

“that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

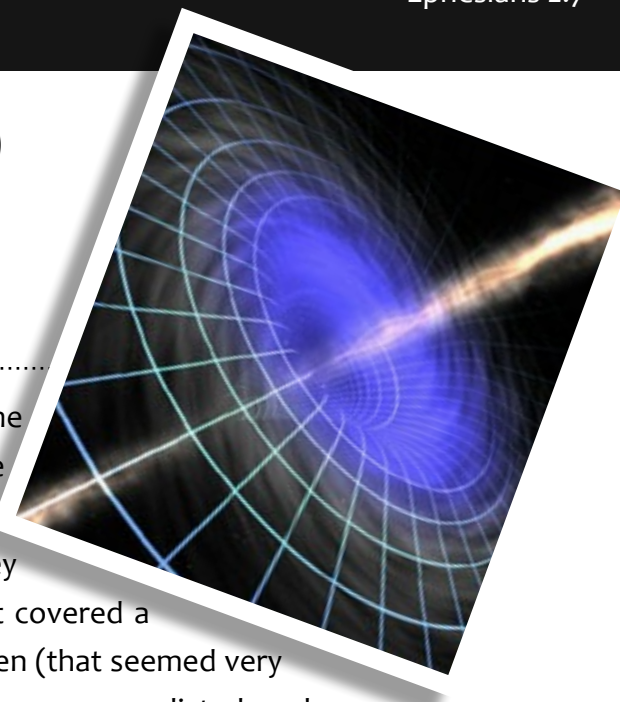
Ephesians 2:7

Time Travelling with God (Part 2)

Theme: Exploring our present age

Review of Lesson 8

We may wish we could time travel to far distant places in other time periods. It makes for great movies and cartoons even though we cannot do it. However, God did let certain individuals time travel (by dreams, visions, or in person) so they could record what they saw. In time past, God gave a very specific prophecy to Daniel; it covered a period of 490 years. In that prophecy, two future events were given (that seemed very unlikely) and the time between those events. The two events did occur as predicted, and we can establish the actual dates for them. God indicated the time between them would amount to 173,880 days and that is, to the exact day, what history shows. This absolute accuracy is something that gives us confidence in God's Word.



Bible Truth

Introduction

We read about time past, now, and time future in the Bible. Based upon past fulfillment of prophecies, which were fulfilled in every detail, we can be sure any uncompleted or yet future prophecies will be equally true. Next, we will learn more about our Age--the "now" of the Bible.

Exploring our Age

Interrupted Prophecies: In Lesson 8, we time traveled into the past. Daniel's prophecy of 70 weeks (490 years) was all accurately completed in time past except for one week (seven years). What happened to those seven years? Why were they not fulfilled? As it turns out, those seven years are still waiting to be fulfilled in time future. Fulfillment of the last week has

jumped over 2000 years of history (our entire Age of Grace). Biblical prophecy has been interrupted, or we could say "put on hold," for 2000 years. We will see that God did not alter His plan nor did Daniel make a mistake.

It is a bit hard to understand, to say the least, why the first 69 weeks of Daniel's prophecy occurred (445 BC until 32 AD), but the last week has not. Other Old Testament prophecies are like that too; they just skip over great periods of time or seem to fall apart shortly after Jesus' time. Joel 2:28-31 is such a prophecy; it skips over thousands of years between verses 29 and 30. The question is: How can OT prophecies be true when they skip over a vast number of years shortly

after the time of Christ? This is a legitimate question every Bible believer should ask.

The goal of this lesson is to show what God is doing today and how this has impacted prophecy. Once we know what God is doing (His big plan for all ages), then we can interpret past prophecies correctly. We will see God has not abandoned any prophecies that were made before our Age, but they have been put on hold (i.e. temporarily suspended until God accomplishes something greater). We live in the Age of Grace; an Age in which such prophecies are interrupted, but not abandoned. (Note: the Age of Grace is similar to the Church Age or Dispensation of Grace.)

Because some cannot understand this interruption of prophecy, they are forced to teach that prophecies will be kept in a figurative (spiritual) way. What's the difference between a literal and figurative fulfillment?

- For Daniel's 70th week, a literal view is: It will be exactly seven years long, it is called the Tribulation because it will be a time of great suffering, and it takes place on earth. God is not done with Israel. Israel will have a homeland and (because of the Tribulation) will turn to Christ. There will be an evil ruler called the Antichrist and the 1000-year Kingdom will be an actual kingdom on this earth in which Christ reigns.
- For Daniel's 70th week, a figurative view would be: There will be periods in our lives during which we will have struggles and problems (this is our tribulation), the church has replaced Israel, the Antichrist is not a person but a general trend toward evil in this world, and the 1000-year earthly Kingdom will not take place on the earth but is viewed as Heaven.

