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What is the Tribulation?



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg delves into the concept of the tribulation in the context of biblical prophecy, questioning the traditional view held by evangelical Christians in America. He notes that there is no clear biblical evidence for a seven-year tribulation period or the pre-tribulation rapture and suggests that tribulation is a normative Christian experience. The interpretation of Daniel 9 and the timing of the last half of the 70th week are unclear and subject to varying opinions and theories. Despite this, believers are reminded to focus on being ready and occupying until Christ's return.

Transcript

We just take a moment to pray. Thank you, Father, for another opportunity to be with people who are your children and your servants and who are hungry for your word. People don't come out on a Monday night to hear a Bible study unless they are hungry for the word of God.

And I pray, Father, that your sheep who have come to be fed will not be disappointed, even if surprised. And sometimes your word surprises us. And I pray, Father, that you'll give us the ability to at least think objectively about what your word says and be willing, if necessary, to modify our own thinking where that might be helpful or necessary.

And we ask that Jesus be glorified in our midst, that we will adore him more and follow him more faithfully as a result of spending yet one more night in your word. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, again, after I talk tonight, I'm going to let you have questions, any questions you want, about the subject matter. Wednesday night, we're going to have a more generic Q&A where you could ask more questions about, like, what I talked about last night or what I talked about tonight or any other biblical subject that you've been reading about and have, you know, interest in knowing more about, we'll talk about. Now, I don't, I don't always, I don't usually choose my topics when I come to preach someplace, unless the pastor wants me to.

Pastor Steve asked if I would actually talk about what the Bible says or does not say

about the seven year tribulation. Now, I have to tell you that my understanding of Bible prophecy has changed a great deal in the decades that I've been studying and teaching the Bible. My views originally were those which are usually called the pre-tribulation rapture view, also called dispensationalism.

And this is the view, and I taught it for eight years, that there's going to be before Jesus comes back a seven year period of tribulation, which the Christians will not be here for. That before the tribulation begins, the Christians will be removed from the earth and then great plagues and great disasters will be poured out from heaven on the earth. And then from hell will arise the man of sin and the Antichrist.

And he will, of course, wreak havoc upon the saints who, of course, will not be the church. The church will have been raptured before this. And so the saints would be then anyone who is converted after the rapture of the church.

And this is called the pre-tribulation rapture. This view holds that the tribulation is seven years long. The first three and a half years, they sometimes call the tribulation.

And the last three and a half, they call the great tribulation. And on this view, it is generally assumed that the latter three and a half years are much more severe than the first three and a half years. But at the end of the seven years comes the Battle of Armageddon.

And during the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus actually returns to earth with his saints. And on this view, then he sets up a millennial kingdom and reigns for a thousand years. And at the end of that time, Satan is loose for a while again.

And then there's a new heavens and new earth. This is all part of the end times scheme called dispensationalism. I and most evangelicals in America have been taught this view.

And I have to say that I did not know for the early years that I was teaching it that this was a view that nobody in the church ever taught prior to the 19th century. That is, if you read the church fathers, you read the medieval church, you read the reformers, you read the, you know, the Wesley's or those kind of people back in the 1700s. They never believed there was going to be a pre-tribulation rapture.

But this view arose in the 1830s with a man who was in the Plymouth Brethren movement named John Nelson Darby. And Darby's views became very prominent in evangelical circles, not only in England, which was his home country, but also in America. In fact, since America became such an evangelical powerhouse in the world, dispensationalism taking hold as it did in America became sort of the prominent view of end times prophecy.

When I was young, when I was 16 years old, Hal Lindsay wrote a book called The Late Great Pan of Earth, indicating that the last days were upon us immediately. That Jesus

was going to rapture the church, you know, before you could say Jack Robinson. And then we were facing the rise of the Antichrist during the tribulation.

And Jesus would be back, he said, before 1988. This was based on his assumption that Jesus said that the generation that would see Israel become a nation again, which happened in 1948 in our modern era, that generation would not pass before all prophecy was fulfilled. That would include the whole tribulation and the end of the tribulation when Jesus comes back.

Since Hal Lindsay believed, and I did too, that the rapture would happen seven years before the end, and the end had to be before 1988, therefore the rapture had to come before 1981. In fact, in a television interview, Hal Lindsay actually said back in the 70s, he said, either I am a hero or I'm a bum. He says, if Jesus comes back and raptures the church by 1981, I'm a hero.

If he does not, I'm a bum. Well, he's still around. I don't know how he would describe himself at the moment, but Jesus did not come back in 1981 or 1988.

Although Edgar Wisenot put out a book and sent it to every pastor in the United States called 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Must Occur in 1988. It didn't. And so he put out a book the next year saying 89 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Occur in 1989.

He missed that one too. And then we had, of course, there was a major Korean Christian movement in the 90s that said Jesus was going to come back in the early 90s. And then on the radio, on family radio, Harold Camping predicted in, I think it was 96, he said Jesus is definitely going to come back.

He'd done all these calculations, and it didn't happen. And he didn't learn his lesson. He made another prediction.

I think it was 2011 he believed Jesus would come back. When he didn't, Harold Camping just had a stroke or heart attack and died. And he didn't outlive his prediction by very long.

Hal Lindsay, in the meantime, who's still alive and wrote The Late Great Planet Earth, had influenced a whole generation, my generation, to believe that Bible prophecy is almost immediately going to be fulfilled, that most of us will not live to old age. Many people my age chose not to have children, because they thought, well, Jesus is coming back too soon. Won't be able to raise them.

Some didn't go to college. I'm one of those. I didn't go to college, and it was because.

I thought, well, what's the point? Rapture's coming any day now. And, I mean, there were many like me. Hal Lindsay didn't recommend that people don't go to college or don't have children.

But that was the way many people were influenced, because the tribulation was coming. Of course, we believed that we wouldn't be here for that, but that's just the point. We're not going to be here much longer, we said.

Now, this is, of course, you realize, 50 years ago. And if you'd gone back another 50 or another 100 or another 300, another 600 or another 900 years before that, you would have found Christians saying, the tribulation is upon us also. The second coming of Christ is coming.

Although they would not in those years have spoken about a pre-tribulation rapture. Well, I eventually gave up my view of a pre-tribulation rapture. And many people, therefore, would say, well, you don't believe the rapture.

I have a radio program, if you didn't know, and people do call in with questions. And sometimes I say, I know you don't believe in the rapture. I say, wait a minute, I do believe in the rapture.

It's right there. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 16, 17. We who are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

That's the rapture. Of course, I believe in the rapture. The church has always believed in a rapture.

What the church has not always believed is that the rapture is separated from the second coming of Christ by a period of seven years. That is, they didn't believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. And in many cases, did not believe in a seven-year tribulation at all.

How could they not? Well, this is the thing we want to explore. What does the Bible say and what does it not say about the tribulation? And I will say that, again, I spent eight years teaching dispensationalism. And I only very gradually changed my mind point by point on certain issues.

I don't expect anyone here who's unfamiliar with anything other than dispensationalism, and many Christians are not familiar with anything other. I don't expect to change your mind tonight. If you say, well, this guy's here trying to promote heresy.

I'm not trying to promote anything. I don't care if you go away disagreeing or agreeing. I'm an educator.

I'm not here to require people to believe anything. I would like to share with you the things that I learned over a period of many years. They may not sit well with you tonight, and that's okay.

I'm not going to feel bad about it. If you never agree with what I say, I won't feel bad about it. That's the important thing to note, is that we are not all at the same point in our

journey of learning.

And if you think I've gone off on a side road in the wrong way, well, that's a possibility because I'm entirely capable of doing that. But I would suggest that as we consider the subject, we consider what the Scripture actually says. And this is the process that led me eventually to reach views that I now hold.

Now, I don't hold these views like as some kind of oddball. The views I now hold have been held by people in church history for centuries. This is something that I wasn't taught by my teachers because they didn't know this either.

They were taught by dispensational teachers who had been taught by their dispensational teachers. And then they taught me dispensationalism. Then I taught dispensationalism.

This is what teachers do. They learn from their teachers, and they repeat it and perpetuate what they learned. Unless they just begin to study critically a Bible that is critically of their own presuppositions and begin to see, is this what the Bible says? In fact, the reason I gave up my view of the Pre-Trib Rapture, I'll tell you this little story.

It's a true story. I had taught it for about six or seven years at a certain point in time. And I had students who had been sitting under me for some years.

And one of my students said to me, he left and went to another Bible college, and his professor didn't believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. And I did. And I'd been teaching it.

And this guy came to me, and he said, the student came to me and said, I have a professor who doesn't believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. I need you to give me all the ammunition I can get to convince him of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Now, I have to say, with all modesty and humility, nobody could necessarily defend the Pre-Tribulation Rapture better than I could.

Now, that doesn't sound very modest. And maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there are people who could.

But I was pretty convincing. I knew every biblical argument by heart. In fact, I knew of 20 scriptures, which if I were in a debate with somebody about it, I could prove the Pre-Tribulation Rapture just off the top of my head.

But I could give most of them by memory now, even though I changed my mind 40 years ago, 45 years ago. But I knew my stuff. And I sat down, OK, you've got a professor who's doubting this.

You sit right down here with me, and I'll just load you up with ammunition for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. And I went one after another through all 20 of the scriptural

passages that, to me, proved the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. And although I didn't say it to him at all, because I didn't think it would be safe to say it, as I looked at each one, through the eyes of what I knew his professor would be saying.

See, I knew that these scriptures proved it to me because I believed it. But would they prove it to someone who didn't believe it? That was the question. This is the first time I was really asking myself that question as I read these scriptures.

You know, this scripture would prove it if a person already thinks it's true. It would support their assumption. It can be seen that way.

But if a person is doubting it, this scripture doesn't really say it. It could easily be seen another way if you start with different presuppositions. So I thought, it must be the next scripture.

I went one scripture after another. Every single one I showed this guy, I had the same impression. If a person believes in the pre-tribulation rapture, this scripture will support it, as it does for me, who believed it.

But I was thinking, the professor's going to see right through this. This doesn't say there's going to be a pre-tribulation rapture. And the more of these proof texts I went through, the more uncomfortable I became thinking, where is that scripture that actually says there is a pre-tribulation rapture? I thought, if you have a scripture somewhere that says it plainly, these other scriptures would be good supporting texts.

But you have to have something that says it before you can read it into these other scriptures that don't say it. And I got through the whole list. And when I did, I wasn't honest enough to say to this young man, you know what, these are not very good proof texts.

Because I still believed it was true. I thought, OK, none of these actually say it really very plainly. But 20 things that kind of can support it, that's a pretty good case for it.

And I really did believe it was true, even though I came to realize my scriptural case for it was exceedingly weak. When I thought it was exceedingly strong, all you have to do sometimes is look at the scriptures you're using to prove a point through the eyes of someone who doesn't already believe it. And say, well, is there something in this passage that would require them to believe what I'm saying? Is there something in it that cannot be understood differently than the way I'm understanding it? And that's the first time I looked at those scriptures through that lens, I thought, all the scriptures I have, and there are a lot of them, they all support the pre-tribulation rapture if you already believe in the pre-tribulation rapture.

But the church did not believe in the pre-tribulation rapture. No one in the church did until 1830-something. It was Darby, John Nelson Darby, who introduced the idea for the

first time, and he himself said no one taught it before him.

He said he had rediscovered apostolic teachings that had been forgotten by the church after the apostles died, and he had just rediscovered them in the 1830s. You know, Joseph Smith said exactly the same thing about his doctrine in around 1830s. He said the church had lost the true gospel after the apostles, and that he had rediscovered it.

An angel Moroni had given it to him on gold plates when he started the Mormon church. Interesting that a man in England and a man in America, both of them in the same general time period in the 1830s, rediscovered the true gospel that the apostles had taught but no one else had taught until it was rediscovered by them. But it wasn't the same one.

Darby did not become a Mormon, and the Mormons did not become dispensationalists. And I don't believe either of them rediscovered the true gospel. I don't think the true gospel was ever lost.

