

NEW YEARS DAY 2014

INTRO: Many of you are reading through the Bible. Some of you are doing so as families, and I am encouraged by that. So this morning I am going to give you a survey of over 7,000 New Years Days. You will have to put on your thinking caps and be ready to fly. Our distance is far. You see, today is the day of year we call New Years Day. New Years day is a marker of time. Time is an incredible subject. In VBS over the years I have taught a class giving the timeline of the ages of the past, the present and the future. To begin that class I would say to my students, "How many of you know what time is?" And they all put up their hands. And then I would say, "That is good. Now write down in the blank space on your paper what time is."

I have never found a definition that truly defines what time is. I briefly checked the internet. One article was titled, "What is Time? One Physicist Hunts for the Ultimate Theory. The article began like this, "One way to get noticed as a scientist is to tackle a really difficult problem. Physicist Sean Carroll has become a bit of a rock star in geek circles by attempting to answer an age-old question no scientist has been able to fully explain: What is time?" So, let me give you Funk & Wagnall's dictionary definition of what time is. They say it is: "The general concept, relations, or fact of continuous or successive existence, capable of division into measurable portions, and comprising the past, present and future." That helps a little.

We have many time words. A second, a minute; an hour; a day; a week; a month; a year; a decade; a millennium etc... Today is New Years Day and New Years Day is a time marker for us to show us where we are in relation to the past. Now when we talk about a year, we are talking about the time it takes the earth to orbit around the sun. It is approximately 365 and 1/4 days.

Now we sing a song in which one line speaks of when time shall be no more. There is only one verse of Scripture in the KJV that says there shall be time no longer (Rev. 10:6). Though the word there is *chronos* from which we get our word *chronology*, I believe the correct translation is that there should be delay no longer. It is my view that time has always been and will always be. Such words as forever or eternal speak of time. Forever is time without end and eternity is time without beginning and without end.

So, if you were to determine when the new year should start, how would you determine which day it should be? Do you know how we

have come to January 1? Well our New Year's day of January the first has its history in Rome, both political and religious Rome. It appears that the new year in the Roman world began when the new consul took office. In 222 BC that date was fixed as March the 15th. But in 153 BC it was moved to the first day of January. And so January 1 became the first day of the new year according to the Encyclopedia Britannica.

So let me ask you this question: If you were to determine what day would be New Year's Day, how would you determine that? Well, there is only one place to truly start it. It would be the very first time the earth made one trip around the sun. And when was that? Well, if you want that information, you can listen to last year's New Years Day message. However, in the Bible track was kept of time right from the beginning of creation. Look at it in Genesis 8 (read 13). It was the 601 year of Noah's life, but it was the first day of the first month of the year. The word 'year' here is the Hebrew 'shannah'. So the Jews have a day called "Rosh Hashannah." That means "Head of the Year", or New Years Day. And when is that? It is on the first day of the first month, of course. And when is that? It is on the first day of the Hebrew month of Tishri. For us, that is somewhere around October.

Now what I want to do very briefly is give you an overview of all of time from the creation of the universe until the beginning of the new heavens and the new earth.

I. FROM CREATION TO SIN

So we begin at the time of creation this morning (read Gen. 1:1-5). Here at creation we have the day that would in one year become the first New Years Day, Rosh Hashannah. It is the day we call Sunday. We are familiar with the creation story. God created everything in six days. Creation ended with the creation of man and woman. And God rested on the seventh day. This became the first week.

Then God places the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden, or the Garden which was in Eden. And there He instructed man as to his life's responsibilities. There He also told man not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And here man lived in paradeisos, paradise. It was an absolutely glorious environment. How long man lived in this state we do not know. The thing we

do know, and sadly so, is that this glorious state came to an end when Adam and Eve sinned.

II. FROM SIN TO THE FLOOD

So, our second time frame is from sin to the flood. You see, one day when man lived in this glorious sinless state, God's arch enemy, Satan, came to Eve and tempted her into eating from the forbidden tree and Eve enticed her husband to eat as well, and the first sin, not in the universe, but the first sin on earth took place. Sin had a drastic effect on creation. Both man and woman suffered the bad effects of sin. The earth and the animal world began to suffer and have ever since.