Discussion: Give examples of things in your life that resemble prophecy being put on hold (like putting a

phone call on hold--the call has not been abandoned just temporarily interrupted).

The Key that Unlocks: God was not caught off guard with the failure of Israel to accept Jesus Christ (see Lesson 8). God knew that would happen ahead of time. God knew a secret plan was needed for the time when Israel rejected Him; He had this plan in mind before He created the world, **"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory"** (1 Cor. 2:7). Our Age was a mystery (secret) in God's mind until revealed at just the right time (Eph. 3:3; Col. 1:26-27). Prophecy has been put on hold for over 2000 years while God completes His purpose for our Age. It is our Age that has interrupted prophecy for 2000 years and is what is preventing the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy from occurring. Once our Age ends at the Rapture, prophecy will continue right where it left off--it will continue in time future. (A "Biblical Timeline" is provided at the end of this lesson to help the reader see how this all fits together.)

The key to understanding prophecy is our Age of Grace. Our Age was something in God's mind before He created the world. He knew humans would use their freedom to commit sin; if they were to have a relationship with Him the penalty of sin had to be paid (since God cannot overlook or ignore sin). Not only must the penalty be paid, but there was only one way to pay for sin--He had to do it Himself. We must understand it was absolutely essential that He kept our Age a secret for thousands of years. If not, there would have been disastrous results.

Why the Big Secret: Why did He keep a secret for so long? The answer is so different than what we normally think that it is shocking. The Bible teaches that if the rulers of this world (primarily Satan and

world rulers under his control) had known all that Christ would accomplish through His death they would not have crucified Him. **"Which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"** (1 Cor. 2:8). It was essential for Christ to die on the Cross; this was well prophesied and God's number one goal. His death was required for the salvation of humans from Adam to the last person saved. Thus, God planned to use the tragedy of Christ's death for the forgiveness of everyone's sins.

What those who crucified Christ did not know was they were actually fulfilling God's plan. They did not know of the "mystery," because that was kept a super secret. Therefore, God let them crucify His beloved Son, but did not let them know His complete purpose for permitting this. Satan probably thought he was going to destroy Christ and, in so doing, win the battle of the ages. He knew from Scripture that Christ would die, but He did not know about the mystery; thus, he did not know what wonderful things that death would accomplish in the "mystery" age.

The great mystery is our Age of Grace. If there were no Age of Grace, prophecy would have continued just as written with no break in time between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel. The world would have gone into the Tribulation shortly after Christ's resurrection; in fact, they were entering those days in Acts 1:14-20. But God in His mercy stopped the prophetic events. He interrupted them. He presented a whole new Age which has gone on for over 2000 years. The millions (probably billions) of people who have been saved in the Age of Grace would never have been saved had He revealed our Age ahead of time. Why? Because Satan would have made sure Christ was not crucified; thus, there could be no forgiveness of sin for anyone.

Imagine this: If God had revealed the Age of Grace sooner, Satan and his rulers would not have crucified Christ. No crucifixion means no sin would be forgiven and no one could be saved. This would have been Satan's victory. Since Satan did not know of the Age of Grace, he was willing to have Christ die. This all seems rather odd, but it seems that from Satan's perspective Christ's death was to his favor. Satan saw the world was in rebellion against God and even the chosen nation did not accept her Messiah. Furthermore, his pride was bolstered by supposedly crushing Christ. This all seemed to favor Satan because precious few people would have been saved throughout all the previous ages. It was only by keeping our Age a secret that God was able to blind the evil rulers of this world to what was actually going to be accomplished. Not only were they blinded but they were totally "out-foxed" (fooled) by the greatest secret plot in all history.

Our Age is what has interrupted Old Testament and Gospel prophecies, and when we understand this, we know why prophecies are not taking place today. We live in a mystery-secret age in which those prophecies do not apply. When our Age ends at the Rapture, the former prophecies will continue right where they stopped. So the key to understanding the Bible, and why prophecy is on hold, is the mystery. If our Age were even hinted at in former prophecies, then that would have tipped off Satan to God's mystery. God was very careful to keep former prophecies separate from our Age. Thus, Old Testament and Gospel prophecies are held in abeyance (suspended) until our Age ends. (Note: Events like the Rapture are events revealed in our Age, so they will be completed in our Age.)

Discuss: In the 1940's, the Manhattan project was the United States' most top-secret project ever. It led to

the first atomic bomb. That project had to be kept secret for many years. God's mystery age also had to be kept secret, but for thousands of years. Both altered human history. God's secret resulted in billions (most likely) of people being saved.

