

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Revelation 6. And while you're finding that, would you find Daniel 9 and Ezekiel 36 as well? Revelation 6, Daniel 9, Ezekiel 36. Those are the three places we're going to need to have you go tonight, and so I'll give you plenty of time to find it. Okay, ready? No. (Laughing) Revelation 6, Daniel 9, Ezekiel 36.

The good thing about studying the book of Revelation is that your exposure to it is over in chapter 4. The church is gathered, raptured, removed before the wrath of God is poured out, and everything that you read forward - after chapter 5, you experience 4 and 5 in heaven - has to do with God's judgment upon the earth. And you really won't show up again until the Lord rides back to the earth with you and me to rule and reign with Him. Everything in the middle - all of these chapters we're going to go through: chapters 6-18 - is all future, but you won't be here for it; you'll be in heaven singing songs with Zach (one of Morningstar's worship leaders) or whoever's leadin' worship that day. And I think the Lord gives us these things for a couple of reasons. Number one - because He is faithful, and we know that He is going to do what He says. And so it should motivate us, I hope, to go out to the world and say, "Look, you don't want to be here when this takes place. As much as we want to get out of here, you want to go with us when we leave. You don't want to stay to face the wrath of God."

And so since we finished chapter 5 last week - our time in heaven around God's throne - it is vital that you see that that's where your life stays and your existence stays until the Lord comes to rule and reign. So all of this beginning tonight is God's wrath poured out. His patience is finished. There will be a great harvest, but there will also be tremendous judgment.

I hope that you've brought your thinking caps with you tonight. We're only going to look at two verses, not because I'm tired (Laughing) but because I think it's vital that you have a good understanding of the chronology of the things that take place and in what order they take place when we get to this final seven-year period after you've been taken out and we arrive at this time of Jacob's trouble, if you will.

It is essential that you get the big picture chronologically. I think if you will, when you get to the Old Testament prophetic books, they'll make a lot more sense when you can place them correctly in the chronology of the final days, if you will.

The book itself, Revelation, is mostly chronological. There are some parenthetical chapters that either look back or look forward - give a bigger picture. For example, when we get through these first six seals in chapter 6, chapter 7 is kind of a pause where, before you get to the seventh seal, the Lord says, "Now I want you to see through all of this how many people are coming to know Him, what the fruit is coming out of the Great Tribulation." And so it isn't an interruption in the chronology, but it's kind of a step back to say, "Here's the wider view." And then, by the time that you get to the very next chapter, chapter 7, you'll read, "After these things," and then again there'll be the seventh seal which will lead to the seven trumpets and all. But, for the most part, things are in chronological order. So the seven seals will lead to the seven trumpets which will lead to the seven vials. If you take them out of order or somehow you move them around, you're going to have a hard time with most prophetic Scriptures because they are presented in a way that's logical and follows chronologically.

So, what I wanted to do this evening is just look at verses 1 and 2 because it kind of sets the stage. And then next week we'll take these four horsemen of the apocalypse down through verse 8, and we'll just look at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, which I think we will show you tonight (if we haven't already) that will take place starting at the 3½-year mark; that literally, after verse 2 of this chapter, everything else in the book of Revelation falls into the last 3½ years. So, think it through with me, if you will.

Let's read verses 1 and 2 before we look at Daniel 9. This says, "Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer." This is the Antichrist. He looks like Jesus Christ, right? He's coming on a white horse with a crown and to conquer and to overthrow. But, as we will learn tonight, this is certainly the beginning of the end in terms of the judgment of the Lord as he is revealed to the world. But he's coming first to conquer. Look, he's got a bow in his hand, but he's got no arrows. He's coming to manipulate his way, to schmooze his way into the hearts of man who is going to look to him - at least for the first 3½ years - as a Messiah, as the Savior, as the One

that they've been looking for. All right. So mark that. We'll come back to this in 35 minutes or so.

But let's go over to Daniel 9 for a minute. Daniel was a young man very interested in prophecy. If you don't know his background, he was captured by the Babylonians when he was in his teens. The Babylonians began to besiege Jerusalem as a result of God's judgment on the southern kingdom in 606 B.C. Now they would come in 606, they would come again in 597, they would come again to level the place in 586, and then it would be fifty more years, 536 (the seventy years in total), before they would be allowed to return to the land. In that first wave, though, in 606, Nebuchadnezzar sent and kidnapped....took by force.....most of the kids that he took came from wealthy homes, cultured, schooled, intelligent, wanting to use them and plans to just take this whole nation 700 miles away from their homeland and use them to interpret and to lead and to be the go-betweens between Nebuchadnezzar and his world-dominating Babylonian kingdom and the Jews that he had taken captive.