I think it has been obscured from time to time, but I don't think there's ever been a time where you could not find people in the church who knew the basics of the gospel. Now, when it comes to eschatology, that's a little more arcane, that's a little more abstract. And there have been a number of opinions about eschatology from the beginning of church history.

But none of them, as far as we know, until the 1800s, believed there'd be a preacher rapture. And when you go trying to prove all the Christians in history wrong before you, you better have some good, strong scriptural arguments. And as I showed this guy these arguments, I realized I didn't.

Now, I give you that not because I want to talk about the pre-tribulation rapture. I want to talk about the tribulation itself. Because I did, eventually, it wasn't immediately after that conversation, but within a couple of years, I had seen some other scriptures that proved to me there is not a pre-tribulation rapture.

Not just that the case for it was weak, but the case against it was airtight. Jesus himself said that he will raise his people up on the last day. If there's seven years after that, or three and a half years after that, or even one day after that, then it wasn't the last day.

And four times, in John 6, verse 39, verse 40, verse 44, and verse 54, four times Jesus said, I will raise my people up on the last day. The last day would be a day after which there are no other days. There's not another seven years.

There's not another three and a half years. There's not even another day. It's the last day.

So, unless Jesus was using words in a unique way, which he never explained to anybody,

then he was being very deceptive if there's a pre-trib rapture, or even a mid-tribulation rapture, or any other rapture other times than the second coming of Christ on the last day. So, over time, I began to see this as I became more and more willing to. But then there was something else that came up.

I was with another Bible teacher who I ministered alongside. We lived in Santa Cruz, California, on a beach town, and we were on the beach together talking about the things of God, about the Bible. And he said to me, Steve, where in the Bible do we get the idea of a seven-year tribulation? And I thought, nobody doubts that there's a seven-year tribulation.

The question is not if there's a seven-year tribulation. The question is whether the rapture is before, in the middle, three-quarters of the way through, as the people who are at the pre-wrath rapture have, or at the end of it. The seven-year tribulation is a given.

The controversy is over when does the rapture happen with reference to it. And when my friend said, where in the Bible do we even find a seven-year tribulation? I began to think again. That's my problem.

I think too much. But when people challenge something I believe, I want to make sure I've got the Bible on my side. I thought and I thought and I thought, like Pooh Bear, the bear with very little brain, think, think, think.

I thought, you know what? In my mind, I can scan the whole Bible. I mean, I've done it many times. I'm not bragging.

That's just the way God made my mind. People who have ministered with me say, when someone asks me a Bible question, they can just see the Rolodex going around in my mind, picking out the scriptures relevant to it. That's just, I've never done anything but study scripture all my life.

So that's just what happens. So he said, where is the seven-year tribulation? I scanned every prophetic book, every New Testament book in my mind. I said, I think there's a couple of things.

One is Revelation talks about three and a half years. But it mentions three and a half years five different times. And I think one of those is the first half and the other is the second half with tribulation.

So that would make seven years. But Revelation never mentions a seven-year tribulation. In fact, it never even tells us that there are two different periods of three and a half years.

It just mentioned three and a half years and it mentions that five different times without

saying that there are two such periods. But that was something I had always read into the book of Revelation because I believe there was a seven-year tribulation. I thought, well, where else is there one? There was one other place, and this was probably the main one, and that was in Daniel chapter 9 in the 70 weeks.

We're not going to look at that right this minute, but we will at the end of my talk tonight. But I realized that Daniel chapter 9, I was bringing some assumptions to that too, which my dispensational teachers had taught me and which, as I thought about it, I wasn't sure there was any real basis for them. And maybe there's a reason why the church didn't teach it before the 1800s.

Because it's not there. Now, I'm going to talk about the 70 weeks of Daniel as the closing of this lecture, but I want to lead up to it by talking about what the Bible says about tribulation in general. The word tribulation occurs about 27, 28 times, 29 times in the New King James Version.

Now, different translations will translate the word philipsis with different words like affliction or trouble or things like that. The word philipsis in the Greek, it literally means pressure. It means being put under pressure.

But the King James and the New King James usually translate it with the word tribulation. Now, of these 29 times that you find the word tribulation in the New King James Version, how many of them are talking about a specific period of tribulation? Frankly, not very many are. Because in most cases, the word tribulation is not referring to a specific period of tribulation, but it's a generic reference to trials that Christians have.

Sometimes the word is in the plural, like tribulations. You'll experience tribulations. But whether it's singular or plural, it's talking about trials.

And in almost every case, it's talking about the experience of Christians. Now, of course, as a dispensationalist, I knew that. And if someone had brought that up, I would have said, well, yeah.

Yeah, tribulation, generically, Christians go through. But we won't go through the Great Tribulation. We won't go through the Seven-Year Tribulation.

We'll have tribulations in sort of a general sense through our lives, but not the Great Tribulation. Now, of course, I was assuming that based on certain things I've been taught and certain things I had not challenged. But the truth is, the word tribulation is a very common word in the New Testament.

Though in referring to any particular period of tribulation, it's very unusual. In fact, there might only be two places. There could be three or maybe even four, but there's not very many where the word tribulation is referring to an actual period of time called that.

Before we look at those passages, let me just show you how the word is typically used in Scripture. In Matthew 13, Jesus is telling the parable of the seeds that fell on different kinds of soil. He later explained that this refers to the Word of God being expounded and scattered among hearers.

And the different kinds of soil represent the different conditions of the hearts of those who hear it. And therefore, different responses lead to different degrees of fruitfulness or not, depending on the condition of the heart that receives the word. Now, there was a reference to seeds that fell on shallow soil.

He called it rocky soil. There was stone, but there's a thin layer of dirt above it. And the seed penetrated enough to heat up and spring up.

But because there was rock at a very shallow level, the seed could not put down roots. And when the sun came up, Jesus said, the seed burned up because it had no root to get the moisture from below. It just burned up.

Now, when he explained that parable, what it was talking about, in Matthew 13 and verse 21, Jesus said, I better give you verse 20 and 21. But he who receives seed on the stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he has no root in himself, for he endures only for a while.

For when tribulation and persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. In other words, he loses his faith because persecution and tribulation come to him because he's a Christian. Of course, this is not talking about any particular period of tribulation, but it's just using the word tribulation to refer to something that happens in the Christian life and which will drive some people away from Christ if they don't have roots deeply planted in Christ.

When those tribulations arise. That's obviously very generic. Jesus, in John chapter 16, made a very important statement about this.

And I say it's very important because many people I knew when I was younger and was teaching and everyone I knew believed in a pre-tribulation rapture. Sometimes people got so weird, they'd say, well, if there's not a pre-tribulation rapture, I'm not sure I even want to be a Christian. Which is really a dangerous thing to say.

Because what they pictured happening in the tribulation was what? A bunch of plagues, like you read about in the book of Revelation, and an Antichrist who cuts off the heads of people who don't worship him. That's pretty much the scary part of the scenario as it's taught in dispensationalism. And I was thinking, you know, these plagues, you know, even if I was here and God was pouring out plagues, he wouldn't pour them on me.

When he put plagues on Egypt, they came on the Egyptians, not on the Israelites. God doesn't put plagues on his own people. If God pours out plagues on the earth, and if I'm

here, it says in Psalm 91, no plague shall come nigh your dwelling.

A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not touch you. Only with your eyes will you see and behold the reward of the wicked. So any plagues that God pours out on the wicked, if I'm not one of the wicked, I don't have anything to worry about them.

Just like Israel in Egypt. Ten plagues came on Egypt, but they didn't affect the Israelites, even though they lived there among the Egyptians. So if I'm here during a time when God pours out plagues, okay, I mean, I'll be sad for those people who were plagued.

But God doesn't pour out plagues on his own people, so that's not going to be an issue for me, at least for my safety or my security. The other thing is, what if there's an Antichrist that says, you worship me or you get your head cut off? If I find myself in a situation like that, won't I pretty much be in the same situation all the Christians were in, in the time of the apostles? And in the three centuries following that, until Constantine was converted? And in many parts of the world ever since, in communist and Muslim countries? Do we not know of Christians who have their heads cut off in Muslim countries, even today? Are there not martyrs in communist lands? There have been martyrs for Christ throughout history. Actually, having your head cut off is not the worst way you could go.

Rather quick, rather gruesome, but rather quick. The point is, the tribulation and the worst of it that was imagined in the scenario I was taught was the kind of thing that, okay, I mean, it doesn't sound like a lot of fun, but it's not really much different than Christians have always had to face. What's the big deal? I mean, I'm not trying to sound like a hero, like I don't care, let them cut my head off.

Well, if it comes to that, let them. When I came to Christ, I came all in. I figured, you know, I may die for Jesus.

In fact, I hope I do, because I'm going to die one way or another. Something's going to get you. I've often thought, since I was a teenager, I've thought this way.

Since I'm going to die one way or another, I hope I can die for Jesus. Not everyone gets that privilege. A lot of us just die meaninglessly.

Some people die in accidents and things and nothing, you know. It's wonderful that they go to be with the Lord, but it would be so much more meaningful in a way if they died for Christ and they went to heaven as martyrs. To me, I've always said, I hope I get that.

Not that I look forward to dying, but if I die, something's going to kill me. Might as well be something that I'll be excited about, like dying for Jesus. The apostles rejoice that they're counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ, because they were beaten and threatened with death.

And so, let's just say, if the Tribulation is a seven-year period, as people always depict it, and the Antichrist is there cutting off people's heads, and there's plagues from God coming down on the wicked, you know, it'd be definitely an exceptional period of time because of the plagues, but nothing particularly threatening to Christians that Christians haven't had to face in other times. And yet, so many of the people, I guess very naively that I knew, would say, I never said this even when I believed in the Preacher of Rapture, but many naively said, God would never let his bride go through that kind of a thing. Would you let your wife go through that kind of, you know, situation if you could stop it? God certainly wouldn't let his bride do that.

I think, well, why has he been letting his bride go through that for the last 1900 years? There's really nothing in the Bible that suggests that Tribulation, intense or otherwise, is inappropriate for Christians. Jesus said in John 16, 33, 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.

I said, you live two places, you live in me and you live in the world. In me you'll have peace, in the world not so much. In the world you'll have tribulation, but that doesn't interfere with you having peace in me.

You can have peace in Tribulation. I know, because I've suffered Tribulation before, not the Great Tribulation, but I've suffered horrendous things at times and received grace from God that made it very tolerable. Not fun, but tolerable.

Much more than it would have been without Christ. The truth is that in Christ we do have peace, even though in the world we have Tribulation. Tribulation is not inconsistent with Christian experience.

In fact, it sounds like it's normative for Christian experience. In Acts chapter 14, when Paul, on his first missionary journey, had gone through the region of southern Galatia, and he had built these little groups, congregations, brand new baby churches. When he came back toward his home and went through and visited those churches again, he preached something to them.

And here's what he preached to them. In Acts 14.22 it says, let me give you 21 and 22. When they had preached the gospel in that city, they 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. Through many tribulations we will enter the kingdom of God. Not escaping them, but through them.

Tribulations. Again, we acknowledge this is not talking about a specific period of tribulation. We'll come to that concept in a moment.

In Romans chapter 5, Paul indicates that going through tribulation is not even a negative thing. In Romans chapter 5, in verse 3, Paul said, and not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope, etc., etc. So we glory in tribulations because we see they're functional, they're helpful, they improve us if we respond properly within them.

But they're not something we think, oh, I don't want to be a Christian if I have to have tribulation. Paul says, no, I glory in my tribulations. I glory in my weaknesses, and in my persecutions, and so forth.

He says in 2 Corinthians 2. But over in 1 Thessalonians, now 1 Thessalonians is where Paul talks about the rapture. You know, I do believe in the rapture. But the rapture, the church for centuries believed that the rapture would happen at the end of the world, when Jesus comes back.