It is my view that God had a plan right from the beginning. I believe that God created man for His own glory and that through man He would ultimately be able to judge Satan and justly punish him for eternity, while at the same time, out from the midst of sinful man, He would raise up those who would trust Him by faith and who would bring glory to Him for all eternity. We cannot speak of that this morning. However, man became progressively worse in sin and rebellion against God until God decided to bring man to an end.

So look at Genesis 6 (read 1-3). Well, you are well familiar with the story. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord and built the ark as God instructed him. According to Frank R. Klassen's chronology, 1657 years after creation the flood came. After the flood only Noah's family was left alive to repopulate the earth. But God promised never more to destroy the world with a flood and set the rainbow in the sky to remind man of His promise.

III. FROM THE FLOOD TO ISRAEL

That brings us to the next age, the time from the flood to the time of the nation of Israel. After the flood, man once more began to populate the earth. The first age began with one man and one woman. This stage began with one family, Noah and his three sons and their wives. The time from the flood to the time of the beginning of the nation of Israel takes us to the time of Abraham. During this time the events of the tower of Babel took place.

Man was now divided in language family groups. So let us look at Genesis 11 (read 1-9).

In Genesis 11:10-26 we have a genealogy of the family of Shem who was one of the sons of Noah. When we use the term 'antisemitic' I think it is really a misnomer. Antisemitic is really antishemitic. That means against Shem. But Shem was the father of the Arabs as well as the Jews. So today when we use the term antisemitic it means against the Jews, who are descendents of Shem. But in this genealogy we trace the descendents of Shem to Abram (read 27-32).

Well, by now almost 2000 New Years Days have passed and we have come to the time of Abraham the father of the nation of Israel and the people we know as the Jews.

IV. FROM ISRAEL TO THE CHURCH

The next time period we want to look at is from Abraham, the beginning of the nation of Israel to the Church age. The time of the nation of Israel lasted about 2000 years. This long period of time starts with Abraham. We turn to Genesis 12 (read 1-3). Well, to Abraham was first born Ishmael, who became the father of the Arabic people. And then Isaac, the promised son, the son from Sarah was born. From him Jacob and Esau were born, but Jacob became known as Israel, prince with God. From him came the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph was one of those sons and you know how he became the president of Egypt and saved his own people out of a great famine and ultimately brought his family to Egypt. The story of Joseph closes the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis.

But in Egypt the people of Israel became slaves to Egypt. And as time progressed the slavery got worse and worse until God called Moses to deliver them out of Egypt. You will remember the 10 plagues and how Egypt finally let Israel go. They now went back to the land God had given to Abraham, only they now came back as 12 tribes. During this time the first five books of the Bible were written and delivered to the Jewish people as their guide.

And in Israel they began to prosper and to grow in number. Moses had brought them from Egypt to Canaan and died, according to Klassen, after 2552 New Years Days. Then Joshua led Israel, and he them into the land and

conquered the people of Canaan. During this time the events of the book of Joshua took place. Then during the next many years, Israel was led by leaders called judges, and the book of Judges takes place during this time. Samuel was the last of the judges and the books of 1 & 2 Samuel tell us about that time. The judges ruled about 450 years according to Acts 13:20. They began about 2500 years after creation and judged until approximately 2950 years after creation. We are now just over 1000 years before Christ.

So the next major time period during this lengthy time was the rule of the Jewish kings, beginning with Saul. He began to rule about 2,940 years or so after creation. He ruled for about 40 years and then David ruled for about 40 years. Then Solomon ruled about 40 years and then the kingdom split. So for the next 1,000 years Jewish kings ruled. But in 722 the northern kingdom of Israel was taken captive because of its sinfulness. Then after many warnings, the southern kingdom also went into captivity. This was in 586 BC, or 3,400 years after creation. During this time most of the rest of the OT books were written. Most of the prophets prophesied during these years. To these prophets God revealed almost all that lay before mankind. The one thing they did not see was the Church age.

During that time Daniel prophesied of seventy sevens of years that would begin when the command was given to begin to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Let us briefly go to this prophecy, one of the greatest prophecies in the Bible. It is found in chapter 9 (read 24-27).