So Daniel - and if you read the first couple of chapters of the book of Daniel, he'll tell you the experiences - was 15 or 16 years old when he was taken. In his mid-80's, he was reading the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah and realized, from the prophecies written there, that the captivity that he had been a part of nearly all of his life would end after seventy years; and he was pretty good at doing numbers. And so he had read, for example, in Isaiah 45 of a man named Cyrus. He was coming, and the LORD names him by name several hundred years before he was ever born. But He declared of him that when he came, he would deliver Israel from its captivity or literally allow the Jews to go back out of Babylon back to Jerusalem and to their homeland again. Reading chapter 29 of Jeremiah, Daniel had learned that the captivity in Babylon would be exactly seventy years; that then the LORD would heal His people of their idolatry, that the seventy years were determined by the fact that they had neglected as a people to give the land a Sabbath day rest one year for every seven, don't plant, and they had ignored it for 490 years. And so they owed the LORD seventy years. That was His word to them out of the book of Leviticus in chapter 25; also the last couple of verses of 2 Chronicles 36. So you can read there that the land would enjoy her Sabbaths, and as long as she remained uninhabited - desolated, if you will - she would receive her Sabbaths back, and it said, "for seventy years." So the official captivity of Jerusalem and of the southern kingdom - the Jews - began in 606, like I said. Sixty-eight years later, or two years before this was over, 538 B.C., Daniel

realized that he was near the end of the captivity, and in his old age, he began to pray, "LORD, what can I do, that I'm here positioned amongst Your people?" He'd been a prophet for all of his life, had walked with God even when others had not. "What would You like me to do? What do You want from me?"

And with that in mind, we come to chapter 9. Verse 1 says, of that chapter, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans - in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." So Daniel begins to pray, "Lord, I see it's just around the corner. I'm available. What can I do? What should be done?" Here's a guy in his 80's that is still just as excited as ever to serve the Lord. Darius, by the way, was a Mede; you read that in other places. Cyrus was the Persian. The world kingdom that followed the Babylonians is called the Medo-Persian Empire, if you will, and so they had overthrown the Babylonian world kingdom, and now this fellow Darius and Cyrus would come, and he would be the one, as we read in Isaiah 45 (though he hadn't been born, he'd been named), that would allow the children of Israel to go back home. So Daniel kind of puts it in frame, if you will, and he begins to pray. And if you read the prayer (it's down through verse 19 or so), he confesses the sins of his people, he acknowledges that he's part of the problem. He said, "We've brought this upon ourselves, we are idol worshippers. We forgot You, Lord. But with You, there's mercy and forgiveness even if," verse 9, "we've rebelled against You. We know that God, You're a forgiving God." And so he begins to just seek the Lord's face, to cry out upon the Lord, "Please listen to us and deliver us." Verse 19, "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name." And so there is this crying out.

While he is praying, verse 20, "Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter,

and understand the vision.' " I love the fact that there are at least a couple of places in the Bible where the LORD answers while you're praying. Hang on to those because the typical experience is you pray, and then you wait. And sometimes you wait a lot longer than you'd like to. But here's one of those occasions that Daniel began to pray, and as he was in the midst of praying, God sent the angel Gabriel to give Daniel, notice, skill to understand what he's going to tell him next. He says to him "you are greatly loved of God." And, by the way, there are only very few people called "loved of God" in the Bible. Solomon is, David is, Daniel is, the apostle John is, and then you get to the New Testament, and you are. But it is kind of reserved for the precious few. Paul, in Romans 1:7, says you are the "beloved of God." He says the same thing in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, you're "beloved of God." So, nice class to belong to. Yeah, we're the people God loves. And so Daniel is told that.