But, like I said, in the last less than two centuries, the view has become popular that the rapture happens seven years earlier than that. But how many verses in the Bible are there about the rapture at all? Even that, even, how many verses would we have to remove from the Bible in order to have no concept that there's a rapture at all? There's two passages, basically. One is 1 Thessalonians 4, 16 and 17.

The other is in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 49 through 51, I think it would be about. And both places do talk about the resurrection of the dead, how Christ will raise the dead when he comes, and then those of us who are alive will be caught up, will be changed, and so forth. That is to say, when Jesus comes back, all the Christians will be raised.

The ones who are dead will be raised first from the dead. Those who have not yet died will be raised alive and transformed into the image of Christ, changed into his image and caught up. I believe in that.

I believe in the rapture. But like I say, one of the two places in the Bible that mentions the rapture is 1 Thessalonians. And it also mentions tribulation, but not in connection to the rapture.

In 1 Thessalonians 3, 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. Now what's interesting is in the two passages in the Bible that mention the rapture, neither of them talk about the rapture in connection with the tribulation. They don't say it'll be before, in the middle, at the end.

The tribulation is not mentioned in the same paragraph or even the same chapter with any mention of the rapture anywhere in the Bible. If we say the rapture is before, after, or in the middle of the tribulation, we don't have a verse of Scripture that tells us that. We're putting together different things from different places.

But the interesting thing is, one of the two places, and I'd say the one where Paul most clearly predicts the rapture, the same book, he says, I told you we're going to experience tribulation. He doesn't say we're going to be raptured before we have tribulation or anything like that. Rather, I told you you'd have tribulation, and look, it happened.

You are suffering tribulation. You see, it's very common in the New Testament to speak of tribulation as a normative Christian experience, not as something that's somehow not consistent with Christian status. In 2 Corinthians 1, 4, and after we look at this verse, I'm going to get more specific about the great tribulation, because there are some passages we need to look at.

2 Thessalonians 1, 4, Paul said that we ourselves, both of you, among the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure. Now, both letters to the Thessalonians, in both of which he spoke about eschatology, he also spoke about tribulations, but not eschatologically. Neither 1st or 2nd Thessalonians mentioned tribulations as something that's part of eschatology, but rather part of their present experience in the 1st century.

They were experiencing tribulations. And no matter what century Christians live in, you could write to them and talk the same way. You're experiencing tribulations.

You will experience tribulations. In the world, you'll have tribulation. But be of good cheer.

Christ has overcome the world. In Him, you can have peace. That's the teaching of Scripture about tribulation.

Except in a very few passages that seem to speak of something a little more specific. But we'll see exactly what it says and what it doesn't. If you look at Matthew 24, I don't know how eschatologically attuned you are.

Some people are really into studying the end time passages and prophecies. Other people think it's too confusing. Or some people think it's not confusing.

I'm just not interested in it. But if you're kind of a person who's into end time stuff, then when I say Matthew 24, you instantly say, oh yeah, of course, Matthew 24. You've got to talk about that.

That's where it first mentions the Great Tribulation. Because Matthew 24 is what we call the Olivet Discourse. At least Matthew's version of it.

There's one in Mark 13, one in Luke 21. And they are all the same discourse, paralleled in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But in Matthew 24, the earliest of them in our Bible, that we encounter, we find this statement in verse 21.

He says, Now, prior to this, Jesus says there's going to be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilences in diverse places, false messiahs, false prophets. You'll be persecuted by all men for my name's sake. And at this point he says, Now, I was taught, and probably you were too, that Matthew 24 and its parallels, the Olivet Discourse of Jesus, is talking about the end times.

And when he mentions, with reference to the end times, presumably, there will be Great Tribulation, this becomes the first notice that there might be a time, a specific time, called the Tribulation, or the Great Tribulation. Now, I would point out to you, at this point, we'll look back at Matthew 24 in a moment for other information, but Jesus does not say how long this Tribulation is. He does not say that it's, you know, a month, a year, three and a half years, seven years, a hundred years, a thousand years.

He just says there'll be a Great Tribulation. He doesn't say how long it'll be. No clues about it.

But this is, in fact, the first passage in the New Testament that, as a dispensationalist, I, and all other dispensationalists, look to and say, that's the eschatological seven-year Tribulation he's talking about. Now, a case could be made that it's eschatological, I'm sure, but that it's seven years could not be deduced from this passage or any passage nearby. Now, when is the next time in the Bible that we read anything about the Great Tribulation? Well, we have to go from the first book of the New Testament to the last book of the New Testament.

Revelation chapter 7. Revelation chapter 7. And it says in verse 9, After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, and they were worshiping God, and so forth. And one of the elders said to John, Who are these people? And John said, I don't know. You tell me.

And he said, in verse 14, So he said to me, These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Now, Jesus didn't say anything about the Great Tribulation. He just said, then will be Great Tribulation associated with the prophecy he's giving in Matthew 24.

Revelation, as you may know, has a lot of the same features as Matthew 24. Matthew 24 talks about earthquakes and famines and pestilences, false prophets, false Christ. So does the book of Revelation.

Earthquakes in diverse places. Revelation and Matthew 24 seem to be talking about the same thing. And if they're not, they're talking about two things that are very similar.

I myself would say they're talking about the same thing as each other. I don't know many people who take a different view than that. Whether you're dispensational or not dispensational, most people say what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 24 is essentially

the same thing that Revelation is talking about in these passages.

Now, in Revelation, John is told these are the ones who are coming out of the Great Tribulation. I'm going to assume that he says the Great Tribulation because he's assuming that there is a particular Great Tribulation that John is supposed to be aware of. He doesn't say a Great Tribulation as if he's introducing a new idea.

No, the Great Tribulation. You know, the Great Tribulation. The one you know something about.

That one. How would he know? The only way he could know is because of Matthew 24. Jesus said then there will be Great Tribulation.

Speaking later, the elder says this is the Great Tribulation. You know, the one that Jesus predicted in Matthew 24. Now, once again, Revelation in no place tells us how long this Tribulation will be.

In fact, the only place in the Bible that gives us an actual time referent for how long a period of time of Tribulation would be, and it may not be the same one, but there is a Tribulation time mentioned that does have a time given. You'll find it in Revelation 2 when Jesus is making promises to the church of Smyrna, which was an existing church in what we now call Turkey or what they called Asia Minor in those days. In Revelation 2.10, Jesus said to the church of Smyrna, Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.

Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested and you will have Tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I'll give you the crown of life. You'll have Tribulation ten days.

That's the only place in the Bible that attaches any particular time to a length of any particular Tribulation. Now, if we said, well, the great Tribulation Jesus spoke of is the Tribulation that Revelation is talking about, we'd have to say, well, it's ten days long. However, most scholars, and this doesn't matter what view of prophecy they take, almost all scholars agree that the ten days mentioned here is symbolic.

Some people say it represents ten years. Some people say it represents ten different emperors that persecuted the church. Some people say it's a figurative number that means a long enough time to be uncomfortable but not long enough to be devastating.

Ten days in prison would be very unpleasant, but hey, in two weeks or less you're out. In other words, it's a somewhat severe but not devastating Tribulation. There's a lot of different opinions about what the ten days refers to, but no one I've ever read in any commentary, and he showed you my book called Revelation, Four Views.

I read 50 commentaries on Revelation to write my book, Revelation, Four Views. And in

50 commentaries on Revelation, read from four different positions, I never met any suggestion that the ten days spoken of the Tribulation of Smyrna is literally a ten-day period of time because no one knows of any such. Now, the Church of Smyrna doesn't exist anymore.

It was wiped out. Well, I have to be careful about that. The city of Smyrna is now Izmir in Turkey, and there is a small group of Christians there.

So I guess we could say it still exists. But Jesus said to them, and he was writing to them, what, in the first century, he says, you are about to have this happen. You are about to be thrown into, some of you will be thrown into, the devil is about to throw some of you in prison and you'll have Tribulation.

It sounds like he's not talking about something thousands of years off in the future from his audience's point of view. He's talking to them. And we have to remember this about Revelation, by the way, because Revelation, like all the other books of the New Testament that are not epistles or acts, that are not gospels or acts, Revelation is an epistle.

It's an epistle written to seven churches. And like all epistles, it's relevant to the churches it was written to. It might have extended relevance to others besides, but the first relevance of any epistle is to the church that it's being written to.

When I read 1 Corinthians, I'm not reading an epistle written to the American church. I'm reading out problems that were, that the first, the church in Korinth, when Paul was writing to it. There might be churches today that have similar problems, so I can apply what he says there to those problems in the modern church, but it first applies to them.

The book of Revelation is written to seven existing churches. Smyrna does still exist, but most of the seven churches do not. Five of them don't exist.

Five of them are cities that were wiped out by Muslims back centuries ago, and don't even, some of them don't have cities there anymore, much less churches. Ephesus, the city of Ephesus doesn't exist anymore. And many of these churches, Jesus wrote to, he's writing to people in the first century about things relevant to them in the first century.

And he said to the church of Smyrna, you're about to experience tribulation for ten days. So we have to assume that the tribulation in Revelation is talking about, at least in that verse, isn't in our future, it was in their near future. And that's a very reasonable assumption based on, that's what they would assume, because that's what he said.

That's what he said to them. We should remember that the original audience was supposed to make sense of what was being told them. But what, that raises questions.

What is the time frame then of the great tribulation that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24,

and of the great tribulation in Revelation? I do believe both of them are referring to the same great tribulation, but what is the time frame? Well, the church of Smyrna was told that they were going to have tribulation soon. In fact, if you look at Revelation chapter 1, verse 1, 1 through 3, the first three verses of the book of Revelation are verses that many Christians don't pay any attention to. It's a shame, because the book starts with them and gives you sort of a frame of reference for understanding the book.

That's what introductions are for in books. Here's what it says. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants things which must shortly take place.

When did he write this? In the first century. When did his readers live? In the first century. What was he telling them? These things are going to shortly take place.

In the first century he said that to them. Then it goes on, and he sent it and signified it by his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ of all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it.

For the time is near. Wait a minute. He's writing to seven churches that were in existence at that time.

Five of them aren't in existence anymore. And he's telling them things that are about to happen to them. And he says, listen, these are things that must shortly take place.

This is about to happen. The time is near, he says. Now, if it wasn't really near, he shouldn't have said so.

And I realize that some Christians who are assuming that John's writing about things that were two thousand years off into the future for these people, that he's thinking, well, it's not so much near from our point of view, but from God's. After all, a day to the Lord is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. So actually, it's really a couple thousand years off, but from God's point of view it's near.

Well, then he might as well say nothing about how near or far it is, because if it was a million years off, that's near for God, too. God is not, you know, the whole of human history, thousands of years, even a million years, would be nothing to God. And if God was writing to himself and said the time is near, he could mean thousands of years off, because that's from his frame of reference.

But he's not writing to himself, he's writing to people. I've never yet met a person for whom two thousand years was near. And frankly, if he was saying, it's near, but only from God's point of view, we might say, why even waste the ink? Because that tells me neither whether it's going to be next year or a million years from now.

Why confuse the matter? But if he says it's near to a group of people who are going

through something, and he's making promises to them and warning them about things that are going to happen soon, it seems to me like he's telling them, be ready, because this isn't too far off. And just in case we are not sure that that's how he means it, look at chapter 1 verse 9 of Revelation. This is one of the few places in the Bible that you actually have the definite article the attached to tribulation.

The tribulation. We have it a couple places, as we pointed out, but here's another one. Revelation 1 9. I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ was on the island of Patmos.

Blah, blah, blah. Now he says, I, John, who happened to be writing to you in the first century on the earth from the island of Patmos, I am your companion in the tribulation. Oh.

So, if I'm your companion in a ship, we're both in the ship. If I'm your companion if I'm your companion in the last days, we're both in the last days. If I'm your companion in the tribulation, we're both in the tribulation.

Is that right? I mean, I was, I'm your companion in the tribulation. That doesn't sound like he thought the tribulation was thousands of years off. Sounds like he thought he was in it.

