



explanation.

I'm just saying there are different ways of explaining it. The main thing is there is nothing compelling that would suggest that the 70th week is still future now. Now, let me show you something here.

In verse 26 and 27 of Daniel nine, it tells you, verse 26, first of the Messiah being cut off. And then it tells of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. It says the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

That is Jerusalem in the temple. I'll agree about that. Likewise, verse 27 talks about the death of Jesus and its accomplishment of the bringing of an end of the sacrifice and offering.

And then the second half of verse 27 talks about the destruction of Jerusalem again on the wing of abomination shall be one who makes desolate even until the consummation, which is determined is poured out on the desolate. Jesus walked out of the temple in Matthew 23, said, your house has left you desolate. And it only remained for the consummation to be determined, which is wrath poured out on the desolate, the desolate temple that Jesus declared desolate.

Interestingly, Jesus in Matthew 24, verse 15 said, when you see the abomination that causes desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, that's how he words it in Matthew 24. But if you look at the parallel statement in Luke 21 and verse 20, which is clearly the parallel Luke has Jesus saying, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation is near. Interesting.

Matthew has Jesus speaking about the abomination of desolation spoken of in the prophet Daniel. Luke interprets his words as being when the Romans come, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, its desolation is near. In other words, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, according to a comparison of Matthew and Luke's parallels on that statement, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is the abomination of desolation.

So that in Daniel nine 26, we have a reference to the death of the Messiah, followed by a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. In verse 27, we have the same two events, the death of the Messiah seen from another angle, different effects of it being mentioned and the destruction of Jerusalem. These two are like two parts of one thing.

Now, it does not necessarily say that the destruction of Jerusalem will fall within the 70th week. It doesn't say that. Though some think it is implied, and that would give them reason to make the Jewish war from 66 to 70 AD be the last half of the 70th week.

But it's not my point to establish that because I'm not sure. I just don't know. All I can say is this.

Nothing in the passage necessarily speaks of a future 70th week that we still look forward to. Everything in the passage suggests that when the 69th week ends, the 70th week begins. And we'll run its course.

Now, I will tell you what the dispensationist thinks. The dispensationist thinks that in verse 27, we're already in the tribulation period of the future. He does believe dispensationists do believe that the people of the prince who is to come in verse 26 are the Romans coming in the days of Titus who destroyed the city in the century.

They agree that that is 70 AD. But when you get to verse 27, you're no longer at 70 AD. You're now in the future.

You're now in the future tribulation. And he who shall confirm a covenant with many for one week and then break it in the middle or cause the sacrifice and offering to cease in the middle week is the Antichrist. Suddenly, the Antichrist comes into the passage, though he has not been mentioned anywhere previously.

Now, normally, when you have a pronoun like he, there needs to be found an antecedent to the pronoun. In other words, you don't just start off a sentence out of the blue and say, he said this. You have to have previously mentioned who he is.

And there must be an antecedent to the pronoun. He is a pronoun. Who is the antecedent? Well, the last mentioned person who is the subject of a sentence in the previous sentence was the Messiah.

Therefore, the logical assumption is that he in verse 27 is the Messiah. Messiah in verse 26 is the most reasonable antecedent to he in verse 27. So we would expect, as the church always did believe that verse 27 is in fact talking about the Messiah.

He will confirm the covenant. He will cause the sacrifice and offerings to cease. We know this actually happened.

The dispensationists got a new idea. No, he in verse 27 is not the Messiah verse 26, but he is the prince who is to come in verse 26. And that is the Antichrist.

And therefore he is the Antichrist and he will make a seven year covenant with Israel and allow them to rebuild the temple. But he will break that covenant and cause them to stop offering sacrifices by putting his image in the temple. Now, I want you to be aware of the situation when anybody tells you there's going to be a seven year tribulation.

When someone tells you there's going to be a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, when someone tells you there's going to be, the Antichrist will make a seven year covenant with Israel. When anyone tells you that the Antichrist is going to break a covenant with Israel, they are talking about this one verse. There is no other verse to substantiate any of those propositions.

This one verse, Daniel 9, 27 is the whole scriptural case for the idea of the Antichrist making a covenant with Israel and breaking his covenant three and a half years later. That is like a norm of expectation among all dispensational evangelicals. But very few realize that there's not a line of it in Thessalonians.