Now, notice verse 23. You read the words, "At the beginning of your supplications." From verse 3 to verse 20, in heaven the command was already given, and orders were already directed, and the angel was already dispatched with information. Now I want you to notice something, and I'll just show it to you really quickly. If you'll turn to chapter 10, just flip the page over, verse 2, we read these words, "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks." And then if you skip to verse 12, when the angel comes to speak to him, he says this, " 'Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand....." So, there was an interesting insight. The minute that Daniel prays, heaven responded, sent an angel who ran into a problem; and he ran into the king of Persia. Well, it wasn't a physical guy; it was the demon who ran this place, wasn't it? And so there was a battle in the spiritual realm. Gabriel's not a fighter; he's a delivering messenger. He's a post office worker, you know? He delivers the mail. So he goes to get Michael, who's really good. He's got a tenth degree black belt. He's got somethin'. And he shows up, and he delivers the messenger. And so what does Gabriel say to Daniel? "Hey, I came the moment you began to pray." Sometimes delays are just because there's something going on you can't always see. There's a war in the heavenlies for your life. So, greater is He that's in you (1 John 4:4), certainly. But here's a good lesson. It's just a lesson for another Bible study; we can't go into it tonight. But, needless to say, he gets the answer right away, and the answer, in

chapter 9 here, beginning in verse 24, is one of the most amazing prophecies that you will find in the Bible. It gives us a definitive time chart for God's dealing with Israel. And I want to stress that to you. This is God's Word to God's prophet about God's people Israel and His dealing with them not as individuals but as a nation. This is the timetable from this time forward how God's going to deal with and lead and speak to and speak through the nation of Israel that He has made such great promises to. And we're going to see that this includes the last seven-year period of the Tribulation, or what we call the Tribulation, that we're studying that follows on the heels of the rapture of the church and directly precedes the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of those seven years.

So let's look at verse 24, and we're just going to look at 24, 25, 26 and 27 - this prophecy - because we want to kind of get a handle on what's going on after we are taken out. Verse 24 says this, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." So, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people." Notice the prophecy, and like I said, I want you to mark it down if you don't: this is all about the people of Israel. They're the ones that, back in verse 20, Daniel had prayed for. "I prayed for the sins of my people Israel. I was supplicating for my people. We're the ones in captivity." He's praying for the nation. So, "I've come to give you God's answer because He loves you, He wants you to know, and I want you to consider the matter," verse 23, "I want you to understand this vision that I'm about to give you." And then he says this, "Seventy weeks" (sevens) "are determined for your people." The word "week" is the word "*shabua*," and it literally is the word for seven. And here it refers to seven years. So this literally is seventy seven-year periods, if you will. If you go to chapter 29 of the book of *Genesis*, when Laban is being told by Jacob that he had fallen in love with Rachel, but when he went to be married that night and to meet his wife in the honeymoon tent, he woke up married and went, "Pfft. That's Leah. That's not the good-lookin' woman I wanted to marry." And he went back to Laban and said, "You ripped me off," and he said, "No, no. That's what we do here. The oldest gets married before the youngest. But if you'd like to spend the rest of your time and fulfill her week, then I will give her to you as a wife as well." And it's the same word. It's a seven-year period. And it's kind of like when you use the word "decade," and you say that's ten years. This is a word that most often just means seven years. So, seventy is the word "*shabuim*," and then the word "seven" is

"*shabua*." And so seventy seven-year periods are determined by the LORD from this time forward to deal with national Israel and the holy city of Jerusalem.

And in this list, in verse 24, Daniel is given by the angel six specific things that need to take place during this seventy years of seven weeks or, if you will, 490 years (if you do the multiplication). The first three were accomplished when Jesus died on the cross: "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity." That's what the Lord came to do when He died. The last three will be accomplished at His Second Coming. It will "bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up" (the word means to finish or to complete or to close) "vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy."