And so were his readers in it. Sounds like to me. And I don't like to read stuff into things.

I used to read stuff into the Bible, but I'm kind of trying to avoid that these days because I think I led myself astray or others weren't allowed to lead me astray when I allowed that to happen. I don't want to read into it. I was just like, what does it say? How was it expected to be understood? And if you look at Revelation 22 10 at the end of the book now, Revelation 22 10.

At the end of the prophecy, it says in verse 10, the angel said to me, see that you do not, well, let me do this. Look down to verse 10. And he said to me, do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is at hand.

Now, we already saw that the time was at hand in Revelation chapter 1. It said that, but this is interesting. It's coupled with the command, do not seal the words of this book because the time is at hand. Does that sound like anything else in the Bible that you can remember? Like the last chapter of Daniel.

Here's the last chapter of Revelation, which bears a lot of resemblance to Daniel. Daniel 12, Daniel said, what shall the end of these things be? And the angel said, seal it up, Daniel, because it's not going to be fulfilled anytime soon. You're going to go to your grave at an old age and in the end of times, you'll rise to your estate.

It's not for you to know. It's not for your generation to know. Just seal up the words of the

book.

The idea is, these prophecies are distant in their fulfillment. Put a seal on it, a wax seal. You can even date it so that later on when it becomes relevant, they can see this prophecy was sealed shut on this date and look in a later date when it's happening and say, wow, it really was predicted.

They would seal up the prophecy because it would be relevant at a later date, not immediately. But John is told the opposite. Don't seal up this prophecy because it's at hand.

How could there be anything more explicit than that? He's saying whereas Daniel's prophecies were way off in the future so he had to seal them off for a later date. Revelation? Not so much. Not so much off in the future.

Don't seal it even. It's near. It's at hand.

It's imminent. Now that makes it sound to me like God himself is telling John or the angels in him these prophecies are not about the end of the world, somewhere way off in the future. These are things about to take place.

Now I know that if you haven't heard that before, you've got to be scratching your head about that and say, what? And you know, all I can say is, I'm not selling my books, but my book does have four views of Revelation. There's one column called the Preterist View that holds that Revelation was in fact fulfilled and the prophecy, you can go through the commentary and see point by point how in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish war, those things that Revelation said would happen, did happen. We'll not worry about proving that right now.

Like I said, I'm not here to prove anything to you. I'm here to take you through the process I went through in being disabused of my earlier views about things. There's nothing in the book of Revelation to say these prophecies are about distant future things.

There's not anything in the book of Revelation that says these prophecies are about the last days or the end of time. We impose that on the book, and it's interesting that Christians didn't for the earliest centuries of the church. The idea that Revelation is pretty much all about the end times was a relatively new idea.

It was earlier than dispensationalism but not much. It came up after the Reformation. It came up in the late 16th century.

The idea that the Revelation is all about the future tribulation, the future Antichrist. Well, it could be true, but let's face it, the first 1500 years of Christians didn't think that. And, you know, they could have been wrong, but let's face it, the Bible does have some

content that leads us to believe maybe this isn't what we've been told it's about.

Maybe it's not about a seven-year tribulation. Even if it is about a future tribulation, there's no mention of seven years. There's mention of ten days, but no one takes that literally.

So, what do we have left to guide us about this? Well, we're talking about the time frame of the tribulation that Jesus and Revelation predict. Let's look back at what Jesus said in Matthew 24. This is where Jesus said, then there shall be great tribulation such as not been since the world began nor ever shall be.

So, that's the first reference to the great tribulation. What does he say about that? Now, if you look at Matthew 24, the first verses tell us that Jesus walked out of the temple and somebody among his disciples pointing out how marvelous the stones of the temple were. And they were magnificent.

It was like the temple is one of the greatest buildings in the world. It was one of the seven wonders of the world, of the ancient world. And the stones were magnificent, huge stones.

How they were moved by ancient people is hard to even fathom. But the disciples were admiring the stones of the temple and Jesus said, do you see these things? Not one of these stones will be left standing on another that will not be thrown down. Every one will be thrown down.

Now, are you aware of what happened in 70 AD? That exact same happened. That happened. The stones were thrown down.

The Romans destroyed Jerusalem. They tore down the temple, totally dismantled it down to the ground. And so, Jesus was right.

He said, all the stones of the temple will be dismantled. And his story tells us it happened. The Romans did that.

That's why there's not a temple in Jerusalem today. Now, the disciples came and said, when shall these things be? And what sign will there be that it's about to take place? In Matthew 24.3, it reads a little differently. They said, when shall these things be? And what signs shall there be of your coming in the end of the age? But Mark and Luke have the same story.

And they render the question a little differently for their audience. In Mark 13 and in Luke 21, the parallel says that Jesus predicted not one stone of the temple would be left standing on another. And the disciples said, when shall these things be? And what sign will there be that these things are about to happen? There are essentially two questions they had.

The temple is going to be destroyed. When will that happen? And what sign will there be that it's about to happen? Now, Jesus answered that question. Both questions actually.

In verse 34, Matthew 24.34, Jesus said, Surely I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place. Now notice, until all these things, what did the disciples ask? When will these things be? What things? It only predicted one thing. The destruction of the temple.

He hadn't predicted the end of the world. He hadn't predicted a future great tribulation. He had predicted nothing about the end times.

He had only predicted that not one stone of the temple would be left on another. That's the only thing he said. They said, when will these things be? He says, this generation will not pass away before these things happen.

When did it happen? 40 years later. That generation did not pass away. Now what's interesting is that the two, and it's within this prophecy, he talks about the great tribulation.

We have two places in the Bible that talk about the great tribulation. One is Matthew 24, the other is Revelation. Both of them say it's coming soon from the standpoint of the original hearers or readers.

He told his disciples, this generation will not pass before all of this happens. In Revelation, these things are about to take place. Don't seal up the book.

The time is at hand. These things will shortly happen. I don't know where anyone got the impression that these are talking about the end of the world.

He's talking about things Jesus is, and Revelation is talking about things that would happen not so long off. That means that at least if we're going to let the Bible answer the question of when is the great tribulation, Jesus said that generation would not pass away before it happened. John's Revelation said it would happen shortly after the time he wrote it.

We don't have any other verses in the Bible that talk about the great tribulation to place it further off in the distance. We have zero scriptures in the whole Bible that speak of a tribulation at the end of the world. Now, is there going to be a tribulation at the end of the world? I don't know.

If the Bible doesn't say so, I don't know if there is or not. Maybe there will be. The Bible actually doesn't tell us everything that will happen, and maybe there will be really bad times at the end of the world.

I wouldn't deny it, but I couldn't support it from Scripture because we only have two

places in the Bible that speak about the tribulation, and they both say it's going to happen early in church history, not late, within the generation of the first hearers or readers. I'm not making this stuff up, and believe me, I'll tell you how hard it was for me to accept this when I first discovered it because I was so, so ingrained with the other view. And again, I didn't realize that the church had not taught until very recently, relatively, the things that I had been taught and that I was teaching, that the church came up with a novel idea about the same time Joseph Smith came up with his novel idea about what the Bible originally meant.

Joe Smith and Darby were contemporaries, and they both thought they rediscovered the truth that everyone in the church had forgotten. But I'm not so sure they did. I know Joseph Smith didn't, and I don't have any more reason to believe that Darby did than that Joseph Smith did, especially when the Bible itself says things that look like the opposite.

Maybe the church wasn't so dumb through those 1,800 years that they were believing something different. Maybe they were actually reading what the Bible says instead of imposing on it ideas that some man said he rediscovered. Now, we come to the question of how long is the Tribulation? Do we have any information on that? If we ask when, what's the time from the Tribulation? We have to say, according to Scripture, it was early on in the church history, apparently in the first century, in the generation of Jesus' hearers.

But how long would it last? Now, again, I have to say, as I said earlier, it doesn't say anywhere in the Bible how long it did last, or would last. Revelation does have those multiple references to three and a half years, but if you stack them all up, like if there's five references, if there's five periods of three and a half years, then that's much longer than seven years. That's like, what, 17 and a half years.

But there's no reason to stack them up. There's no reason to stack up five of them, or three of them, or two of them. There's no reason, in fact, to think that the three and a half years, every time that occurs, is anything other than the same three and a half years in all the other places where it occurs.

And yet that number, I believe, is symbolic. I can't go into all my reasons. I've already gone quite late, and I don't want to go all night, so I have reasons.

I won't go into them now, but I just will say, I believe the numbers in Revelation are symbolic, just like you'll have tribulation ten days. I think that's symbolic. When the Bible says that God put it in the hearts of ten kings to give their loyalty to the Antichrist for one hour, I don't think that hour is literally 60 minutes.

The time references in the book of Revelation are generally, I believe, figurative. I won't go into proof of that. If you don't find that convincing, I won't try to convince you.

But, I don't think we'd be safe in taking the three and a half years as a literal length of time for the tribulation, since that only occurs in a book that's the most symbolic book in the whole Bible, which raises questions about how much is not symbolic, and how much is. We might have different opinions about that answer to that question, but it becomes not a very good place to find solid answers about questions that are of detail that are not necessarily made clear. But the place we do want to look at, and this is the last passage I want to look at with you, is Daniel 9. Now, Daniel 9 is the famous prophecy of the 70 weeks.

Before I say anything, how many of you are familiar with the prophecy of the 70 weeks? It's okay if you're not. I just wonder how many. Many people, many people who have studied popular Bible prophecy have learned something about the 70 weeks of Daniel.

It's a key passage. Daniel was in Persia. He had been taken away from Jerusalem as a captive to Babylon around 70 years earlier.

He had been a captive in Babylon for the whole period of Babylon's history until it was conquered by the Persians, and he remained in Persia under Cyrus and Darius and the early kings of the Persian Empire, and that's when he, when chapter 9 takes place. He was living at the end of about 70 years of captivity, and he was reading Jeremiah chapter 25, where Jeremiah had predicted that the Jews would spend 70 years in captivity, and then God would restore them. So reading the prophet, Daniel said, wow, God's going to restore.

So he set himself to pray and to fast and to seek God and to repent on behalf of his people so that God could fulfill this prophecy, and an angel came to him, and in perhaps the densest four verses in the book of Daniel, verses 24 through 27, we have this famous prophecy of the 70 weeks. Let me read it first and then try to make sense of it for you if I can. The angel said to Daniel, verse 24, 9-24, 70 weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.

Now your people are the Jews and the holy city is Jerusalem, of course. 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 shall be seven weeks and 62 weeks.

Do the math, that makes a total of 69. There's going to be seven and then 62, so that's 69. And the streets shall be built again in the wall, even in troublesome times.

And after the 62 weeks, which you recall came after the first seven, so 69 weeks into this, after there's the seven weeks, then there's the 62, and after those 62, we've got 69 behind us by that time. 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. That'd be the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem after Jesus died, and the temple.

The end of it shall be with a flood, which most understand to be an invasion or a dispersion. Both happened. Until the end of the war, desolations are determined.

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week. That is, we've still got a week missing. We've had 69 weeks, but the prophecy encompasses 70.

So now we come to the 70th week in verse 27. He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week. That's the 70th week.

But in the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering, and on the wing of abominations shall be one that makes desolate. Now it says, on the wing of abominations, there'll be one abomination that makes desolate. This gave rise to the phrase the abomination that makes desolate or the abomination of desolation.

Jesus used that phrase, by the way, in Matthew 24, verse 15. And so did Mark in Mark chapter 13. Okay.

There's going to be this abomination of desolation. On the wing of abominations, there'll be one of them that makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate. Now those last few lines are a little confusing, but there's enough information there for us to make some sense of the prophecy.

First of all, the word weeks, which dominates this section, in the Hebrew, it doesn't mean weeks. To us, a week means specifically seven days. But in the Hebrew, the word weeks simply means sevens.

It doesn't say seven days or seven anything in particular. It says seventy-sevens are determined. There'll be seven sevens, then there'll be sixty-two sevens, then there's one seven.

