

Time Travelling with God (Part 1)

Theme: Exploring the past, the key to the future

Review

A Christian can say, "God designed and created me with a body, soul, and spirit. Sin destroyed my relationship with God. When I believed in Jesus Christ, I was saved by God's grace and that has restored my relationship with Him. I am a person that is being transformed daily to renew my mind by the power of the Holy Spirit working within me. One day I will have a glorified body like His. My life is being lived for the Lord in spite of problems and circumstances. I am highly loved by God, Who looks at my heart and not my outward appearance. He is using me in mighty ways, regardless of sickness or handicap, to bring honor to Him. In fact, it may be my weakness that best glorifies God--the Lord is my strength and my salvation."



Bible Truth

Introduction

Time travel would be exciting. Just imagine going back into the past or into the future. Humans have dreamed of this for ages. Think of what fun it would be to go back in time and see dinosaurs or go into the future to see the inventions and wonderful things they might have. Is it possible things that are unknown now might be clarified (like what happened to the dinosaurs)?

A little boy named Calvin and his stuffed tiger (Hobbes) were comic strip characters who often time travelled. In Calvin's mind, when no one was around, his stuffed tiger became a real tiger. They would get into their make-believe time machine (cardboard box) and travel to unbelievable places and times. Calvin

would often get captured by the evil Zorks of the future but always managed to escape. If they went into the past, there was always danger from a Tyrannosaurus.

By studying the Bible, we discover the big picture, that is, what God is doing in His overall plan for all the ages. Knowing His overall plan means we will learn about the past, present, and future. So understanding the Bible is similar to time travel; we can see the past, present, and future without leaving home. Bible teaching too often gets bogged down in the details of events, names, and minor issues. If we study the big picture, that will help us understand the overall plan of God, and then we can see how we fit into it. It seems most people desire to know where they fit into

God's plan and what lies ahead for this world. Even in the Old Testament people wished they knew more; Isaiah lamented, " **'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; Isa. 64:4). If you wish God would reveal those things to us, hang on, because He has.

Discussion: If you could time travel, when and where would you like to go? (This is just an open discussion for creating interest, class bonding, and helping to draw all students into the topic.)

Time Travelers in the Bible

The Bible tells of people who time traveled. Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and other prophets had visions or dreams of the future and recorded them for us. John, in the book of Revelation, was actually transported into the future (whether by vision or how we do not know, Rev. 1:9-10). The Apostle Paul was translated into the third heaven (where God dwells), but he was not sure if he was physically there or there in spirit only (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Paul heard things that were inexpressible; thankfully, the Holy Spirit guided him to record those things for us in the Bible. Since we can't time travel, this is a great way to learn about the past, present, and future; and we can do it safely. Who knows, if we really could time travel, we could be eaten by a dinosaur or zapped by the evil Zorgs. Learning from the Bible gives us the big picture (not just a snap shot of events here and there as time travel would), and it is what God knows we need.

Biblical Divisions of Time

There is so much in the Bible on this topic but only a few examples can be used here because our goal is to get the overall (big picture) view. The Bible presents a simple, common way to divide time to help us understand the Word. It divides time into: 1) time past

(history), 2) now, and 3) time future (see chart below). Notice our Age (now) extends from the first century to the Rapture (when God takes the believers to Heaven). God had special people in each of these time periods, or took them there in visions, to record for us what we needed to know.

Biblical Divisions of Time

Time Past	Now	Time Future
(Eph. 2:2, 12) Creation to 1st century AD Past Prophecies	(Eph. 2:13, 3:3-6) 1st Century AD to Rapture Mystery Age	(Eph. 2:7) From Rapture to Eternity Future Prophecy Continues

As we look at Time Past, we see it is concerned with past biblical prophecies. Biblical prophecy is a statement of fact about something before it occurs. Such prophecies are a statement about the future; once that which was prophesied takes place, it becomes history. Biblical prophecy is not a prediction about the future that may or may not happen—it will happen for sure, as we shall see. True prophecy has to come from God and what we have in the Bible is from Him, **"for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"** (2 Peter 1:21).

Discuss: Prophecy teaches us about the future. How interested are you in the future?