Gabriel then breaks those seventy seven-year periods down to some definable actions, beginning in verse 25, where we read, "Know therefore," Daniel, "and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem" (now remember, it's two years out; it's 538, that commandment is going to be given in 536) "until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks" (seven seven-year periods) "and sixty-two weeks" (sixty-two seven-year periods). So those are two divine - one is seven sevens, one is sixty-two sevens; one is 49 years, the other is 434 years. "The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times." So, "Here, Daniel. I'm going to tell you how God's going to deal with the nation for the rest of the time until the Lord's here." And he gives, like I said, a frame of reference, and he begins to say to Daniel, "From the moment that the commandment is given to go forth and to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem, until Messiah the Prince," notice, "there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens," or 69 seven-year periods. Are you following me so far? I don't want to confuse you. I know I'm talking fast, but there's a lot to go through. "Know and understand." When does the clock start? The clock starts when the command is given to go forward and rebuild Jerusalem. If you go to Nehemiah 2, we are told that Artaxerxes II gave the command to Nehemiah (who Nehemiah worked for) to go and to restore Jerusalem; and we get a specific day there. It was the first day of Nisan in the twentieth year of his reign. That is found, like I said, in Nehemiah 2:1. If you look at the Julian calendar, which we use, that would extrapolate to March 14, 445 B.C. That was the date that Artaxerxes II gave to Nehemiah. Remember Nehemiah was praying, and he had such a heart to go and rebuild the city, and he worked for a king - he was his cup bearer; he had months of prayer, and nothing was going on, and he finally showed it on his face, and the king called him out on it. You remember the story. And so he shared what he wanted to do,

and the king said, "What do you want?" and he gave Daniel permission. For the next 49 years from that commandment - seven sevens or seven seven-year periods, seven weeks - the city of Jerusalem was indeed rebuilt and restored. But things did not go easily. If you go back and again read the account, Nehemiah was able to rebuild the walls of the city in a record fifty-two days. It was phenomenal. Everyone said, "Only the work of the LORD." But it took many delays politically before the city itself could be built. So that was accomplished in those first fifty (almost) years.

But moving on from that part, verse 26 says, "And after the sixty-two weeks." So, first the seven sevens, 49 years, accomplished: the city was rebuilt and reestablished, and the children of Israel were able to move home in smaller increments for a while. And then we read, in verse 25, "there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks." So, in verse 26, "After the sixty-two weeks Messiah" (Jesus) "shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined." So moving on from the point of the rebuilding of the city, we turn to this sixty-two seven-year periods, 434 years, where we read after the city has been rebuilt, if you continue to go forward and count days and weeks and months and years, we should find ourselves at a place that the Messiah would be cut off; He would die. Again, there's the Old Testament saying the Messiah's going to die. But He's going to die for us, not for Himself. Right? So, again, we get the calendar out. The Jews use a calendar - Babylonian calendar - 360 days a year, as Daniel would have used. We use a calendar with $5\frac{1}{4}$ more days. But, in any event, it should be easy to do the math. You move forward, you account for leap years and all, and for the 1 B.C.-1 A.D. kind of a deal, and there's a fellow who worked for Scotland Yard for a lot of years called Robert Anderson. He wrote a book called "*The Coming Prince*." Did a really good job of the calculations. They've stood the test of time for the last 100 years. No one's been able to dispute them; they're really well done. But he takes these 434 years, and he marches them forward, and he arrives at a date. It happens to be Passover week, 32 A.D., April 6th, the very day, Palm Sunday, that Jesus rode into town on a donkey and presented Himself officially to the nation as their Messiah, according to Zechariah 9:9. You remember that Scripture. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey." So, big day. But, again, to Daniel, the 80+ year old wanting to serve the LORD, the angel comes and says, "I want you to get this right.

Understand." God's dealing with Israel. First those seven sevens. That's finished. The nation has been developed. Moving forward from that another 434 years or sixty-two seven-year periods brings us to this time of April 6, 32 A.D., the Sunday before the Lord was to be crucified, Palm Sunday, if you will.

Now, if you go through Luke 19, for example, you will find the Lord that day riding on a donkey. Big deal, if you look at the Scriptures, how the disciples were able to get this donkey and just tell him the Lord has need, and they laid the palm branches down, and the people began to sing. And they began to say, "Hosanna! Save now, Lord! Save now!" The Pharisees, so angry with this public display of worship, told the Lord to knock it off. "Tell them to knock it off!" And Jesus said, "If they don't cry out, the rocks will." In that very day and on that very day, as the Lord got down closer to the city of Jerusalem - down the mountain, He began to weep. And He said out loud to the nation before Him, "If you would have known in this your day" (singular) "the things that belong to your peace!" "This is the day that the LORD has made" you'll read in the psalms (Psalm 118:24). It's more than just a day, it's the day. What day? It's the day that God specifically told Daniel, "This is the day you can find the Messiah. This is the day that the LORD has made." It's a very specific day. "Read and understand, Daniel. Understand what is being said." And so this day should not have been missed. Only Jesus can be the Messiah according to the prophecy of Daniel. If He is not, then the time has come and gone, and we have no Messiah. That very week Jesus will go to the cross. He'll be cut off, and in that public declaration also came an official rejection, and Jesus is crucified for the sins of the world. That's sixty-nine weeks. That's it. Seven weeks, sixty-two weeks = sixty-nine weeks.

