

Understanding the “Times”

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Confusion of ‘what the Word of God says’ has plagued the Body of Christ, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, over the years. It seems that periodically, something in the world occurs involving the Middle East, a series of catastrophes, UFO’s, “signs in the sky”, someone espousing the end of the world or other such events resulting in confusion and the questions, “Is Christ coming?!” “Are we in the end times?” “Is this the Tribulation?” “What about the Book of Revelation?”

The recent Covid-19 pandemic coupled with the Peace Agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates has spawned a new round of these and other questions.

The Apostle John tells us in Rev. 1:3,

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear
the words of the prophecy, and heeds the things which are written in it;
for the time is near.”

to which we might ask, “Who doesn’t want to be blessed?” But many do not do as this verse instructs. The word “reads” is the Greek word “anaginosko” which means more than *reads*, it means “to read over again” with the idea of intensity – to labor over the reading. In a similar way, the phrase “hear the words” brings the mental activity of understanding from a spiritual perspective – not to spiritualize but to recognize that God gives the understanding and it is spiritual in nature as opposed to from a world’s perspective. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, the Apostle Paul informs us,

“But a natural man does not accept the
things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him;
and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

The natural man here being a non-believer or pre-believer. This would also apply to the carnal Christian, one who is not walking or living by faith. If you are a non or pre-believer, and you want to understand Scripture, you can certainly sincerely ask God for an understanding mind and He will meet you at your need. If you are not walking by faith, confess your wayward attitudes and sin and ask for an understanding mind and spirit. If you ARE walking by faith, you should still ask, for He gives liberally.

So, to answer the question above regarding the “Times” we are in and the “Times” of the future, we need to consider how we will approach this subject. One of the keys to understanding Scripture is “context”. Too many grab their study Bible and open to the Introduction of a book or letter, read it and dive into the text. This can be helpful, but the experienced student of the Word understands that *context* often is found in other books of the Bible also. In fact, the excelling students understand that the New Testament writings are contextualized by many of the Old Testament writings – to understand *any* book or writing in Scripture, a person must take into evidence the other writings. Therefore, to understand Revelation, one must include at least a few other Old Testament passages. We will not be exhaustive in this document for books have been written, many pages and many words. We will take a semi-exhaustive approach – so, let’s begin . . .

Daniel 9 is a key passage for getting handles to grasp the Book of Revelation – if one doesn’t have a good grasp of Daniel 9, it may/will result in confusion as they read or study Revelation! We will overview the first part and dig in to the last portion.

Daniel’s Prayer for His People

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

In Vs. 1,2, we see that Daniel had been reading the book of Jeremiah and found that 70 years had been revealed for “the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem.” Daniel was so grieved by the pending judgement that he

he purposefully sought the Lord with prayer, supplication, fasting in sackcloth and ashes – he was serious in his confession of himself and his people’s sin (v.3). His prayer is detailed in Vs. 4-19.

Daniel’s Prayer:

³ So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. ⁴ I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, ⁵ we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. ⁶ Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land. ⁷ “Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. ⁸ Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. ⁹ To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; ¹⁰ nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. ¹¹ Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. ¹² Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. ¹³ As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. ¹⁴ Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice. ¹⁵ “And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. ¹⁶ O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us. ¹⁷ So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. ¹⁸ O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. ¹⁹ O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

As Daniel prays, Gabriel appears to him and greets him. Daniel has been praying and extremely weary – he has probably been praying all day because of the heaviness on his soul regarding the desolations and judgements! Gabriel was sent at the beginning of Daniel’s supplications. His greeting includes:

- ✓ The purpose: to give insight with understanding;
- ✓ An admonition: to give heed (listen astutely) to the message and gain understanding from the vision;
- ✓ An encouragement: that Daniel is highly esteemed by the message sender – God!

Gabriel Brings an Answer

²⁰ Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, ²¹ while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. ²² He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. ²³ At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.

Seventy Weeks and the Messiah

²⁴ “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. ²⁵ So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. ²⁶ Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. ²⁷ And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

Verses 24-27 contain the Message that Daniel is honored with explaining the 70 Weeks. The actual wording means “seventy sevens” from which we interpret 70 weeks.