Time Travel to the Past

An example of a true prophecy was when Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would conceive and bare a son (Isa. 7:14). That was a prophecy for time future for Isaiah; it was a true statement of fact that is now proven by history. Isaiah's prophecy is now a completed prophecy, so it belongs to time past for us. God gave countless other prophecies to various men to tell them what would happen, why, and when.

Many of these prophecies are past, so they are now biblical history. Many are yet future, so they will someday take place. God spent a lot of time in the Bible explaining how our present age fit into the big picture. So we have God's plan for all ages, beginning to end, presented in one Book.

The main theme of prophecy is the Lord Jesus Christ. It considers His first coming, a future time of great trial called the Tribulation, His second coming, and the events of His Kingdom reign upon Earth. The prophetic words were revealed right from the beginning of the world (Luke 1:67-70; Acts 3:20-21). God's plan was to select a nation to be His special "show piece" to the rest of the world. That nation turned out to be Israel whom God chose--not because of her greatness, but because of her insignificance. He wanted to show the rest of the world the greatness of a small, insignificant nation that trusted in Him. Out of the chosen nation would come the Messiah Who would provide salvation to all who believed in Him (Jesus Christ). Things were going pretty much according to plan until the time of Solomon (~1000 BC). Then the worship of other gods became such a problem that God had to deal harshly with Israel. By the time of Daniel (500's BC) all twelve tribes of Israel had been taken into captivity (Daniel was a captive in Babylon, now Iraq).

Two tribes of Israel did return from captivity and the plan still was that Israel would accept the Messiah (when Christ came the first time). God would still make them a great nation. Then they would go out into the rest of the world taking the truth of God to them. However, they did not accept Christ as their Messiah. They stumbled at this important step in history, **"but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,"** (1 Cor. 1:23). The rejection of the Messiah and then a few

years later the Holy Spirit led to the downfall of the nation of Israel. Now how could the truth of God go to the rest of the world?

Daniel, writing in the 500's BC, was given a prophecy by the Lord (Dan. 9:24-27). He was told of 70 special "weeks." We know from the rest of Scripture that each of these prophetic weeks really represents a period of seven (7) years; thus, each day represents one year. So Daniel's 70 weeks really represent 490 years of special prophecies related mostly to the nation of Israel. This old prophecy is important because 69 of those weeks have been fulfilled (time past), but one is still in our future (time future). Understanding this prophecy helps us grasp the overall teaching of the Bible, where we fit into God's overall plan, and the big picture of God's purpose.

When Daniel prophesied, the people of Judah were living in captivity in Babylon. He prophesied two events: 1) a decree to restore and build Jerusalem and 2) the coming of Messiah the Prince. These were seen by unbelievers as total nonsense. They thought Israel was forever gone and would never be a nation again. God had different plans. Then even more incredibly Daniel prophesied the time period between those two events. Not only did he predict two future events, but he prophesied the time period between the two--69 prophetic weeks or 483 years.

What is so interesting is we can check these prophecies to see if they are true or not. This provides a way of proving if the Bible is correct or not. The facts are fascinating even if a bit involved.

- **Prediction one:** The **"...command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem..."** (Dan. 9:25) was given by Persian King Artaxerxes in Neh. 2:5-7 (Persia, today's Iran, had taken over Babylon). The date of this was March 14,

445 BC, which is established by non-biblical, secular history.

- **Prediction two: "...Until Messiah the Prince..."** is a bit harder to determine (Dan. 9:25). The only biblical event that fits this prediction is when Christ rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and was hailed "**Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD...**" (Luke 19:38a). The date of this event was April 16, 32AD, which is established by astronomers (they can calculate this date since it is connected with Easter and the cycles of the moon).

- **Prediction three:** The time period between events one and two was to be 483 years. Biblical prophetic years are 360 days long (a nice even number used in those days). We can't see if this prophecy is true by looking at our years (the years are different lengths). The best way to check the accuracy of this prophecy is to calculate the number of days between the two events. The prophetic period is 483 years times 360 days a year; this comes out to be 173,880 days from prediction one to two. How close would we expect this prophecy to be? If within 100 days seems very close, certainly within 10 days would be a miracle. We will not do the calculations here because it gets complicated making allowances for leap years, the adjustment for going from 1 BC to 1 AD, etc. However, when the calculations are made in days, the time period from prediction one (March 14, 445BC) to prediction two (April 6, 32AD) **turns out to be exactly 173,880 days. Wow! Daniel's prophecy is true to the exact day!** This is proof of the accuracy, reliability, and supernatural nature of God's Word.