But the prophecy is seventy weeks. Where does that final week end up? It ends up after the Church Age. It's that last seven-year period where God no longer just deals with the world. He deals with the world through national Israel. He'll protect them in Petra. He'll watch over them. The witnesses - 144,000 Jews (Jewish witnesses) - will be at work. And through the nation itself, God will fulfill His promises. He'll return to them. They'll look upon Him whom they've pierced (Zechariah 12:10). He'll rule and reign from Jerusalem. Everything that comes and takes place in this last seven-year period will be accomplished through the nation, not through the church, which has been taken out, but through the nation. So sixty-nine seven-year periods have been fulfilled. The Messiah was cut off, and there is one seven-year period that still waits. And that's the one that begins in chapter 6:1 of Revelation. The Church Age begins with the death of Christ, His

resurrection, His breathing upon the church (the book of Acts, Pentecost), and Israel, the nation - God's dealing with Israel nationally, is put on hold. It isn't moved forward. It is put on hold. If you read Romans 11:25, you will read it saying, "You should not be ignorant of this mystery, brethren, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." Now the *Gentiles*, by and large, is a reference to non-Jews. But in the context, it's a reference to everyone except national Israel. God will again deal with the nation, but the church now consists of believers that are Jew and Gentile. Right? Male and female. Those are always the comparisons that are made. But God has set aside national Israel until when? Until the church is removed, till the fullness of the *Gentiles* comes in, and then He turns, and that clock begins to tick again. The day you're raptured, that seven-year clock begins to tick, and you can tell exactly the day the Antichrist is going to show up at the Temple and go, "Hey, I'm God. Worship me or die." We can know the exact day the Lord's coming back with you and me to rule and to reign. All of that stuff now becomes time-driven and predictable. The only thing that's not is the rapture which is why we're constantly being told to watch and to look up and to wait. So the seventieth week of Daniel as it is referred to - the *Great Tribulation* period - begins, like I said, in chapter 6. Right now we're still in this *Age of Grace* that is ushered in, but there's one more seven-year period according to this prophecy.

Okay, let's go back to this prophecy for a minute. We read, in verse 26, "And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined." Less than forty years after Jesus' death, in 70 A.D. the Romans, under the leadership of Titus, marched into Jerusalem and took it apart - even the Temple - stone by stone. They started a fire, gold melted into the cracks. They were very avaricious. They wanted every little bit they could get. Literally a million people in Jerusalem died in one day. Read the history. And the people of Israel were dispersed - notice the word "flood" here. They were dispersed throughout the whole world, and from 70 A.D. until 1948, the Jews had no homeland at all. It's a miracle in itself that there're still Jews by then. Every people that have lost their homeland for more than three generations are usually assimilated and lost. You won't find any Phoenicians....there're just a lot of folks you won't find anymore. You'll find people living in those geographical places but no longer identified with the people that once lived there. Except for the Jews. So there are Jews from Africa, there are Jews of every color, there are Jews of every language. And so today, in Israel, literally 51% of the Jewish population of

the world have moved back to Israel. We're waiting, Lord. They're in the land. They're waiting, Lord. It won't be long now.

You may want to get a copy, if you haven't gotten one, of the works of Josephus. He is a Jewish historian. He lived from 37 A.D. to about 100 A.D. He's not a believer. He's kind of an agnostic guy. But the records that he records - the death of Jesus (which is amazing to read), he records the fall of the city, he writes about a lot of Jewish history prior to that day - gives you some good insights. But interestingly enough to me, one of the most exciting signs of the days in which we live is that Israel is back in the land after all of those times. There are roughly 15 million Jews in the world. I think 7.7 million live in Israel. The rest live in New York (Laughing) or in California, New Jersey. I think there's less than 1% that live outside the U.S. But, needless to say, as we draw closer to the seventieth week of Daniel, it will require that Israel is in the land and that there is a capital - Jerusalem - where the Lord will come and from which He will rule. And it is imperative that the Jews become a thorn in the sides of every nation around about when the Lord returns; which is exactly what's taking place now. So we have some pretty concrete evidence, if you will, that we're living in the last days just by the Word of God amongst His people, the ones that this prophecy says He will go back to when you and I are raptured and taken up. So who are the people that shall come? The "prince that shall come" is definitely a reference to the Antichrist, and we're going to find that to be so because he is verse 26.