Well, during the years of Daniel's prophecy, those 70 7's of years began to tick away. Daniel had also prophesied of four world powers. The first, the Babylonian empire began 626 years before Christ. That is about 3,400 years after creation. That is quite a few New Years Days. It came to an end in 539 BC and the Medo-Persian empire rose. The Persian part, by the way, is Iran of today. This kingdom fell in 330 BC. Then the kingdom of Greece came to power, the kingdom over which Alexander the Great became ruler. In 63 BC this kingdom came to an end. We are now only about 59 years from the time of the birth of Christ. Herod the Great, who tried to kill Jesus as recorded in Matthew 2 was already alive at this time.

Well, Herod became the ruler of Israel under the Roman rulers. And about the year we know as 4 BC, the Lord Jesus Christ was born. In our time we have just come past the time when we commemorate His birth. His birth should be at zero BC but because of a calendar error of a certain Roman Catholic Pope, it ends up being about 4 BC on our calendar. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ, the long prophesied Messiah was born and He lived about 30 years and then ministered, in my reckoning, just over 2 years. He was crucified, but then miraculously resurrected; one of the greatest events of all history, and He ascended back to heaven, and so ends the time of the nation of Israel. Sixty nine of Daniel's seventy weeks have been fulfilled. God has stopped the Jewish clock and today the 70th week still awaits fulfillment. Another great era of this earth's history has come to a close.

V. FROM THE CHURCH TO THE TRIBULATION

So we have arrived at the time we know as the Church age. This will take us up to the tribulation. Jesus had remained on earth for 40 days after His resurrection. He then ascended to heaven and told His disciples to wait until they were endued with power from on high. So they waited another 10 days in Jerusalem, and then we come to Acts 2, which records the next great event in history (read 2:1-4).

We have here the beginning of a new age. It is the age of the Church. Just about 40 years after this, Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus, of Rome. From that time, the Jewish temple has never been rebuilt. For most of the past 2,000 years Jerusalem lay largely in ruins. According to Mark Twain, who visited there just before it once more came to life, said it was a God forsaken desert.

The Church has been God's primary work on earth in the past 2,000 years as any Christian historian can easily find. But in the later 1,800's and early 1,900's a stirring was caused among the Jewish people. The OT had prophesied of this. It is clearly shown in Ezekiel 37. Something amazing began to happen. The stories that could be told from the early 1,900's until today would fill many volumes, and they do. But in May of 1948, Israel was reborn as a nation.

Last night we entered the year 2014 on our calendar. That is just over 6,000 years from creation. Of course we do not know the exact number of years, but that is reasonably close. And now, as the Church age is coming to a close, God is preparing the nation of Israel for that final and 70th week of Daniel's prophecy.

I believe the Church age officially closes at the catching up of the Church or the event we know by the Latin word rapture. Though not all Christians agree when this event will take place, that it will take place is very clearly prophesied. I do not know how much time will elapse between the catching up of the Church and the beginning of the tribulation, but I believe it will not be long.

VI. FROM THE TRIBULATION TO THE MILLENNIUM

So we come to the next time period. It is the time known as the tribulation or the time of Jacob's trouble. It will take us up to the millennium. From the prophecy of Daniel's 70 weeks we know it will be a time period of seven years. So go to Daniel 9 once more to see how this time will begin (read 27). It will begin when the antichrist confirms a covenant for seven years. Then it says that in the middle of the week he will bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

It is most amazing to see in Israel today, that some of the Jews have made almost all the items needed to once more begin their sacrificial system. As I watch the Israeli news I note that more and more the Jews want access to the temple mount. When they get that, no doubt, more and more they will want to rebuild their temple again and begin their sacrificial system.

It becomes evident from Scripture that the temple will be in place during the tribulation time and the Jews will once more be using the sacrificial system of the OT. Daniel says the antichrist will put a stop to this in the midst of the week. That is after 3 and 1/2 years. Go to Matthew 24 for a moment (read 15). That is what Jesus is talking about here. Go to 2 Thessalonians 2 (read 3-4). You see, the antichrist will set himself up as God in the Jewish temple.