So there's almost all Bible scholars agree, he's talking about seven years per week. So a week is not seven days. A week is seven years.

And sixty-nine of these weeks would transpire between two points. What are those two points? From the going forth of a decree to rebuild in Jerusalem and restore Jerusalem, to the Messiah, the Prince. So Daniel is the only prophet in the Bible who's actually told when the Messiah will come.

It's going to be sixty-nine of these weeks. Now if a week is seven years, do the math, sixty-nine times seven, that's four hundred and eighty three years. So the Messiah will come four hundred and eighty-three years after something else, which is said to be the decree to restore and build Jerusalem.

Now when Daniel received this prophecy, Jerusalem was desolate. It had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar seventy years earlier. The temple didn't exist.

And so there's going to be a decree to restore and build Jerusalem and the temple. Now unfortunately for us trying to understand this prophecy, there were three such decrees. And there are Christians in three different camps.

I'm not going to defend any one of them. All I will say is that Cyrus made a decree that the city could be restored in the year 538 B.C. No, no, excuse me, 539... 538, I think it was, B.C. And then Artaxerxes, a later Persian king, made two such decrees at different times. And they were considerably later.

I'm not going to worry about the dates of them, because no one knows which of them is the right date to start from anyway. But the prophecy, if you get the right date to start from, is said to be from then 483 years, or 69 sevens, to the Messiah. Unfortunately it doesn't say what point in the Messiah's life.

Is this his birth? Is this the beginning of his ministry? Is this the end of his life? The Messiah, he was conceived, and then nine months later he was born, and then he lived for 33 years. And, you know, which part of that is 483 years after which decree? Now the decrees, it's ambiguous. Literally you'll find scholars who take the first, you'll take scholars who take the second, and scholars who take the third decree, and you'll get different results for the end.

You'll also find scholars who believe that 69 weeks ends at the end of Jesus' life. Others believe it ends at the beginning of his ministry. So the time from the decree to the Messiah is not entirely clear.

What's the exact decree we're talking about? What's the exact point in the Messiah's life? Christians differ, but one thing we can say, they don't differ very far off. I mean, let's face it, all those decrees happened within the space of, you know, 50 or 70 years of each other. And that means if you go forward about 483 years, you're going to fall somewhere in the life of Christ, or thereabouts.

We're pretty close. And there's no one else who ever was on the world scene who could ever claim to be the Messiah credibly who came around that time. Now God knew which decree and which date.

He didn't really make it as clear as frankly in apocalyptic literature, God doesn't make things all that clear, but we can see that he predicts a period of time from Daniel's own time when a decree would be made by a Persian king until the Messiah would something, until the Messiah is there at least. Now that only covers 69 weeks. That is 483 years.

There's still a 70th week to reckon with. Now these weeks are 7 years long, remember.

The so-called weeks of Daniel are 7 years, not 7 days each, so the 70th week, like all the other ones, is another 7 years.

Altogether 70 weeks makes 490 years. We've only accounted for 483 of them. There's another 7 years to think about here, and that's what comes up in verse 27.

It says in verse 27 he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midst of the week he will cause the sacrifice and offerings to cease. Okay. Here's where we get some where someone is confused.

The dispensational view that I was raised with and that I taught holds that this 70th week is in fact the future Great Tribulation. In fact, that's where you get the idea that the Tribulation is 7 years long. There's no other place in the Bible that would yield the length of the Tribulation as 7 years unless it is identified with the 70th week of Daniel.

The whole case for the existence of a 70 year Tribulation is resting on Daniel 9.27 where they say the 70th week, that's the Tribulation that Jesus talked about in Matthew 24. That's the Tribulation of Revelation he's talking about. Of course we would have to justify that claim but if that claim is true then in fact the Tribulation is 7 years long.

But is that claim true? You realize that the 69 weeks brought us up to the life of Jesus. That was like 2,000 years ago. And now they're telling us the 70th week hasn't happened yet.

So there's been like 2,000 years since the end of the 69th week when Jesus came and we haven't even seen the beginning of the 70th week yet. What do you do about that? Well here's what they say. They say that when Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey it was the end of the 69th week.

And if the Jews had received him as the Messiah then the next 7 years would have played out all 70 weeks but the Jews rejected him. And when the Jews rejected him it is said the clock stopped ticking. This is what they like to say.

The prophetic clock stopped. Daniel's 70 weeks only got up through week number 69 and the clock stopped and it won't start again until the rapture of the church in the future. Then will be the 70th week.

So there's this gap between the end of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week which is frankly 2,000 years that's more than 4 times as long as the whole 70 weeks combine. This gap, which by the way is not mentioned or hinted at. You may have been told that this 70th week is in the end times but Daniel doesn't say that.

The angel doesn't say that. There's not even a hint of it. In fact the 70 weeks is broken into 3 segments.

There's going to be 7 and 62 and 1. Correct? That makes 70. Is there a gap between the first 7 and the next 62? No one has ever suggested it. In other words dividing it into portions doesn't mean there's gaps between those portions.

You've got the 7 weeks, you've got 62 weeks, you've got one more week. No one has ever suggested there's a gap between the first 7 and the next 62 though they're mentioned separately they follow immediately after one another. Why wouldn't the 70th week follow immediately after the 69th? Could it? We're going to explore that question but let me just say this.

The angel is purporting to tell Daniel how much time there is left for God to be dealing with the Jews as a special people uniquely. This is a prophecy concerning His people and His holy city, Jerusalem. Now suppose I told you that I would like for you to give me a ride home.

And you said, well how far from here do you live? I said, well I live about 10 miles from here. You said, well I've got some time, I'll take you home. So I get in your car and you start driving me home.

And we go 10 miles and I don't say anything, you just keep driving. You're wondering, okay, I wonder how soon it is. We go 15 miles, still not a word.

20 miles. 50 miles. 100 miles.

And you say, I thought you said you lived about 10 miles from here. What if I said, well I do live 10 miles from there, I just didn't mention that between the 9th and the 10th mile there's a distance of 400 miles. Wouldn't you think I had given you some false information in the first place? If an angel said there's going to be 490 years left for God to deal with His people, Israel, especially as a special people, and the first 69 will bring us up to the Messiah.

You would assume then when the Messiah comes, the next 70, the 70th one, the last 7 years would come. Darbyism teaches, no, it was postponed until after the rapture, then we have the 7 year tribulation. And again, if we had many other places, or any other places in the Bible that said the tribulation is 7 years, then there might be a connection.

Oh, there's a 70th week, there's a 7 year tribulation, maybe it's the same. But we have nowhere in the Bible that says there's a 7 year tribulation, and even this passage doesn't mention tribulation. There's no mention of the tribulation in Daniel's 70 weeks.

It is an artificial imposition upon the data to say, this 70th week did not occur when you would expect it to occur, and it's going to occur thousands of years after it would normally have occurred, and it's going to be identified with the tribulation. Really, why should I believe this? This is what we need to ask when people tell us things and you can't see them immediately in the Bible. Don't just say, this person knows the Bible

better than I do.

That was my mistake. My teachers knew the Bible a lot better than I did. It was true.

I thought, well, I guess he knows more than I do, I better just believe it. Then the time came where they didn't know more than I did about it, because I studied it, and lived it, and taught it for decades, and eventually I knew as much as they did, and arguably, in some points, maybe some things they didn't know. I don't know.

I'm not trying to make myself smarter than my teachers, but David did say I'm wiser than all my teachers, because your word is my meditation. Psalm 119. It is possible to learn more than your teachers if you are meditating on the Word of God, and that's what I'd recommend you do.

I hope you know more than me, if not now, someday, as a result of meditating on the Word of God. I hope you'll know more than all your teachers, but that doesn't mean you want to be a rebel, and skeptical, and disregard all your teachers. What you have to do is like what the Bereans did.

They heard what Paul said, and they searched the Scriptures daily to see if it was so. That's what you listen to teachers. You should.

These people may, in fact, know a lot more than you do. Often they do. Listen to them, and then search the Scriptures, because they don't know more than the Scripture.

They know more than me. They know more than you, but they don't know more than the Scripture, and you can go over their head to the authority that's over them, which is the Scripture, and say, hold on here, partner. You're telling me there's a 2,000 year gap between the 69th week and the 70th week? Is there some Scripture you can appeal to that might give me a hint that I'm supposed to understand that and believe what you're telling me? There was a time I wouldn't have known if there was.

I know now, because it was 40 years ago that I began looking for that Scripture. I've taught through the Bible verse by verse over 20 times since I was 16, at least in some parts 20 or more. It's not there.

There's nothing there. It's an imposition of a system of thinking that is not there. In fact, if that prophecy did not end in a total of 490 years, the angel was really misleading.

The dispensationalists say that they take the Bible prophecy literally, but no one is taking the Bible prophecy literally if they say there's a gap between the 69th and 70th week, because there isn't one. You can't take any passage of the Bible literally and get that conclusion. What you would normally get is, taking it literally, is you've got seven 7s, then you have 62 7s, and then you have the last 7, and then it's done.

Why do they postpone it? Let me just show you the details, and then I'll take Q&A, because I realize I've gone quite a long time. For me, that's normal. For you, maybe not so normal, so I don't want to tax you too much.

But what does it say would happen in the 70th week? It says, then he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. Who is he? There's somebody who is confirming the covenant with many for the seven years, and that same he will end the sacrificial system within that period of time. Now, Darby said, this is referring to the future tribulation and the future Antichrist.

He will make a covenant with Israel for seven years, but he'll break the covenant and destroy the sacrificial system by defiling it, by putting an image of himself in the temple. By the way, if you've heard anything like that, you don't have to trust me. Do not trust me without checking.

But check on this. See if you can find any scripture that ever speaks of an Antichrist putting an image of himself in a temple in Jerusalem. Whoa! Every one of us probably, if we've heard anything at all, have heard, that's one thing that's going to happen in the middle of the tribulation.

There's going to be a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. Antichrist is going to put his image in there. That's the abomination of desolation and so forth.

Well, see if you can find any support for that actually in the Bible. The truth is the Bible never says any such thing about an Antichrist. The idea is Darby believed the 70th week is future, so he who does these things must be a future individual.

Who will it be? Well, he says, well, look back at the previous verse. It says, the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Who's the prince who is to come? Well, whoever he is, his people are the ones who destroyed the temple in 70 A.D. They were the Romans.

Therefore, the prince who is to come is a future Roman ruler and false messiah, Antichrist, they say, because he's the prince who is to come and his people 2,000 years ago destroyed the city because they were Romans, so he's going to be a Roman. That's what they argue. And therefore it says he will confirm the covenant.

It means the prince who is to come. But wait a minute. How did the prince who is to come in verse 6-9 become a focal point of anything in the prophecy? He's mentioned in passing as an object of a preposition.

It's not even he who destroys the city. It's the people of the prince who is to come that does. They're the focus.

Who is the prince who is to come? Well, since they were the Romans, their prince was Titus. Titus was the prince who was to come and his people destroyed the city and the sanctuary. If he's actually some future Antichrist, how were the Romans 2,000 years ago his people? The Roman Empire isn't even in existence anymore.

Well, Darby said there's going to be a restoration of the Roman Empire. But he's making stuff as he goes along. He has to do this to make things fit that don't fit.

But the idea is he who makes the covenant and breaks the covenant and ends the sacrifices, that's the Antichrist and therefore that's in the 70th week, that's in the future tribulation. But wait a minute. Let's suppose we'd never heard any of that from any teachers and we were just reading the Bible.

What a concept. Let's just read the Bible and see if we have any information here. The word he in verse 27 obviously refers back to somebody who's been mentioned, but who has been the focus of the previous verses? Who is the focus of this? It says, after the 62 weeks the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.

Earlier it said, from the going forth of the decree to build Jerusalem to the Messiah shall be this many weeks. This is a prophecy about the Messiah. And then it says he, without telling us who he is, but presumably the one we've been reading about, which is the Messiah, he will make a covenant, confirm the covenant with many for a week and in the midst of the week he'll call the sacrifices and offerings to cease.