“Seventy weeks have been decreed” for the Israelites and Jerusalem – during these weeks, the following will be accomplished:

1. “to finish the transgression” ~ to bring to a close the waywardness of God’s people, Israel, to the Law;

2. “to make an end of sin” ~ to conclude the effects of sin’s judgement and curse;

3. “to make atonement for iniquity” ~ to provide payment, satisfaction for all wickedness, sin, vice, evil;

4. “to bring in everlasting righteousness” ~ to restore the normal state between God and man which will go on eternally;
5. “to seal up vision and prophecy” ~ to seal or complete all prophecy and the prophet’s message – not to be added to or altered; and,
6. “to anoint the most holy place” ~ to cleanse the most holy place by Jesus Christ’s presence, the Lamb of God, in preparation of His return.

V.25 So Daniel is to “know and discern that from the issuing of the decree to return and rebuild Jerusalem, until the Messiah the Prince will be 7 weeks and 62 weeks; . . .” The decree to return and rebuild Jerusalem happened under Persian emperor, Artaxerxes Longimanus in 445 B.C. (Ezra 6:13,14; Nehemiah 2:1-6). The “seven weeks” refer to the time of rebuilding which extended to 396 B.C. (49 years). The “62 weeks” would then extend until the Messiah, the Triumphant Entry of Jesus. This, then, equals a total time period of 483 years (69 weeks, or “sevens”).

V.26 “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; . . .” After the Messiah, Jesus, came, He would be “cut off” – murdered, crucified. This occurs just after the end of the 69 weeks and V. 26 indicates a period of time that is not measured in the prophecy, (the 69 weeks already noted) “. . . flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.” This time is what we call “The Church Age” where belief in Christ grows, the Gospel is spread around the world even amidst war and desolations. The destruction of “the city and the sanctuary” was accomplished by the Romans in 70 A.D. after a 2-year siege.

V.27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week . . .” The “he” in this verse is the prince who is to come of the people in verse 26. This prince will make a firm covenant with “the many” – referring to the Jews and people groups or nations – for one week. This is the 70th week (V. 24) and what is referred to in Scripture as the Tribulation, a seven year period of the prince’s rule, he being Satan and the counterfeit

trinity. The completion of the building of Jerusalem, the temple and sanctuary will occur in the first half of the week (7-years). Offerings and sacrifices will begin again *“but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; . . .”* - the prince who has made the firm covenant will stop the temple activities *“and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”* This prince will bring great tribulation upon the Jews and people groups (nations) for the remainder of the 7-week period, 3 1/2 years. At its end, the *“complete destruction will be poured out on the one who makes desolate.”* This will be Jesus Christ’s return and the defeating and imprisonment of Satan for 1000 years. [Daniel gives more detail on this prince’s activities at the midpoint in Daniel 11.]

In summary of Daniel 9, there will be a decree given to “return and rebuild” Jerusalem, the walls and the temple (Artaxerxes, 445 B.C.) which will be the first 7 weeks (or @ 49 years). From that time, there will be another 62 weeks until the Messiah comes which corresponds with Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and then his being “cut off” at the cross. This is a total of 69 weeks which is followed by a gap of time which we call The Church Age. We do not know how long this gap will be but it will be followed by the 70th week, a 7 year period when Satan will have free reign, will make a covenant or alliance with the Jews and people groups (*the many*) and, half way through the 7 years will break the treaty/covenant/alliance and he will bring the great tribulation.

The obvious questions resulting from the Daniel 9 timetable include: 1) What will happen during the time between the cutting off of the Messiah and the 70th week? How will one know the 70th week has begun? Let us now move to 2nd Thessalonians 2:1-12. Here, the Apostle Paul discusses the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” – what we call The Rapture of the Church.

The context of this passage is that many believers have received word by “a spirit”, “a message” or “a letter” as if it was from one of the apostles indicating that the day of the Lord has already come. Paul emphatically tells them that it has not come, that there will be events prior to its arrival and that believers are not to be shaken or lose their composure – the Lord has not changed His timetable – so do not be deceived!

² Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

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Vs.3&4 The events that will be evident are: A) *“the apostasy comes first”* – that is a falling away of so-called believers from the faith; B) *“the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction”* – this is the antichrist, the prince of Daniel 9; C) he will *“oppose and exalt himself over every so-called god and object of worship”* – therefore placing himself as the person and object of everyone’s worship as he; D) *“takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God”* – this is the abomination of desolation of Daniel 9.

⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Vs.5 Paul reminds them that he has already prepared them for understanding the events, but as so many believers through the ages, we have been misguided by sight rather than standing firm in the Word.

Vs.6-8 Key in the timetable of events is the restrainer! “*And you know what restrains him (the man of lawlessness) now so that in his time he will be revealed. . . . For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. . . . Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay*

with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; . . .” Who is the “restrainer”? It is the Holy Spirit. Where IS the Holy Spirit? He is “omnipresent” – everywhere and He is also the seal given to believers at the moment of belief or trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. This is important because, if the restrainer is to be “*taken out of the way*” then that indicates that believers will be taken with Him – The Rapture of the Church. “*THEN*” (emphasis added) “*that lawless one will be revealed*” – after the restrainer and the Church (universal) is taken away, the man of lawlessness will be revealed (cp. Daniel 9:27). The end of the lawless one is already decreed, “. . . *whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; . . .*” At Jesus’ return to earth after the Tribulation, the lawless one will be slayed, blown away “*with a breath of His mouth*”.

Paul identifies him with the fact that his activities will be “*in accord with Satan*” and he will display great power, signs and false wonders with wicked deception – the many who are deceived by him will perish with him “*because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.*” (cp. Romans 1:18-24) Because of their refusal to believe, they will be continually deluded (Vs. 11,12) and judged along with their prince.

In summary of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, we understand that at the end of the Church Age, the Rapture of the believers will occur. [STOP and consider the turmoil the whole earth will be in as a people – confusion, wild explanations of the vanishing people, posturing for power, riots and uprisings.] In the midst of this turmoil, a person will rise and bring about peace – many will accept this person’s charisma and yield to his directions, and “. . . *he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week . . .*” (Daniel 9:27) and the Tribulation, 7 year period, will have begun in earnest.

There are many passages that we could look at for an exhaustive discussion, BUT, the intent of this document is to be semi-exhaustive to answer the Questions: “Is Christ coming?!” “Are we in the end times?” “Is this the Tribulation?” “What about the Book of Revelation?” we can now answer 3 of the 4 questions: 1) Is Christ coming? Yes, but not yet - He is able to return and receive His Church – the Body of Believers – at any time. If you are reading this,

the easiest way to know if the Rapture is happening is to look around . . . are you rising? If you are a believer and you are not rising, then it is not the Rapture and Christ have not come . . . yet.

2) Are we in the end times? No. In the sense of post Rapture, no. In the sense of getting closer to the time of Jesus Christ's return, yes. But historically, the phrase "the end times" is synonymous with The Tribulation. Which means I have just answered the 3rd question also . .

3) Is this the Tribulation? No. The turmoil and angst, pain and confusion will be far worse than now. Has a mysterious loss of many, millions of people occurred all around the globe? Then the Rapture has not happened and life will continue for "*a while*". The times that we are in are what Jesus referred to as "birth pangs" in Mark 13:7-9. However, eventually, the birth pangs will yield to the "labor pains", but we know not when.

So, let us now consider the 4th Question:

4) What about the book of Revelation? This prophesy was written by the Apostle John while exiled to the island of Patmos. Revelation can be broken into the following overview:

The Prologue	Chapter 1:1-8
The Things Which You Have Seen	Chapter 1:9-20
The Things Which Are	Chapter 2:1-3:22
The Things Which Shall Take Place	
After These Things	Chapter 4:1-22:5
Epilogue	Chapter 22:5-21

The Prologue Chapter 1:1-8

This Revelation was sent by God to His bond-servants (believers) by His angel to John, His servant about "*the things which must shortly take place.*" I will refer you back to the 2nd paragraph on page 1 for an explanation of V.3. This Revelation is sent to the 7 churches of Asia and, therefore, to the Church universal and reminds us of His love, His shed blood, His making us a kingdom and priest to God, that He is coming and He is the Alpha and the Omega, God Almighty!