We jump 2000 years into the future, and we read this of him in verse 27, "Then he" (again, that prince) "shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;" (one seven-year period) "but in the middle of the week" (in the middle of that seven-year period, at the $3\frac{1}{2}$ -year mark, at the 42-month mark, if you will) "he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate" or, if you will, until the final judgment falls. So the prince of the Romans, "the people of a prince that shall come," because what we know for sure is that the last world kingdom will arise out of the ashes of the old Roman Empire. So here Gabriel gives Daniel an outline for this final seven-year period of God's dealing again with national Israel, delineating the beginning, the middle and the end with very specific markers. At the beginning, here comes the "prince that is to come." In the middle, he shows himself for who he truly is. At the end, God will bring judgment upon his kingdom, and the Lord will rule forevermore. So in one verse you get beginning, middle and end, if you will.

Now we learn from verse 26 and from Daniel's other places there that the Antichrist will come out of the nations that comprise the old Roman Empire. Daniel tells us much about that in his prophecies. Let me show you one real quick. You got a minute? Why not? I don't know if I'm going to be able to fit this in, but we'll try. Daniel 2:39. In chapter 2, we are given by the LORD and then, in chapter 3, the interpretation from the LORD through Daniel, we are given Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, the king of the world, dreams and Daniel's interpretations from the LORD about world kingdoms. Now historically, and maybe you know that already, before the Babylonians became world rulers, there were only two world empires that ruled the world. The first one was the Egyptians, and the second one was the Assyrians. There were really no other world powers until we get to Babylon. Babylon was the third. The fourth one, which overthrew them in 538 B.C., was the Medo-Persian Empire. It lasted for quite some time. They would eventually be overthrown by a fifth world kingdom, the Greeks, who would be overthrown by a sixth world kingdom, the Romans. And the Romans in the West and in the East lasted much different times, but needless to say, the Romans were the last world empire that the world has ever seen. There weren't any more from them. But there's coming a seventh and final world kingdom of man's power - led by the Antichrist - that will rise out of the ashes of the old Roman Empire. And so it is led by the Antichrist, it is represented by ten toes and later by ten horns, but it will be during this last worldwide, seventh worldwide, kingdom that Jesus will return to crush the rebellion, establish His kingdom. It'll be the eighth one, it'll be the last one; the number eight is always the number of new beginnings. So here in Daniel 9:27 we're told about the Antichrist who will make a covenant with many, including Israel, at the beginning of the seventieth seven-year period, but in the middle of that week, he will cause the sacrifices to cease, declare himself to be God, demand to be worshipped under penalty of death. But for the first $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, he will gain power through shrewdness and worldly wisdom. It'll be a time of relative peace and safety, deception, if you will, as man turns to him as the promised Messiah.

I've got you at chapter 2, right? Verse 39 we read this, "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others." This is now the fourth one, but that's the sixth one, if you will, in world history. Verse 41, "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the

kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days" (so this is the sixth world kingdom, this is the revived Roman kingdom, if you will, the one that the Antichrist is going to rule) "of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold - the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure." This is what Daniel refers to in chapter 9. It is in those days, in this last world kingdom; and the Antichrist is going to have the last world kingdom before Jesus comes to rule and to reign.

The turning point, in Daniel 9:27 here, is the half-way mark, right? It's defined in the Bible as the "abomination that brings desolation" or the horrible behavior that brings the final judgment, if you will. We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, of this time he "who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." That'll be the turning point. Right? It'll be at that point, at the half-way mark, that all of the judgment from God's throne upon the earth will begin. It'll be at the time of this action by the Antichrist. Jesus, if you read Matthew 24, tells the disciples that very thing, uses those very words, the abomination that will make desolate. So the Antichrist is going to do really good for a while conquering with a bow without arrows. In John 5:43, Jesus said, "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive." So you can just imagine the deceptiveness that is coming. The Antichrist will seek Israel's approval, perhaps enabling them to build the Temple on Mount Moriah which, right now, would cause World War III with the Arabs.