You recall that something happened three and a half years into Jesus' ministry. He died. What was the upshot of that? It was the end of the sacrificial system.

Did the Jews stop doing it? Not immediately. They didn't do that until the temple was destroyed, but he brought an end to it. The Jews still did it.

Some people think they're going to build their temple and do it again, but it won't be valid. Jesus brought an end to the sacrifice system. With his own death, Hebrews says, he died once and for all and brought an end to all the sacrifices.

There will never be another temple in which valid sacrifices of animals will be offered. The Messiah brought an end to that. That's what Jesus did.

When did He do it? In the midst of the 70th week. Now, that means that when He began His ministry, that was the beginning of the 70th week. At His baptism, He came to confirm God's covenant with His people.

Jeremiah had said there's going to be a new covenant with the house of Israel. Jesus came to confirm that and to bring it about. And He did with the remnant, His disciples, but in the midst of the week, that is three and a half years after He started, He brought an end to the sacrificial system.

Now, I would just point this out and then we'll have our Q&A. I believe verse 26 and 27 are parallel to each other. That is, I think 26 says something and 27 says something about the same thing.

In verse 26 He says, two things will happen. The Messiah will be cut off and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. So it predicts Jesus' death and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Those two things.

I think verse 27 goes back and looks at those same two things and talks about their ramifications. The death of Jesus is described as Him bringing an end to the sacrificial system and then the rest of it is there's going to be an abomination of desolation. That will bring desolation that is to the temple.

Now, when Jesus' disciples asked Him, when will the temple be destroyed? He said, well, it will be in this generation. But He says, when you see the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke about, standing in the holy place, then know it's about to happen. Now, Matthew was writing that to Jews and Jesus used that Jewish idiom, abomination of desolation.

So did Mark. But Luke was writing to a Gentile who would not be conversant with Jewish idioms. So he paraphrased it in the very same statement which Mark and Matthew render as, when you see the abomination of desolation, Luke, in Luke 21-20, which is the parallel statement, he paraphrases it as, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that it's desolation is near.

So, the abomination of desolation, which is the term Jesus used, is paraphrased by Luke as, Jerusalem surrounded by armies. The disciples asked Jesus two questions. He said the temple will be destroyed.

They said, when will it be? What sign will there be that it's about to happen? Well, when will it be? This generation will not pass. That's when it's going to be. It'll be in this generation.

What sign will there be? When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies. Or if you go with the Jewish idiom, if you see the abomination of desolation, which is Jerusalem surrounded by armies, the Roman armies, this generation will not pass. Jesus made an absolutely accurate prediction.

In fact, it's the most remarkable fulfilled prophecy in the whole Bible because it says within an exact time frame, well, the 70 weeks of Daniel is pretty remarkable too, but within this generation, all this is going to happen. It did. If you study the history of Israel from 30 AD to 70 AD, you'll find that every single thing Jesus said would happen, did.

He was not wrong. Now, he did use some apocalyptic language for some of it. It has to be understood probably, but what I'm saying is if we talk about a specific period of

tribulation, we never have a reference to it being 7 years long unless it's identified with the 70 weeks of Daniel, which the Bible nowhere identifies with it.

Therefore, we don't have any specific length of time of tribulation, but Jesus does place it, and so does Revelation very soon after Revelation was written and within the lifetime of some of the disciples in their generation. Many have come to see, and I think the church for many centuries believed this was fulfilled in the Jewish war. That is, the Jews rebelled against Rome in 66 AD.

The Romans came in to crush the rebellion. There was a bloody, protracted war for three and a half years, it turns out. At the end of that time, the temple was destroyed.

Not one stone was left standing or another. All the surviving Jews were deported. But you know what happened? All the Christian Jews who were in Jerusalem fled before that happened.

Because Jesus said, when you see this, you who are in Judea, flee. And they did. According to Eusebius, the church historian writing in the early 4th century, he said before the war began, an oracle or a prophecy given in the church in Jerusalem warned them to flee and leave, and they all fled, and they all crossed the Jordan into a place called Pella.

So when the Romans came into the city, there was not one Christian in there. If the days had not been shortened, none would be surviving. But for the elect's sake, the days were shortened.

He gave them, he shortened their time in Jerusalem before the thing happened, so that the elect would survive. Anyway, there's obviously, I've skimmed over a great number of things, and there's questions galore in many people's heads. Once again, I have unhurried verse-by-verse lectures at my website.

They're free. You can listen on any passage relevant, every passage in the Bible, in fact. So feel free to go there for more detail, but feel free also to ask questions right now.

I didn't intend to go 90 minutes, but it's not unusual for me, too. But we have a microphone for you if you have a question, and the pastor will be glad to, and don't feel like your questions will be stupid, because I'm the one who probably looks stupid, because I disagree with everybody else. But maybe not, maybe not everybody else, but the truth is, if someone had given this lecture to me in 1973, I would have had a boatload of questions for them, and I would not have been very recipient to it, or very receptive to it.

And that's why I said, I don't really expect you to change your mind if you don't already hold a view like this. You don't have to change your mind. You don't have to be like me.

But you should address it and ask questions about it, and search the Scriptures, and allow yourself, if necessary, to revise whatever you may have heard in your thinking. Alright, anyone have a question like this? Yes, this brother here. Brother in front row.

Your view of when the Tribulation happens is based on an earlier dating of Revelation before 70. A lot of Bibles have 95 as the year. So what, I guess it's two questions, what is the best evidence that there was an earlier writing, and why in your opinion do a lot of Bibles have 95 AD? That's very observant.

There are, historically there have been disputes over when Revelation was written. And, for example, in the 19th century, most Bible scholars believe it was written in the reign of Nero. Nero lived, or reigned from, I forget the exact year he began to reign, but he died in 68.

He committed suicide in 68 AD. So just prior to 70 AD. And there's some evidence within the Book of Revelation that Nero was the emperor at the time.

I could go over that, but I don't have time now. There's actually quite a few lines of argument. If Nero was in fact the emperor when John wrote it, then it was written before 68 AD, or at least before Nero's suicide.

That means it was written before 70 AD, and when it said these things will shortly happen, it was probably referring to those things that did shortly happen after that time. Now a more popular view since the 20th century has been that it was written during the reign of Domitian. Domitian reigned later, like 95 or 96 AD.

He reigned till...and most Bibles today written, you know, the commentaries or whatever, they'll say written around 96 AD. Now of course if Revelation was in fact written around 96 AD, then there's no possibility that it was predicted in the fall of Jerusalem, which had happened a quarter of a century before that time. So the general feeling among many scholars that Revelation was written in 96 AD simply eliminates from serious consideration any of the things I've just said.

Now can I prove it was written in 70 AD or before 70 AD? I think I might be able to, but it's not my concern to do so. There will always be scholars smarter than me who still think it's 96 AD. There's plenty of scholars smarter than me who think it was in Nero's reign, so it's going to be a divided question.

What I would say this is if it was written in 96 AD, no scholar can think of anything that happened shortly after that, that in any way resembles what the book of Revelation describes. And most, many scholars, more liberal scholars who believe it was written in 96 AD, they just say John was wrong. John in Domitian's reign was predicting all these things would happen shortly, they just didn't.

And so, you know, they don't see it as an inspired book. There are, of course, Christians

who do see it as an inspired book, and they say let's just forget that John said it happened soon. He was writing in 96 about things that would happen 2,000 years later from his time.

But again, we do have to do something with the actual time frame that's communicated to the readers in the book itself. Now, I believe there's good evidence that Nero is the emperor. At the time, I won't go into detail about this, but I will say this, that at one point the beast is said to have seven heads.

The seven heads, this is in Revelation 17, the seven heads are said to have, to be seven kings. And it says five have fallen, one now is, and the other has not yet come. Now, John is telling his readers that at the time that he's writing, the sixth king was present.

He said there are seven kings, five have already passed, but one is there right now. He's talking to people at a particular time in history. He says the sixth one is present.

And there's more to come after that, but the sixth one is one. Nero was the sixth emperor of Rome. And that is one of the things that has led some people to believe he's identifying the present emperor at the time of writing as Nero.

More than that, the mark of the beast is an interesting study in Revelation 13, 18, because it says, let him who has wisdom calculate the number of the beast. It's the name of a man. It's the number of a man.

And his number is 666. Now, first of all, we have to say that John assumed the beast was living at that time. Why? Because he thought some of his readers, if they were smart enough, could figure out who it was he was talking about.

He wasn't talking about Henry Kissinger. He wasn't talking about Ronald Reagan. He wasn't talking about Donald Trump.

He was not talking about some future leader of the revived Roman Empire. He was talking about somebody that his readers, if they were discerning, he said, could calculate and figure out who he's talking about. So it had to be somebody contemporary to them.

Remember, he's writing to real people. He's not writing to some imaginary group of people that might be alive 2,000 years later to read the book. He's writing a letter to some real people that he knew and who knew him.

And he's saying, listen, this beast I'm talking about, he's a man. And his number, this is his name, and if you figure it out, you'll know who I'm talking about. His number is 666.

Now, 666 is what we call a gematria, which is where you reduce the letters of the alphabet into numbers and then calculate the numbers. So every word in Greek or Hebrew or Latin can be rendered into a numerical value. And the name Cesar Nero in

Hebrew rendered into Hebrew comes out to 666.

Now, why would it be in Hebrew? Because he's trying to conceal who he's talking about in case unfriendly readers get a hold of the book. Romans, if they got a hold of the book, would know Greek and Latin, but they wouldn't necessarily know Hebrew, but his audience would. He uses some Hebrew phrases in the Greek version of the word Alleluia, the word Maranatha, or not Maranatha, but the word Apollyon is, that's Latin, but the Abaddon is Hebrew.

There are Hebrew words in Revelation, but anyway, the fact that the beast that was present was the sixth king, that his name comes out to 666, there's no one else in the first century, including Domitian, whose name could be rendered in any language as 666. So there are, I'm not saying that's proof positive, but I'm saying that that's some of the things that point in the direction of who was reigning at the time he wrote it, and it seems to have been Nero. Were you next? And I'll come to you, Mark.

After Nero died, there was a series of short-lived kings. There was a civil war that lasted for 18 months in Rome, and three different kings supplanted each other within a period of months. The first was named Galba, the next one was named Otho, and the third one was Vitellus.

Altogether, these guys, you add all their reigns together, they were less than a year and a half. Galba, he says the seventh will come and will last a short time, probably referring to Galba. But then he makes it clear there's more besides the seventh, and there's going to be an eighth, he says.

So when he said there's seven, you have to remember that in Revelation, seven is a very significant number, and it's used for, not always for statistical purposes, but the word number seven represents completeness. So it's written to seven churches, and most people think that would suggest that the whole church is taken into consideration by these seven letters. And in Jewish numerology, seven is the number of completeness.

So to say there were seven kings isn't being entirely literal. There's actually more than seven. But he did say five of them have fallen, and the sixth one now is.

The seventh is coming and will last only a short time, he said. And then there's the eighth. And so, and who knows, maybe a ninth and a tenth and eleventh.

So he's not really professing to tell us the total number of Roman emperors that there will be, but there have been five before the present one is what he's, I think, trying to tell them. There are other ways to understand this symbolism, but that's how I take it. Yes, Bruce.

If it wasn't for a man named Darby, John Nelson Darby, then I wouldn't need a theological root canal, which is kind of what, you know, this is being something that was

just so deeply taught to me my whole life has to come out. How did Darby, since it was in the century that, you know, we didn't have the internet, how was he so influential? Why was this man, what was the method that got that story out to a large enough spread so that so many people would even hear it? So how did Darby's view become so influential? Especially since it was so radically different than what the church had taught before. Well, we could ask the same thing about Jehovah's Witnesses or about Mormons or any number of groups that spread like wildfire.