Christ laid down His life willingly; no one was able to take it from Him by force. It was the Father that demanded His death as payment of everyone's sin (from Adam to the last believer). But if Satan had known exactly what God was doing, he would have tried to stop Christ's crucifixion. It is Christ's death that will ultimately crush Satan by delivering people from his grasp and sending him to Hell. The mystery age has allowed millions (billions) to be saved by faith alone. This caught Satan totally off guard and was a major defeat for Satan. He was blind sided (something unexpectedly happening without so much as a hint it was coming--like being struck by lightning on a clear day).

Hidden Truth Revealed

Isaiah is quoted by Paul in, "**But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love him' "** (1 Cor. 2:9). The Old Testament prophets were not shown, told, nor did they know many things they wished to know. People today love to quote this verse as though it were true today. However, note the next verse, "**But God has revealed**

them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). The exact things Isaiah wished to know were revealed to Paul by God so we can know them today.

What is Paul saying when he boldly states, "**But God hath revealed them unto us.**"? He is saying Isaiah did not know these things, nor did the 12 Apostles, and Jesus did not refer to any of these things while on earth; but God did reveal them later to Paul and his associates. So what Isaiah did not know, we can! That is Paul's whole point. What was unknown in other ages is now made known. We can know the things the Old Testament prophets wished to know. From His Word we learn of the things God has done for us in the Age of Grace; a great example of God revealing truth at the right time. If we do not know these things, then we will get all mixed up. That is why people do not understand why prophecies are not being completed today.

The angels and heavenly hosts are learning of God's grace and wisdom as our Age unfolds before their eyes. It is amazing to realize they had no idea God was going to have an Age of Grace (Eph. 3:10). They are now learning from us (the body of believers, the church) what God's eternal plan was and of His incredible wisdom. The angels now know how the old prophecy (Gen. 3:15) of a crushing head-blow to the serpent was accomplished by Christ's death.

Life Applications

The mystery has now been revealed and one can know the things that were formerly hidden. The mystery is basically this: We live in the secret Age of Grace in which every person is equal before God, we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, and all believers become united with Christ and part of the one Body of believers (Eph. 2:8-9, 12-14, 16). It is this beauty and simplicity of our Age that brings so many to Christ. We can all be sure there are no more mystery ages; the Word of God is now complete (Col. 1:25).

Prophecies given before our Age are "on hold" because our Age interrupted the prophetic program. Once the interruption ends, prophecies will continue right where they stopped. This indicates our Age (and its participants) will have to be removed since we are the "interrupters." Being removed is exactly what the Rapture does; it removes us from this earth. Then the former prophecies will continue. What a blessing the Rapture is! It is God's way of getting us out of here before the terrible events of the Tribulation and Day of the Lord (next lesson).

God's Word is totally true and dependable even though some things are hard to understand. You can be confident that even when things seem to be going wrong you are still saved. Do not let suffering or

problems in your life create doubt about your salvation; in fact, they may be the result of being saved. What salvation gives us is an inner joy, peace, a secure future, and the hole filled (that hole in our inner being saying something is missing).

If anyone has doubts about the Bible, understanding how He is working today should restore and validate the authority of the Word. Knowing about our Age helps each of us realize that a literal fulfillment of prophecy will take place in the future. There is no reason to think God has given up on past prophecies; they are merely held in abeyance until we are taken away in the Rapture.

God has unraveled a detailed plan in our Age showing His concern and kindness for us. He cares about our every pain and sorrow. We can apply what we have learned by telling others of the exceeding richness of His grace and kindness to us through Christ Jesus.

Knowing God's plan and how He is working it out throughout human history gives us insight into world events. Since former prophetic events will be fulfilled literally, that means Israel has a key role in the future events of the world. That should influence your views on Israel (e.g. Israel's right to exist today and the need to pray for Israel).

Take 2 Heart

Summary

The key that unlocks our understanding of the Bible is that God had a secret plan before He created the world. He did not keep this secret because it would be fun to surprise us, but because if revealed before the right time, there would have been disastrous results. Had Satan and world rulers known God's secret plan (Age of Grace), they would not have crucified Christ. If Christ were not crucified, no one would have ever been saved. Christ's death and all that is accomplished in our Age (over 2000 years long) is the blow that has destroyed Satan. So the eternal battle of the ages, between God and Satan, was won by God because He had a top secret plan that totally fooled Satan. Today we have in the Bible all the things the OT prophets wished they knew, that is, the things God has prepared for those that love Him.