Let's go back to Revelation 6 for a minute. Hold on to the Ezekiel passage just a couple more minutes. In Revelation 11, there is an insight that we have into this temple that is going to be built during that time, and in verse 1 of chapter 11 of Revelation it says, "Then I was given a reed," John says, "like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those

who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot" (there it is again) "for forty-two months" (or for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years). You're going to constantly see that same reference. There is a place up on the Temple Mount where we take our group when we go to Israel that has a little dome on it; it's called the Dome of the Spirits. It is believed by many Christians in Israel.... and they've written books about it as well, it's something to think about, the fellow who wrote the book on it is a professor at (Hebrew University) Mt. Scopus called Asher Kaufman. But he said the Jews could literally build the Temple of God here as long as you didn't have an outer court, and it would not interrupt the Dome of the Rock, which is....like World War III. You can hardly go up on the Temple Mount without people yelling at you. So it provides an alternative, and it's interesting that here in Revelation 11 we are told that John is asked to measure and leave out all of the big porticos beyond the Temple that was built initially, and just measure the place of the tabernacle, the altar, if you will. So there's a Temple Society in Israel that's pushing for the Third Temple to be built, obviously. But when it comes to the completed Temple, what we know for sure is when it's completed, the Antichrist, who maybe has made all of this work, is going to reveal his true self. Right? He's going to come, and he's going to demand worship, and then the final movement of God's wrath will begin. In fact, Daniel writes, in chapter 12:1-2 (we were just in chapter 9), this of this time, "At that time Michael" (he's the fighting angel) "shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt." This is the final act, right? This is the time when the LORD puts His foot down and says, "Enough is enough." So at the end of those final $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, 1260 days, 42 months - whatever you'd like to call it - Jesus will return, and we'll return with Him.

Going back to Revelation now.....have I lost you yet? Okay. I think this is the hardest part of the whole book anyway. You've done well. In verses 1 and 2, we are given the opening of the first seal. Remember that was the title deed to the earth that the Lord had purchased with His own blood? As a result of Him opening this first seal - and remember the church is out of the way, the time clock has begun, that seventieth week of Daniel - the Antichrist is introduced to the world. And notice he looks like a good guy. He's riding on a white horse, he's got a crown of

rulership on his head, he has a heart that he wants to conquer. He appears much like the vision of Jesus, like I said, when He returns. But don't be deceived. This is the Antichrist himself. But the clock is ticking. And for the first $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, there is going to be relative calm, lots of hope, lots of hopefulness, if you will. As the church is not found in the first sixty-nine weeks of years - those 483 years - the church is not found in the seventieth week either. Another good argument for those that would tell you the church has to go through the Tribulation. It would be an odd place to put them because this is the seventieth week - that God said He would deal with Israel. And, like I said, the church doesn't show up in any of those. This is God's Word to Daniel concerning His dealing with national Israel. All of God's wrath about to be poured out against you was received by the Lord for you at Calvary. In other words, all of God's wrath has been removed through the blood of the Lamb. So you read Isaiah 53:5, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." So there's no more wrath for you. Jesus paid the wrath. This is the wrath of God. In fact, if you go to the end of chapter 6, you will see the people in the world crying out, "Hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" Thus the distinction. You are not going to be anywhere near here.

All right. Well, let's end with Ezekiel 36, and I'm only bringing you to this point because the only other thing that is going to take place in those first $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of peace (that we are sure about biblically) is found here in the chapters of Ezekiel. It documents for us the actions of God to remove the threat from the Eastern bloc that would challenge and interfere with the rise of the Antichrist and his power base. Remember he is rising out of the ashes of the old Roman Empire to have a seventh and last world empire of man's dominance. Now I'm not going to go through all of the verses, but you can write them down and study them for yourself. Ezekiel 36 speaks about the restoration of Israel to the land. It is all about God bringing His people back to the land. Like I said, from 70 A.D. to 1948 that did not happen. A prophecy to their mountains of the coming work of God in restoring the people to the land. It's a great prophecy of God about what's coming to Israel, and now it has.

In chapter 37, it is the prophecy of the dry bones, the LORD saying to Ezekiel, "Can this live?" and there're just dead bones there. And Ezekiel goes, "I don't know. But, LORD, You know." And you begin to watch God put flesh and bones and

life back into what seemed to the world to be a dead society that could never be restored.