Discussion: Considering Daniel's prophecy. Is there any way it could be coincidence or a lucky guess (to

accurately predict two very unlikely future events and the time between them)?

What Happened?

Daniel's prophecy of 70 weeks (490 years) was all accurately completed in time past except for one week (seven years). What happened to that one week? This has been a problem for Bible believers for centuries. That last week, the 70th week of Daniel, is still waiting to be fulfilled in time future. This means Daniel's prophecy jumps over 2000 years of history (our entire Age of Grace). The fact this prophecy jumps over 2000 years puzzles many people and indeed it should. How could prophecy be interrupted for 2000 years? This causes some to doubt the Word or to get confused. Some wonder if Daniel made a mistake or if God altered His plan.

We will see in the next lesson that God did not alter His plan and Daniel made no mistake; there is plenty of Scripture to prove God will still carry out His original plan for that final 70th week. Daniel's prophecy stops at Palm Sunday because that is when Jesus was hailed as King; after that things went downhill rapidly leading to Christ's crucifixion. The answer to why prophecy was interrupted lies in the fact that even after His death Israel would not repent; so God had to temporarily set Israel aside (and her prophecies) to introduce something new, something He had not prophesied—but that is our next lesson. God had a very special reason for interrupting prophecy and it has to do with the Salvation of each one of us. If prophecy was not interrupted by God, none of us would be saved, so this is a "big deal."

Life Applications

1. We can have confidence in God's Word for every detail of life. Fulfilled prophecy substantiates the truth of the Bible. There are many fulfilled prophecies which were so accurately fulfilled we can have absolute confidence in God's Word. The fulfilled prophecies teach us that we can have confidence in the prophecies for the future. If God spoke it, it will come to pass. Understanding that our Age of Grace interrupted prophecy explains why prophecy is not being completed today. One day the prophetic clock will start ticking again, just where it stopped years ago. Every word of the Bible is true; all that God says can be relied upon for every aspect of life.

2. We all are in need of His love, grace, and forgiveness. A doctor will take a small blood sample from a person to check for many things; only a small sample is needed because it represents the entire

blood supply in a person. Similarly, Israel was a representative sample of humanity. God knew Israel would reject Him, but He also knew they were like everyone else. Any other nation or person would have done the same, including us. Today each of us is in desperate need of Him. Without Him a person is in a fallen state and miserable just as Israel was and is today (Israel will one day come back to the Lord and rejoice greatly).

3. We are the missionaries. One reason our Age is special is that God has offered His love and grace for 2000 years (rather than allowing the dreaded last days of the 70th week to occur). Our Age has resulted in more people being saved than anyone in the past could have foreseen. God has given us a message of grace, the printed Word, and opportunity to speak of Him to those around us.

Take 2 Heart

Summary

We may wish we could time travel to 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 (that seemed very unlikely) were given and also 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.

Gospel

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). In time past, anyone not part of Israel had little or no hope. Through the death of Christ we who were far off (had no hope) have been made near; not only near but made one with Christ through faith in Him. God knew Israel would fail Him, so His secret plan was to save us anyway; that is what our Age of Grace is about. Today all we have to do to be united with Christ is to have faith in Him. His blood (His death for us on the Cross) forgives us all our sins and makes us

his dear saint. Yes, a teen can become a saint in God's eyes (even though you may not act like it). All sin can be forgiven in a flash, and you can be a new person based upon faith in Him. This is a blessing only our Lord could provide, and it is free.

Encouragement

The teen whom trusts in the Lord has made the right choice and is an extraordinary person. You can use what you have been taught in this lesson to confirm

the truth of God's Word to others and to yourself. Even though you will all have disappointments and problems in life, God always cares and holds your salvation secure in His hands. Remember, when Israel was in her darkest days in captivity, it is then that God gave them hope of being restored to their own land and told of the Messiah that would come to deliver them. God's Word is true and accurate, so you can be confident that even when things seem to be going wrong you are still in His care and secure in His arms.