The Things Which You Have Seen Chapter 1:9-20

John, while in fervent prayer, is given a vision and told to write it in a book and send it to the 7 churches by name: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

The Things Which Are Chapter 2:1-3:22

These are descriptions, admonitions and instructions to each church for their spiritual condition and future. Some commentators have mentioned that each of the church's condition describes the condition of the Church universal through the Church Age and are therefore, descriptions, admonitions and instructions to believers.

The Things Which Shall Take Place

 After These Things Chapter 4:1-22:5

This is the description of the scene in heaven and the opening of the seals on the scroll, the sounding of the trumpets of heaven and the pouring out of the bowls of judgement. All these events are the events of the Tribulation period, especially, the last 3 ½ years of it. Therefore, believers of this Church Age will not be present as the Rapture has occurred and we are in the presence of our Lord. This understanding should and must

take all fear from believers about those events BUT it should also move us to being purposeful in reaching the lost while there is TIME.

Epilogue

Chapter 22:5-21

The prophesy, “*These words*” (Rev.22:6), are faithful and true. Twice in these last 16 verses, God says, “*Behold, I am coming quickly.*” He, God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is stressing that the TIME is short. Vs. 18&19 contain a warning for anyone tampering with God’s Word/Revelation. John ends with, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come Lord Jesus.

In summary of Revelation, the bulk of the book of Revelation (Chapters 4-19) describes the events during the Tribulation period – the 7 years initiated by a “*firm covenant with the many*” for 7 years, it will be broken at the mid-point as the antichrist takes his place in the temple and demands the worship of him as if he were God. The last 3 ½ years will be hell on earth as he unleashes his wrath unchecked and full. IF you are a believer, you won’t be here for them!

The first three chapters involve a blessing for reading the Book and admonition (stern warning) and instructions for the 7 churches of Asia and also, the believers of the Church Age (the gap between the Messiah being cut off and the Tribulation).

The last chapters are as follows: A) Chapter 19 – the Return of Christ to the Earth to confront Satan and the battle at Armageddon; Chapter 20 – the inauguration of the Millennium where Christ reigns for 1000 years, the final rebellion and the Great White Throne of Judgement which is for non-believers and Satan; Chapter 21 – the New Jerusalem and the Eternal State.

A Final Note: There are many passages in Scripture which add detail to the events during each stage (e.g. The Church Age, The Tribulation, the Millennium and the Eternal State) that have not been included. The main framework of time has been addressed here in a non-exhaustive manner. You are free to study the Word for yourself to add the detail where it should be. However, the most important question which we must ask AND answer is, “So What?”

- If you are a non-believer, what will you do with Jesus? As Dr, Josh McDowell says, “He is either a liar, a lunatic or He is the Lord!” You have questions you need answered? Ask them and get the answers from a reliable source!
- If you are a believer but walking your faith – it’s time to “man up!” You will be saved but you are missing out on the great adventure of a faith-walk.
- If you “*think*” you are a believer, does this knowledge motivate you to share the good news at every opportunity? If not, that’s a sad commentary and you may want to do some soul searching to make sure that you are not one of the people to whom the Lord will say, “Leave Me, I never knew you.”
- If you are a faith-walking believer, it does “make your liver quiver,” prepared yourself with transitional statements which you can use to steer conversations to sharing your spiritual journey and the Gospel – after all, that is WHY we are here!

Blessings - Jim

[Again, the purpose of this document is to answer some questions of confusion regarding the “Times”. As I wrote, other questions came to mind . . . but my intent is not to write a book. Some excellent books include “Biography of A Great Planet” by Stanley A. Ellison, ©1975 by Tyndale House Publishers; “Revelation for Dummies” by Richard Wagner; and a good study translation of The Bible.]