There's not a line of it in revelation. There's not a line of it in Matthew 24 or any parallel passage. The only suggestion anywhere in the scripture that can be suggested, there could be a seven year covenant made with Israel broken in the middle of the week is this one verse.

And that assumes that he in verse 27 is the Antichrist. Now there are two reasons to dispute this. And these are based just on literal interpretation of Daniel.

First of all, as I said, the most natural antecedent for he in verse 27 is the Messiah in verse 26. The Messiah is the subject of a sentence. Uh, at least he is the subject of the, of the discussion.

He's not the subject of the sentence technically until Messiah, the Prince, that's actually the, uh, you know, the, the principal person, the principal Prince. He is the subject matter. He is the one concern and he is the subject of the sentence in verse 26.

I'm sorry. Verse 25 mentioned the Messiah as the object of preposition, but verse 26, he is in fact, the sentence, uh, subject, the Messiah shall be cut off. So the Messiah is the subject of the sentence in verse 26.

Who is the Prince that shall come? Well, first of all, he's not even the subject of a sentence. He's not, he's not a prominent part in that verse. The subject of the sentence that he is part of is the people of the Prince who is to come.

The people are the subject. The Prince who is to come is the object of a preposition describing whose people they are. The Prince that shall come plays a very subordinate role in that sentence, not a very high visibility role.

There are people who destroy the city in the century. They are the Romans, the Prince that shall come. It's the, it's his people who do it.

Now, it is not likely that this lesser character in verse 26 suddenly becomes the dominant character in verse 27 without notice. And yet that is the assumption. Now there's an additional problem.

And that is that even if we were to make the Prince that shall come the subject of verse 27, there's no reason to make the Prince that shall come a future antichrist. Everyone agrees, including dispensations, that verse 26 is talking about the Roman invasion of Jerusalem and the destruction of Jerusalem. And the Prince, the people who did that were the Romans.

Their Prince was Titus. He lived, he died, he's gone. He's not a future antichrist.

And there is absolutely nothing to suggest otherwise in the passage. Now some say, but wait, no, no, no, no. Titus has already come, but this is a Prince who is to come.

That's future. Hey, wake up, wake up. Daniel wrote this before Titus came.

He, just because something was future from Daniel's point of view, doesn't mean it's still future now. To speak of a people who would come and destroy the city of the sanctuary before it happened is the right way to speak about it. And to speak of their Prince as one who is to come before he came was a proper way to speak of it.

There is, if we want to go with literal interpretation of scripture, we have to say that this is talking about Titus and the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. He is not, however, the subject of the next sentence, but the Messiah who is the prominent character in both 25 and 26 is also the prominent character in verse 27. This is natural, grammatical, historical interpretation.

To make the antichrist who doesn't, isn't even mentioned in this whole passage, to make the antichrist the subject and main focus of verse 27, he just appears out of thin air without any prior mention of him, is outrageously artificial. And it is importing into the text something that Daniel never dreamed of, apparently. He never said so if he did dream of it.

And, you know, no one dreamed of it until Darby. And so I frankly don't think Darby had an inspired, I don't think he was as inspired as Daniel, so that he can change what Daniel said and reverse it to mean something opposite of what Daniel said. I'll just take Darby to be another mistaken man, like so many others who had, like myself, the possibility of misinterpreting scripture.

Darby certainly seemed to do that in Asus. Now, we see then that the whole reason for believing in a seven year duration of the so-called tribulation is not based on any solid foundation biblically. It is the mere assumption that the 70th week of Daniel is still future and that it is the future tribulation.

It is that assumption merely that gives us the doctrine of the seven year tribulation. And then that is imported into our interpretation of Revelation. So that when we see the repeated references in Revelation to three and a half years, with this imported idea, we either make each case refer to either the first or the second three and a half years, rather than taking Revelation more naturally and assuming that the three and a half years always is the three and a half years, the same period of time.

So here we go. Now, one other thing I need to say quickly, and this has given a very short attention to something that really deserves far more. You can read my book, Four Views of Revelation, if you want to get a better treatment of this.