Gospel

Our memory verse reads **"that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus"** (Eph. 2:7). Through the death of Christ we have been made one

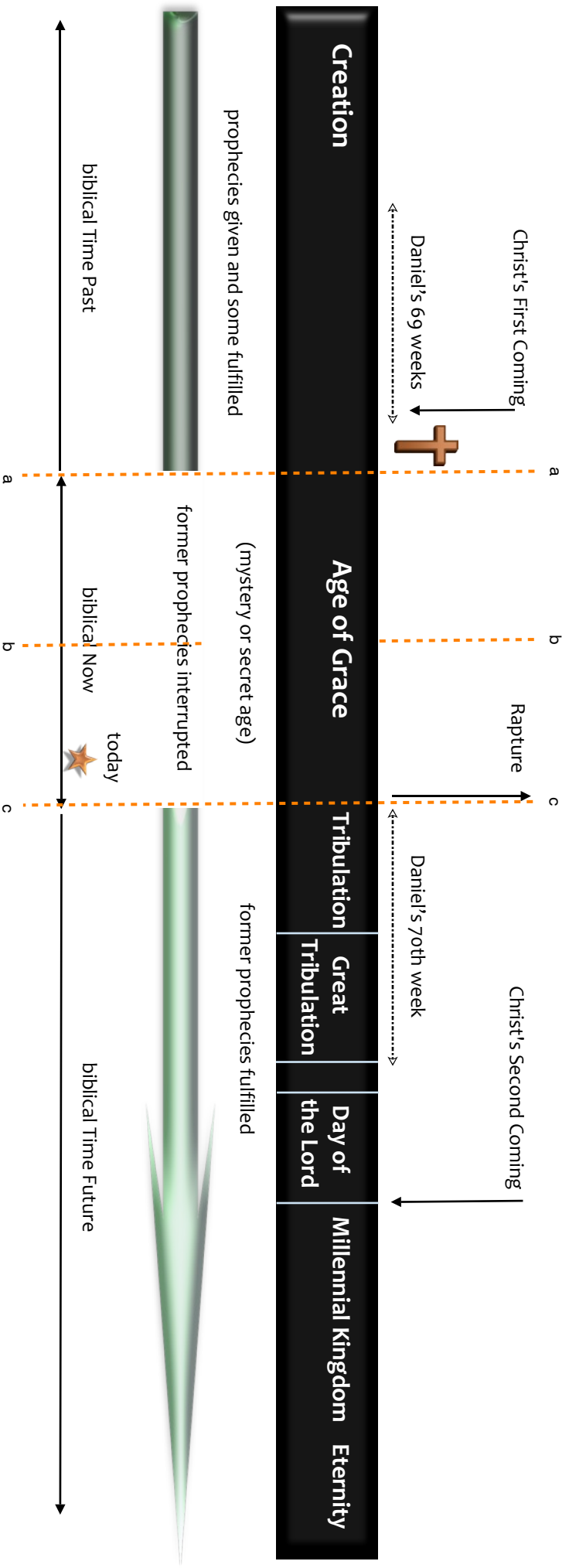
with Christ through faith. God's marvelous plan shows the exceeding riches of His grace to us. This grace offers us the opportunity to be one with Christ; all He asks is simple faith in the fact He died to pay the price for our sins. That's all. You do not have to be good or clean up your act first; just have child-like faith in Him.

Encouragement

The Bible is completely written, and we now have the information the Old Testament prophets longed to know. We see how God planned our Age before creation so He could bless the world through Christ. Sometimes we don't feel so blessed and sometimes we grow weary of trying to do our best because we are criticized and misunderstood. This is part of suffering for Christ, it is painful, but we must expect it. Being a teen is especially hard; not only is there suffering for Christ, but other teens and adults put pressure on you to act or do what they want. Christ will be honored by the teen that loves Him and tries to be faithful. Your faith is a precious thing and we at *Grace 4 You* appreciate and respect you.

A Biblical Timeline

An Overview of the Age of Grace and Coming Events



Notes:

1. In this timeline, time begins on the left and proceeds to the right. Most Old Testament events are not shown.
2. The events shown are not to scale. The intent is to show when different biblical events occur. ★ marks the presumed location of today on the timeline.
3. The Great Tribulation is the last half of the seven-year Tribulation.
4. The Rapture marks the end of the Age of Grace after which the Tribulation begins.
5. This page requires two folds; when folded correctly, the Age of Grace disappears. This enables the reader to see what former believers knew (before the secret Age of Grace was revealed), Eph. 3:1-11. By making the Age of Grace disappear, it is easy to see how former prophecies flowed in time but are now interrupted by the Age of Grace.

How to fold this page: Place the page on a flat surface with the writing upward (as if you were reading it). Make a fold on line b-b by bringing the right hand side of the page to the left. Then part of the page will be right side up and part with the back side up. Next, make a fold along line c-c by taking the part that is back side up and folding it to the right on c-c, the entire page will then have the writing up. If done correctly, **line a-a and c-c will lie on top of each other and the Age of Grace will not be seen (this is how those in previous ages saw the biblical events).**