In chapter 38, we then read about the overthrow of the north, and it is a reference (by what we read there) to the independent states that are to the north of Israel, formerly known as the Soviet Union. Today they are mostly independent. They are majority Islamic. They are anti-Israel. And their removal as a threat of the governing of the Antichrist is documented here as the LORD draws these nations south to attack God's people so that He might destroy them. He literally blows up any kind of opposition that would come against them and so that they would know that they're fighting the LORD.

So verse 1 of chapter 38, "Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, "Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops - many people are with you. Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard" because, literally, "I'm comin' to take you out." And the LORD talks about dragging them down towards Israel and destroying them. So, Gog is certainly a person. The prince of Magog is the association with the Scythians or the area that, anciently, was around the Crimean area, the Caucasus Mountains, if you will, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea. Meshech is the old word for Moscow. Tubal is the word for Tobolsk, which was the capital of Siberia for a number of years; it is Irkutsk today, I believe. But you get to verse 5, and you read about some of her allies. Persia is modern-day, obviously, Iran which is, by the way, Shia fundamentalists by far. Ethiopia is very strongly Muslim today. Libya is 97% Sunni Muslim, so they don't get along very well with the Shias. Gomer and Togarmah are northern Turkey, which is about 99.8% nominally Muslim, mostly Sunni, 20% Shia. Big bunch of fighting going on.

As food for thought, and I'll just run this by you, it is interesting who does not stand with these that are being pulled by the LORD south to attack Israel; and what you don't have on the list is Egypt or Syria or Iraq. So it could very well be

that those nations somehow figure it out. I don't know. But they're not listed here. It doesn't mean this list is complete, but certainly this is all we have. You can only go by what the Lord gives you, and the rest you just have to go, "I don't know." But they're certainly not on the list, if you will.

In chapter 39 of Ezekiel, let's read verse 1 here. "And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; and I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken," says the Lord GOD. "And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am the LORD. So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel....." And, "Surely," verse 8, "it is coming, and it shall be done," says the Lord GOD. "This is the day of which I have spoken." ' ' " So, this judgment of God will fall. If you read chapter 39 here, you will read that 5/6 of the invading army is going to be destroyed by the LORD. The results of the war is described in this chapter. Most commentators believe that what is being told you is that it is a result of a nuclear confrontation. Again, okay, there are certainly some indicators. For example, the dead are supposed to be left in place for seven months and then buried by professionals. Israel is told they should wait seven years to burn the artifacts of war which are left behind. But all of this battle to the north of Israel and the removing of any kind of power to the rise of the Antichrist, and maybe he'll be the one that leads some of these wars anyway, to enamor himself to the people. But, in any event, we read, in verse 29 of this chapter, these words, " 'And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord GOD." God's promise is He's not leaving them alone. So this battle for the former Soviet Republics that are setting the stage - you can watch, I guess, the news, watch to see how that is positioned because it'll happen after you're gone, but it should be in the works at some point. And like Israel going back in the land, I would keep an eye on it. It's always interesting to watch the news from that part of the country and their relationship, if you will, to Israel. The Antichrist could very well be aligned with Eastern Europe, with the EU. We have no idea, for sure. But we know this: when you're gone, this is all going to take place. And halfway into this seven-year period, he's going to be seen for who he truly is.

So here in chapter 6, in verses 1 and 2, and like I said, we'll take the first four seals next week. Here the stage is set. Right? This happens sometime after the rapture. You're already, in chapters 4 and 5, in heaven when the Lord opens the seal. Right? Three-and-a-half years later, all of God's wrath is going to be poured out, and from this seal forward, everything else in the book of Revelation - except for the parenthetical chapters of looking around - happened forward from those first $3\frac{1}{2}$ years or, if you will, in the last 42 months of the Great Tribulation.

So I want you to have those timeframes at least in your memory so that next week, when we look at the four horsemen of the apocalypse, we'll begin to see a world ripe for judgment. And I think the only thing it should do to us Christians is get us out witnessing to others. "Don't stay here for this. This is no time to hang around." Right? You think this pandemic is bad, just read the rest of the book.

Are you all right? Did you do good? Are you okay? Did I lose you? Ohhh. I was worried about it. All right. Let's pray.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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