But I just want to say, when we look at the book of Revelation, we need to guard against the assumption that we're reading about things still future. It seems to be almost universally held among modern evangelicals that Revelation is a book about the end times. That is, the times that are still future before the end of the world, before Jesus comes back.

There are some things in the book of Revelation that suggest this possibility, but there are equally as many, if not more, that suggest an opposite possibility. In Revelation one, in verse one, John said, this is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants things which must shortly take place. And in verse three, blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it for the time is near.

John indicated that the events predicted in the book of Revelation would shortly take place. Now, he wrote this 2000 years ago, so shortly would not be 2000 years. And that the time was at that time near.

Furthermore, if you'll turn to Revelation 22, after John wrote these things, an angel said to John, in John 22, verse 10, and he said to me, do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is at hand. Once again, the time of its fulfillment was near, at hand. And he said, don't even seal the book because it's at hand.

You may remember if you've read Daniel before, that in Daniel chapter 12, twice Daniel is told to seal up the book that he wrote. Daniel 12.4 and Daniel 12.9. Why? Because it was not to have an immediate fulfillment, he was told. Seal up the book.

It's not for you. Go your way, Daniel. The book is sealed up until the time of the end.

In other words, Daniel's prophecy, Daniel is not to expect a very soon fulfillment of his prophecy, so he's supposed to seal it up and put it in storage. John, on the contrary, is told, don't seal this. The time is at hand.

He is told the time of its fulfillment is not very far off. Don't put this book in storage. It's applicable now.

And it is a direct and deliberate contrast with Daniel. That Daniel was told to seal the book because it would not be immediately fulfilled in Daniel's time. John is told, don't seal your book because it is to be immediately fulfilled in your time.

It is implied. Now, of course, the dispensationists believe that Revelation is all about the future, and therefore it wasn't fulfilled very soon after John's time. But they say, well, shortly come to pass.

Time is near. Realize that with God, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day. And sure, it's been a couple of thousand years, but that's really kind of close,

really, because, I mean, that's like two days to God.

Well, God was not communicating to himself. He was communicating to people. He was not writing a book of comfort to himself.

He was writing a book of comfort to persecuted Christians in the first century. And to tell such people the time is near. Hold on.

It's at hand. Don't even seal the book because it's that close. And then God secretly in his mind went, I mean, two thousand years, but I'm not telling you that.

It is kind of deceptive again. I mean, if God was writing a book to himself, then he could say, hold on, God, it's only a little while more, just two thousand years. And because that's only two days to you.

But God was writing a book to people. And I don't know any person on earth to whom two thousand years is a very short time, especially suffering people who are promised that they will be vindicated shortly and that God will judge their enemies before long and so forth. If this was actually two thousand years off, then I dare say then in saying that these things will shortly come to pass is saying nothing at all.

You might as well not have any statement about it at all. Why not just not make any comment about fulfillment since it might be thousands and thousands of years off and still be a short time to God? What's the point of deceiving the readers with these comments? Why not just say nothing? Because you are saying nothing. If you say the time is near and by near, you mean any length of time might be near.

Obviously, we are kind of out of whack here and we're not taking the Bible literally. If we say that the book of Revelation was not fulfilled shortly after it was written because it said it would be, it said it emphatically and repeatedly. And a person who says it was not fulfilled back then is simply a person who cannot take Revelation literally.

In its plain statement. And therefore, when we look at evidence from Revelation, which we will, as we continue this study, we need to remind ourselves that we have been told this is all future and applied to a future tribulation. But the book of Revelation itself suggests not so.

The book of Revelation itself says, no, these are things that were shortly going to come to pass. If John was right, if the angel was right, if Jesus was right, then it must have shortly come to pass after it was written because he said it would. And we believe Jesus, not Darby.

We will continue this study of the great tribulation in our next session. We'll look at some of these other considerations that are thought to prove that there is such a future tribulation. I believe that we will have reason to doubt it by the time we finish our

exploration here, but we will also look in great detail at the Olivet discourse eventually here, but we got several more sessions to take and probably tomorrow we'll get around to talking about the Antichrist, whether the Bible talks about a future Antichrist, not tomorrow, excuse me, the next session, which is shortly.

Okay.