Some of them have grown much faster than any Christian denomination has in recent years. A lot of it has to do with marketing. A lot of it has to do with ignorance of the people who have been exposed to its arguments.

In my opinion, this is my explanation, there might be other explanations, but I will say this. Darby, in Darby's England, there were very, there were Christians hungry for the word of God, but the Anglican church and stuff was not exactly teaching the Bible in a systematic way to its congregation any more than the Catholic church does or the Anglican church does today. But the Plymouth Brethren were.

The Plymouth Brethren were sort of an unaffiliated non-denominational movement that broke off and started up in England around that time. And Darby was one of their leaders. And he was a smart guy.

He wrote, I think, over 50 books. He made his own translation of the Bible, which you can still get, the Darby translation. A very brilliant man, but also very creative, you know.

And he came up with this system, which he felt was the best way to put it all together. And so in England at that time, if people wanted to get someone teaching them the Bible, the Plymouth Brethren were the best place because they were teaching the Bible. The mainstream churches weren't teaching it.

People were starving for the Bible, but they were getting it from the Plymouth Brethren, which were getting their teachings largely from Darby. And that would mean, and then the movement spread to America through what they call the Bible Conference movement. And there was a man named C.I. Scofield, who was converted to Darby's ideas and wrote the Scofield Reference Bible.

And another guy who was converted to Darby's ideas was a guy named Louis Sperry Chafer, who started Dallas Theological Seminary in order to teach Darby's views. That was the beginning of the Bible College movement, which is mostly done by dispensationalists. Moody Bible Institute was dispensational.

Multnomah School of the Bible, dispensational. Wheaton, Illinois, Wheaton College is dispensational. But there weren't any dispensational Bible colleges until Dallas.

And then that kind of spawned a movement of Bible colleges. Now, as far as media is

concerned, every popular book on prophecy is written by dispensationalists, whether it's Hal Lindsey or Tim LaHaye or anyone, Chuck Smith. Certain denominations like the Assemblies of God and like Southern Baptist and many of their very large denominations formally adopted these views, largely because they were educated in Dallas and other places like that.

Christian radio stations are dominated by people like J. Vernon McGee, Chuck Swindoll, John MacArthur, people like that who are all dispensationalists. Most of them were trained at Dallas. Charles Ryrie's study Bible, he was a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary.

J. Vernon McGee was a professor at Dallas. John Walvoord was a whatever you call it, chancellor at Dallas. So was Chuck Swindoll at one time.

So, I mean, these are the highly influential authors and broadcasters, and they all have ties back to Dallas Theological Seminary, which was started by Lewis Perry Chafer to promote Darby's views. It used to be you couldn't graduate from Dallas Theological Seminary and disagree with Darby's views. I think they've broadened a little in the past hundred years or more, but when a very large spate of zealous Bible teachers were launched on the evangelical churches, most of them had been trained in Dallas.

It's interesting, if you go into almost any Bible bookstore, if you can still find some somewhere, and look at a commentary on any book of the Bible, look on the back to read the author's credentials. It's not always the case, but I'd suggest nine times out of ten, the author of any commentary you read did either his undergraduate work or postgraduate work at Dallas. And so I think Dallas Theological Seminary has a lot to say about it.

The Scofield Reference Bible had a lot of influence, too. And it was written by Scofield, C.I. Scofield, a lawyer, not a theologian, he was a lawyer, but he became enamored with Darby's views, and he decided to put them in the bottom of the Bible. In fact, almost all, there might be one or two exceptions, because there's a whole bunch of study Bibles now, but almost all of them are written by dispensationalists.

And my theory is only dispensationalists need to write study Bibles. Because you could read the Bible on your own and get what the Bible says. You need their notes to impose their meaning on the passages.

Because you wouldn't get that meaning from reading the Bible itself. And Scofield started the trend, and others followed. Now, I'm not trying to be disrespectful to dispensationalists.

I was a dispensational teacher myself. I taught Darby's views for years, and I understand very well why some people believe them, because I know why I believed them. I was

taught by teachers I respected.

I hadn't studied it out myself. I didn't know anything about the history of the doctrine. They didn't tell me about it.

In fact, my teachers didn't even tell me that it was called dispensationalism. I didn't even know the word dispensationalism, and I was one. Because my teachers just taught me, this is what the Bible says.

They didn't say, we are dispensational in our interpretation of the Bible, and we understand it to mean this way. But the church throughout history has seen it differently, but we think they were wrong, and this is what we think it means. That would have been fair.

That would have been honest. But they just said, this is what the Bible teaches. Then they fed me Darby's views.

They didn't really, didn't tell me that there was an option to see the Bible differently. But that's what bred so much confusion, because I'd actually read the Bible and say, wait a minute, how do these, where are they getting this? Because no one was helping me along. It took me years to find, piece by piece, this puzzle was falling apart.

I'll just make this statement. I know I'm going on too long, but my pastor, Chuck Smith, was a strong dispensationalist. I sat under him for five years, learned to mimic everything he said, so I could answer every question the way he did at one time.

He always said, I remember he said it often, if you're reading the Bible and you find something you don't understand, doesn't seem to fit, don't worry about it, don't let it hang you up, just put it in the back of your mind and move on. Someday those pieces that you don't understand will make sense to you. And that's what I did as a dispensationalist.

Again and again, I'd find passages that didn't make sense in the system. I'd think, well, I guess I'm not supposed to worry about that, put it in the back of my mind, stick it in the drawer, someday I'll look at it again. Well, eventually the drawer was full of pieces, full of random miscellaneous pieces that didn't fit the system.

I thought, let me pull that out. Look at these pieces. I thought, hey, they fit together.

But I was looking at the wrong puzzle lid. The picture was the wrong picture. They fit together with a different picture.

But that was something I had to sort through myself. Some people get it from reading a book or listening to a teacher. I had to sort through it over a period of years.

But the view I hold now is widely held and has been by many Christian scholars. It's just

not, they're not writing the popular novels about eschatology and stuff. Because frankly, to say it all happened 2,000 years ago, eh, doesn't ring the bells of modern readers of science fiction and futurism and things like that.

Did you have a question? Okay. Thank you for coming. And I think for me, when I started coming out of dispensational thinking and teaching was when I heard your lecture.

It's called What Are We to Make of Israel? And that's when it really hit home. That dispensationalist put such importance on Israel and who they are. And when I heard that lecture from you, it really changed things for me.

That's very relevant to the subject. I have frankly dozens of lecture series at the website. And one called When Shall These Things Be is directly about eschatological questions, the rapture, the tribulation, the millennium, and things like that.

It's 14 lectures. But there's another series as you mentioned called What Are We to Make of Israel? A shorter series. But it also compares what dispensationalists say about Israel and what actually Jesus and the apostles said about Israel.

So it was that series that got you thinking differently. Going to Daniel 9, 70 weeks determined upon Israel is a massive connection. If you're going to tie seven years to that, now you've tied it to Israel.

And then if you really start to do that study, which there's a lot of good lectures around that that people can find on your website also. Questions? Okay. I got one.

So, and I don't know if this is true Darby theology or even Schofield. But as people have taken this and ran with it, it seems to me that one of the things that I've heard for years and years is the whole, and we covered a little bit of it tonight, but the interpretation that there's going to be three and a half years of sacrificing in the temple in the seven year period, correct? Is that the dispensational position? That's a dispensational position for them to have three and a half years. That means that the temple would have to be built on day one of the seven year tribulation, correct? But for them to write for them to have three and a half for it to, or not, if not before, correct? So the concern that I had early on with years with that is that that means that if the temple is not built and they're not sacrificing, they can't even true dispensationalist can't even claim that Jesus could come back today.

And that to me there should be some alarms going off on whether or not we can preach honestly as a dispensationalist if someone is one, that Jesus could come today. Right. A major a major breakdown there for me.

Good point. Right. Yeah.

It's all in one, but going back to their part, they don't believe that the rapture could

happen today. They don't believe that the rapture could happen today if they are pre-trib. No, no, no.

If they are consistent. That's a big if. Most people are not consistent.

Most people hold some views that are not consistent with other views that they profess to believe. You're right. If they are consistent, then they could not believe the rapture could happen today because there's not a temple there in Jerusalem yet, and it would take some time to build presumably.

Another inconsistency, most dispensationalists believe based on Zechariah's prophecy that two-thirds of the Jews will be annihilated during the tribulation in Jerusalem by the Antichrist. They believe that the Bible says the Jews are going to go back to Jerusalem, but when the Antichrist rises, he'll kill two-thirds of them. But they want to bring them all back.

They're paying for plane fare for Russian Jews to go to Israel so that two-thirds of them could be slaughtered by the Antichrist. Why do we let God work this out if he thinks that's supposed to happen? Why should we be have their blood on our hands? If going to Jerusalem is to their doom, why should we fly them there? We should be more friendly to Israel than that. If the danger zone is going to be in Jerusalem, maybe it's better for them to be where they are.

Who knows? There's not a lot of consistency in many of us at all. True, the prophecy teachers are not among those who have a greater degree of consistency than others. Another question before my next one? I'm ready to hand it over.

Next, me. Now, kind of stay in the... Quick, somebody asked something. Quickly.

Stay in that general vicinity right there. If someone was to consider that maybe that Daniel 9 and 27, where in the middle of that week, he would bring it into sacrifices. If that, as opposed to what people have believed dispensationists, that that's not Jesus, it's the Antichrist.

But if it is Jesus and he was to bring it into sacrifices, and his ministry was, as most scholars believe, was three and a half years. If that was the case, he would be bringing it, as you pointed out, three and a half years. And if you back that up to the beginning of his ministry, is that where most dispensationalists still believe it starts? No, that's where most non-dispensationalists believe it starts.

Most non-dispensationalists believe the 70th week began at Jesus at his baptism. And three and a half years into that seven years, he was crucified. But the dispensationalists believe that the 69th week ended on Palm Sunday, which means the 70th week should have started, but Jesus being rejected and crucified postponed that.

See? So there's a difference of opinion as to when the 69th week ended. Historically, many, many Christian commentators believe that it ended at Jesus' baptism, and therefore his earthly ministry began the last seven years. He was crucified in the middle of that.

So what's the other three and a half years? That was my question. Well, we're left to guess, but remember what the prophecy is about. It's about the years where God's going to be dealing with Israel and Jerusalem as his people.

For several years, we don't know how many, but probably about three or four years after Jesus died, God still only evangelized Jews. Then he called an apostle to go to the Gentiles. And so the call of Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles might mark the end of the 70th week, and that is the end of God dealing strictly with the Jews.

He's now going to—he's officially sent one of the apostles out to the Gentiles because he's going to bring them in too. That's a possibility. Some think it's the stoning of Stephen.

That is the end of the 70th week. I'm more inclined to think—I'm more inclined to think that it's the conversion of Paul and the commission to go to the nations and not just to Israel. But there's another view that is out there by some.

Some feel there has been a postponing of part of the 70th week, that Jesus died in the middle, and the last three and a half years was postponed until the Jewish War, because Daniel does talk about the temple being destroyed in that prophecy. And so some feel that as God told Israel that he's going to bring them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, there actually was about a generation gap in there. He made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai at the beginning of that time, but they didn't enter the Promised Land until 40 years later because of their disobedience.

Or maybe we could argue because it took that long a generation to get Egypt out of them. You know, you get people out of Egypt, getting Egypt out of them wasn't easy. They had the golden calf and the rebellion.

Some would argue that the Jewish Christians, after Jesus died, still were kind of trapped in the Jewish system until the temple was destroyed. And God gave them kind of a generation to adjust. You know, okay, the new covenant has come.

The old covenant, it's going away soon. And so the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 8.13 where there's a new covenant, the old is obsolete and is about ready to vanish away. So he's writing before 70 AD, and he's saying that the old covenant, that's obsolete, but it hasn't yet vanished completely from the scene.

It's obsolete, so no one should be following it. But it hasn't vanished, as it will when the temple and the priesthood and the Levites are all removed. So some think that the last

three and a half years is really like a generation later than the crucifixion of Jesus.