Let me show you how this time period will come to an end in Revelation. In Revelation 19 the Lord comes down from heaven with the Church (read 11-21). After this another great event takes place (read 20:1-3). After this yet another great event takes place (read 4-6). This is the sheep and goat judgment of Matthew 25 and this judgment closes the tribulation and brings us to the millennium.

VII. FROM THE MILLENNIUM TO THE SHORT SEASON

Now notice Revelation 20:6 (read). Here is the very brief one verse account of the millennial reign of Christ. Do you know why there is so little written here about it? Well, in my view, it is because the OT and other parts of the NT have so much to say about it. For one thousand years it will be paradeisos, paradise on earth. The Lord Jesus Christ will reign as King. Go with me to Matthew 19 (read 27-29). Jesus said to His disciples that of them would sit on their own throne and they would rule with Him. We, as believers, will co rule with them over the world according to Revelation 20:6. Just these few brief promises should spur us on to live a very godly life in the coming new year. I believe the positions we will have during this time will be dependent on how we have lived our life here.

But, the sad fact remains that paradise is not yet ready to remain. So we go to yet one more era.

VIII. FROM THE SHORT SEASON TO THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

This next era is called in Revelation a 'Short Season'. This will take us to the new heavens and the new earth. We find it in verses 7-9 (read). The earth has been repopulated. But in this short season, Satan is let loose and he flies at the world with a vengeance and wins over to his side millions upon millions of people. And in the end Jerusalem once more is the focal point for Satan. As at the end of the tribulation, he seeks to destroy Jerusalem and Israel.

But look at what happens in verses 10-15. Satan is now cast into hell permanently. The beast and the false prophet are already there, but now Satan joins them. And then, all the unsaved dead are resurrected and cast into hell.

And now, for the first time since Adam and Eve sinned, all sin and war is silenced. The final battles are over. And when it is all over, God does something wonderful. Look at it in 21:1-7 (read). Well, the rest of this chapter and chapter 22 give us some very interesting information on the true new age.

I have told you before, I used to have this idea that when Christians go to heaven, they will be there forever. What would be there, that I could not even picture. All I knew is that it would be very good. But in Revelation 21 it clearly tells us that God will make a new heaven and a new earth. By the way, from the words used here in the Greek, I believe He will renew this earth and the present heaven. And we will be here for all eternity. And not only that. We do not go to heaven to be with God forever. He comes to earth to dwell with man forever. That is what 21:3 says. Look at it (read).

CONCL: Well, we conclude. Today we commemorate New Years day. Since the time that God created the universe until now, the earth has experienced around 6,000 trips around the sun. During those trips man has gone through many experiences. There was that wonderful time before sin. Then after sin man increased in number and in wickedness until God destroyed them all but one family. Then after that one family, He divided people into language families and he chose one family out of those to be a light for His truth. We know them today as the Jews. Well, they went through about 2,000 years of history and then the Messiah came. Because of the disobedience of the nation, God turned their clock off and began a new work called the Church. That is the time we are in today.

Well, when you divide time into the past, the present and the future, that brings us to the present. And in my view, we are nearing the close of the Church age. If I am correct on the timing of the catching up of the Church, then after the Church age is the tribulation, which is followed by that wonderful time we know as the millennium, the time when Jesus Christ will rule on earth. The twelve apostles will rule with Him and we with them.

After this time, Satan will be released from his prison for a short time. He will deceive the nations once more. Then he will be cast into hell, all the unsaved dead will be resurrected, judged and cast into hell as well. When that is done, God Almighty will purge this present heaven and earth. Then He will

bring that holy city, the New Jerusalem, which He has been preparing all this time, and will place it on earth and He will enter that city and He will dwell with all the saved for all eternity. And they lived happily ever after, truly.

I do not know what each of you are going through. I do know that no matter what you are going through at this point in time, you have not yet, nor will you ever go through something over which you will honestly be able to say, because of this, it would be worth it to quit the Christian life. We will find when we come to this time that there was nothing in life worthy of comparison with what these last two chapters in the Bible tell us. And when God told John to write this, He said, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." You can bank your life on it.