I'm not inclined to go there, but that's a secondary suggestion. Right. If you introduce that, you go... It might not even be.

It might be that there would have been seven years, but he got cut off in the middle, and that just canceled the remainder. You know, that could be such another possibility. The point you made earlier about if you're going to give a destination of time, it has to have some meaning.

When you put the gap in, you open everything right up to the dispensation list with the gap theory there. I understand there are people who believe that. I think it's... The reason I was pointing that out is because a lot that was being focused on tonight is this seven years.

Where does it belong? And I think it's appropriately tied to the 70th week of Daniel as it should. And if you were to believe that the 70th week came right after the 69th week as any clock would, then if you're going to break down all of those, then it might would be good to try to figure out at least what could that last three and a half years point to. But I do agree that it's not necessarily have to be completely covered because Daniel doesn't cover it.

He kind of stops there and doesn't give any significance in the other three and a half years, correct? He does not. However, after he mentions the Messiah being cut off, the next thing he mentions is the destruction of the city and the sanctuary by the Romans. That might not be included in the 70 weeks.

Right. You know, he said it's going to be this long from the going forth of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to Messiah. He doesn't say until the destruction of Jerusalem, but destruction of Jerusalem is also mentioned after the death of the Messiah, but that might not be within the 70 weeks.

After the Second World War, and you know, the Holocaust and all the persecution to the Jews was uncovered, the ruling council, if you will, Truman, Churchill, highly influenced by dispensationalism. Very much. Yeah.

They all came together and said, what do we do with the Jews? And they said, OK, let's form a nation for them. I mean, couldn't it be said that lacking dispensationalism, Israel may not be there today. There are Jewish historians who are not Christians who have actually written about the influence that dispensationalism had in bringing about the modern state of Israel.

Yeah. And see, dispensationalists point to the modern state of Israel as proof that their prophecies were correct, because they anticipate that. But they don't often tell you how much pressure they put on like five or six presidents until Truman finally gave in to it

after World War II and after the horrors of the Holocaust sensitized everyone to the need of the Jews to have a safe place of their own, and Truman finally gave in and made it happen in the United Nations in 1948, May 14, 1948.

The United Nations finally officially gave Israel the land that the Palestinians had owned for 1300 years. Kind of nice. How would you like it if you lived in a country and some country, some body, a continent away gave your property away to somebody else? Yeah.

But dispensationalists are very strong in the fact that this was a fulfillment of prophecy and it was the right thing to do because God gave them that land forever and therefore we should be happy and celebrate it. Yeah, I mean, I'm not anti-Israel, not even a little bit. I'm not anti-Israel, but I am I'm a Bible teacher.

That's all. I'm just a Bible teacher without any particular agendas except to try to be right if I can. And I cannot find anything in the Bible that says that what happened in 1948 was going to happen.

And yet dispensationalists say it's the most remarkable fulfillment of prophecy in all of history. And I say, which prophecy? Where did it say that? I know which prophecies they used but these are, you know what happened is there's a lot of prophecies in the Old Testament that God would bring back Israel from the nations where they've been driven to and make them a nation again in their own land and build their temple. True.

But those prophecies were made while they were in Babylon. After they came back from Babylon and did rebuild their temple no such prophecies came after that. In other words, it was predicted God would bring them back and they'd build their temple.

They did in 539 BC. After that, no prophets made that prediction. The New Testament is absolutely silent on any future for Israel.

It doesn't say a word about it. The Book of Revelation doesn't. Of course, it's questionable whether the Book of Revelation has even talked about the future, but the point is, even if it was, there's no discussion about the rebuilding of Israel.

A lot of people use Romans 11-26 where Paul said, blindness in part has happened to Israel until the Gentiles, the fullness of the Gentiles be coming, then all Israel be saved. Well, fine. Let all Israel be saved.

What's that got to do with being in Jerusalem? I'm saved. I'm not in Jerusalem. There's no prediction there of a restored nation.

There's a prediction of salvation. Salvation's in Christ, not in the promised land. You know, salvation is in Christ and Jews all over the world who come to Christ have found salvation in Him.

They didn't have to go to a particular piece of real estate to do that. And you just don't find a word in the New Testament about the restoration of the nation of Israel. And that's because it happened 500 years before the New Testament was written and there's no need to predict it again because, as far as we know, it wasn't predicted to happen again.

Now someone says, but isn't it a miracle that they came back together in 1948? Maybe. There have been a lot of miracles in history that aren't predicted. Their significance is questionable.

I think the founding of America was accompanied by a number of miracles, but it's not predicted in the Bible. I think some of the things that happened in World War II to turn the tide against Hitler, I think some of those were almost miraculous, but they're not predicted in the Bible. I mean, Israel's reestablishment could be a miracle.

I don't know if it is or not. All I can say is I don't know of any place it's predicted in the Bible or given any prophetic significance in the Bible. I'm not against it.

I'm just saying if someone wants to say this is a fulfillment of prophecy, which prophecy? Tell me which one. Was it written after the Jews came back from Babylon? The answer is always going to be no. Hey Steve.

According to dispensationalists in the book of Thessalonians, the man of sin is considered to be the Antichrist, but as we're learning today that he is... the Antichrist is not in here. Who is the man of sin in the book of Thessalonians? Who is the man of sin? We would have to answer that by looking at what Paul actually says about him. He says he will sit in the temple of God and declare that he is God.

Now what does Paul mean by the temple of God? Some people use this verse to say there will be a temple in Jerusalem in the tribulation time and the Antichrist will sit in it. Actually, they don't say it the way Paul did. They say he'll set up an image of himself in it.

Paul doesn't mention any image of the man of sin. He just said he'll sit in the temple of God. Revelation 13 mentions an image of the beast, but it doesn't mention where it is.

It doesn't mention if it's in Israel or anywhere else. There's no mention in the Bible of an image of the Antichrist in a temple in Jerusalem in the Bible at all. You've got Revelation talking about an image without any geographical reference.

You've got Paul speaking of the man of sin himself sitting in the temple. No image is mentioned. But what does Paul mean by the temple of God? Is he predicting a third temple in Jerusalem in our future? Well, he might be, but if so, he's not speaking like himself very much because he used the expression temple of God three times in all his writings.

The other two times, he's talking about the church. In the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, I think it's verse 16, Paul said to the church, do you not know that you are the temple of God and that God dwells in you? Also in 2 Corinthians 6 in verse 16, he says, do you not know that you are the temple of God? The temple of God is the term Paul uses for the church. We have no record of him ever using the term temple of God for the Jewish temple because the Jews rejected Jesus and he didn't minister in the temple anymore.

In fact, Jesus, when he left the temple the last time, said, your house is left to you desolate, which is a change from saying my father's house. Earlier in his ministry, do not make my father's house a house of merchandise. But at the end of his ministry, your house, you guys, this is yours.

It's not my father's house anymore. We're leaving and you'll never see me again until you can say, bless us he who comes in the name of the Lord. So Jesus abandoned the temple and it was never the temple of God again.

Paul never thought of the Jewish temple as the temple of God, nor will it be in the future. If they build another temple in Jerusalem, which they might, it won't be God's temple. God does not dwell in temples made with hands.

We're living stones built into a holy temple, Peter said. We're the body of Christ. We're the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The whole New Testament teaches that. Hebrews teaches it. Peter teaches it.

Paul teaches it. And so, you know, that when he says the man of sin will sit in the temple of God, if Paul is consistent, perhaps more than most of us are in his language, he'd be saying the man of sin is going to sit in the church. Now, who might that be? Well, he says, that won't happen until something is taken away that's hindering that from happening.

He says, you know what it is that's hindering him from coming, but when that's taken away, then he will rise. Well, what was it that was hindering him? Dispensationalists say the man of sin is the future antichrist, and what hinders him is the presence of the church in the world, or the Holy Spirit in the church, and the church has to be raptured before the man of sin can rise. But that's an opinion.

Paul certainly doesn't say that's what he's talking about. The early church had an opinion different than that, and so did the reformers. They believed that Paul is alluding to Daniel chapter 7, where there were four kingdoms, the Babylonian, Median, Persian, Grecian, and Roman Empire, and from the Roman Empire there arose a little horn speaking great blasphemies, and after the Roman Empire was destroyed and the body of the fourth beast was burned, given over the fire, which is the burning of Rome, apparently, he said then we have this little horn to deal with, and he persecutes the saints, and so forth.

Now, early church fathers when they spoke about 2 Thessalonians 2, they believed Paul was identifying the little horn as the same as the man of sin, and what was hindering him from rising was, in fact, the Roman Empire, that the Roman Empire would have to be taken away, its body given to the burning flame, like Daniel said, and then the man of sin would fill the vacuum left by the absence of the emperors, and therefore become the power in Rome and in Europe that the emperors had once been after Rome falls. All the church fathers said that's what they thought Paul was talking about. The reformers thought he meant that too, but they lived after the fact, which the church fathers did not, and the church, the reformers said, you know, what happened when the Empire fell to the barbarians, and there was no more Roman power, what came to the rescue? The bishops of Rome.

They occupied the position that had been occupied by the emperors, and did so for a very long time, and they blasphemed God. They said they were God, many of them. They persecuted all dissenters, the Waldenses, the Policians, the Hussites, the Wyclifites, Luther, I mean, they persecuted everyone who disagreed with them on scriptural grounds.

The little horn persecuted the saints too, and, you know, basically the reformers made an interesting case for the man of sin representing the institution of the papacy, and they argued the reason Paul was so obscure when he said, you know what's hindering, I told you about this, but why doesn't he just say what it is? If he's talking about the Roman Empire has to be removed, when Paul was in Thessalonica, the very church he's writing back to now, when he was there, he was run out of town because they said he's speaking things against the Roman Empire. He's saying there's another king, one Jesus. These are things against Rome.

Well, he wasn't trying to argue things against the Roman Empire, but that's what his reputation was. If he writes back and says, you know, the Roman Empire has to go down first, you know, if that fell in the wrong hands, that would only confirm. You know what it is that's got to go.

I told you about this when I was with you, you know, and when that goes down, then this man of sin is going to come up and do all these things, and he'll come in the temple of God, which in all other times Paul uses that expression, he means the church, and that's where the papacy arose. So the papacy could very well be the man of sin. Now, do I know that to be so? Not really.

I mean, Paul's sufficiently vague. He might mean something I'm not aware of, but the Reformers had a pretty good argument, you know, maybe not airtight, but I think better than the arguments for other positions I've heard up to this point. All right, Steve? All right, thank you.

You can go ahead and dismiss me, Steve. Thank you. All right.

Thank you, Father, for the fellowship of the saints in Christ. We thank you for the access we have to the Bible, which Christians throughout most of history did not have, and some still do not. And we thank you, but we tremble at the responsibility that is ours because we do have Bibles.

We are expected to be like Bereans. If we lived at a time where Bibles were not accessible to us or in a part of the world where we couldn't get them, we'd have no such responsibilities, but we do. Make us diligent students.

Make us truth seekers. Make us able to look as objectively as we possibly can at your Word and help us to search the Scriptures like the Bereans to see what things are so. And I pray, Father, that no one here will just be so discombobulated by hearing something very different that they didn't hear before as to throw them out of whack in any way.

I pray that you'll help us to realize that our understanding of these things is not absolutely mandatory for us to get. I mean, if it takes us years or if we never understand it, it's not the end of the world. We're followers of Jesus, not followers of end-time theories.

And we want to be ready and we want to be occupying until you come. And I pray that when you do come, you'll find your servants so doing as you commanded them to do, rather than so speculating about end times. We remember, Father, that Jesus said, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons that the Father has put in His own authority.

And we certainly are, when we think about the end times, we're certainly talking about times and seasons that you have put in your own authority. And Jesus said, it's not for us to know. So we don't, we want to be content to not know everything.

Though, if there are things we can know by better study, I pray that those things will either suddenly or gradually be made known to us as we continue to walk in the truth and in the study of your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.