

The Man Daniel and the Purposes of God

Cornerstone Baptist Church of Pine Island, MN

April 2013



Focus 2: The Prophecies of Daniel Prophetic Theme #1: The “Times of the Gentiles”

Introduction

- 1a. A reminder: the prevailing concern in the book of Daniel is the *glory* of Yahweh.

- 1b. An important specific issue in that regard: How can a covenant-keeping God (as perpetually acknowledged and celebrated in the name “Yahweh”) allow His covenant people to be destroyed and enslaved by another people in the name of their pagan god?

- 2b. Notice the symmetry between the “doxological crisis” at stake in the fall of Judah to Babylon, and the similar crisis addressed by Paul in Romans 9-11.

- 1c. The answer of Paul in Romans summarized:
It must be understood that God’s setting aside of Israel in this age is –
 - a) Just (i.e., a function of God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises) – Rom 9:30 – 10:3.
 - b) Temporary (i.e., Israel is yet to be brought to belief and restoration) – Rom 11:24-27.

- 2c. Notice that the same two elements prevail in the book of Daniel:
 - a) The punishment of the nation is in exact fulfillment of God’s covenant warnings/promises (Deut 28:63-67).
 - b) The four awful and cruel Gentile kingdoms will be followed inexorably and happily by a fifth kingdom – the Messianic Kingdom (cf. the “stone cut out without hands” of Dan 2 and the “One like unto a Son of Man” dispatched to establish a kingdom in Dan 7).

- 3b. The two “Meta-Themes” in the prophetic (i.e., predictive) portions of the book of Daniel:
 - 1b. Notice the predictive portions of the book:
 - 1) Daniel 2 – Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a statue composed of 4 metals, destroyed by a force which man could not produce
 - 2) Daniel 7 – Daniel’s vision of the same four-fold succession of Gentile kingdoms, this time from a divine perspective, finally destroyed by One dispatched by the Ancient of Days to establish a kingdom of righteousness, but resisted by an awful “little horn” who speaks blasphemy against God
 - 3) Daniel 8 – Daniel’s vision of a latter day – but *not* end-time – “little horn” who will awfully trouble the people of God
 - 4) Daniel 9 – Gabriel’s message, in answer to Daniel’s prayer, describing carefully the program of *time* by which God will bring in the Kingdom promised to Israel (“70 weeks”)
 - 5) Daniel 10-12 – Daniel’s extensive (and sometimes bewildering) vision of end-time warfare in which a *latter-day* (not end-time) struggle becomes a divinely provided harbinger of the terrors of the *end-time* warfare which will culminate in the promised Messianic Kingdom

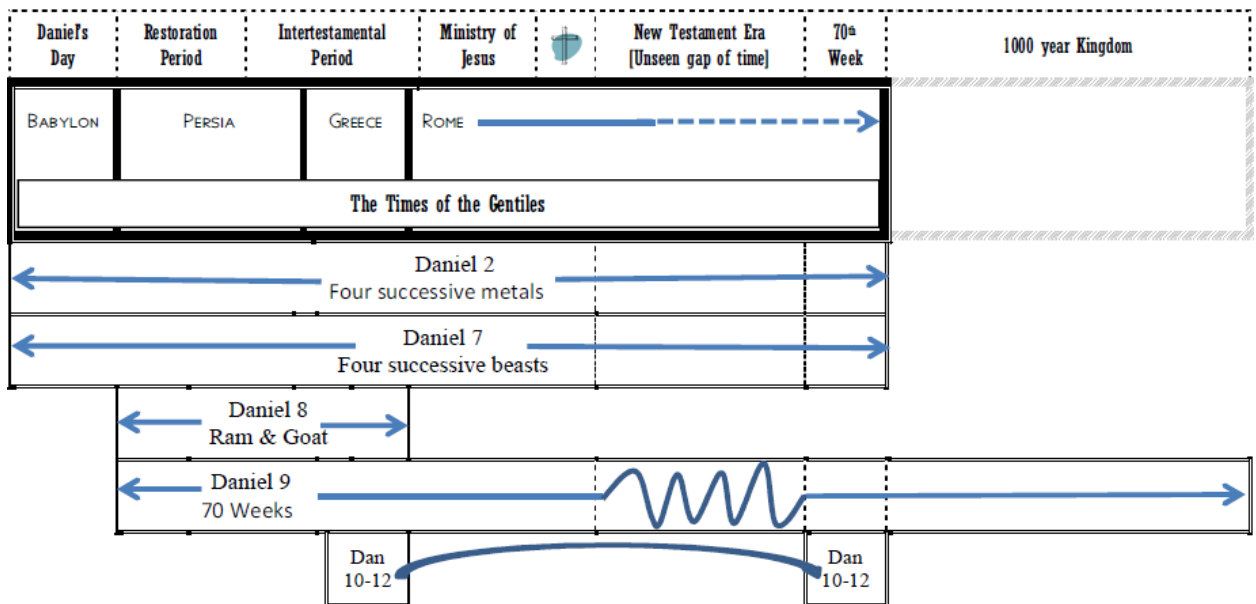
- 2b. These prophetic messages are best conceived as developing two “meta-themes” – that is, supremely important, over-arching and defining focuses of prophetic truth – which are unspeakably important to the situation unfolding in Daniel’s day.
- 1) The coming “times of the Gentiles” (which is entirely just, given that it is in fulfillment of God’s covenant warnings)
 - 2) The certain end-time drama by which Israel will be restored and ensconced in the Kingdom Yahweh has promised her (i.e., the Times of the Gentiles is only temporary, intended by God to bring Israel to Himself in order that He might fulfill His covenant promises to them)

2a. An important reality in reference to the “Times of the Gentiles” – the status of the Theocracy

1b. The *theocracy* is the very real, physical, visible rule by Yahweh as King over Israel (See Appendix 1)

- 1c. It was established in 1446 BC at Mt Sinai, where King Yahweh took His throne once His Throne room complex had been completed (Ex 40:33b-35).
- 2c. It endured centuries of faithlessness and fecklessness on the part of the covenant people, which is a testimony to the covenant faithfulness of King Yahweh (Ps 78:60).
- 3c. The theocratic relationship was abandoned in 592 BC when the Glory-Cloud departed the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek 11:22, 23). (Note: the covenantal relationship, based on promises to Abraham, was *not* abandoned – indeed, it is unthinkable that it ever could or would be!)
- 4c. That theocratic relationship is to be reinstated when the Messianic Kingdom is established on earth (Ezk 43:1-5).

2b. The “times of the Gentiles” is simply that period of time – and (as revealed for the first time here in Daniel) that succession of four Gentile empires which will dominate the earth – after the theocracy was abandoned and before that blessed rule is re-established in the end-times. (See Appendix 2 for a chart representing where this period fits into a Dispensational perspective of human history.)



I. The two Prophetic passages considered separately

A. Daniel 2 – Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue

Note: some instructive issues and questions:

1. A chronological issue: How long had Daniel been in Babylon when this dream drama occurred?
2. An interpretive difficulty: Did Nebuchadnezzar forget the dream? (Note 2:5 – “the thing is gone from me!”)
3. An instructive note: the spirit of Daniel throughout this drama – his winsome, submissive demeanor (2:14), his remarkable faith in Yahweh (2:20-22), his bold and steadfast testimony regarding the God of Israel (2:27, 28), his humility and self-deference (2:30).
4. Notice the four metals of which the image is constructed, and the kingdom represented by each of those metals.

<u>Beast</u>	<u>Nation represented</u>
1.) Gold	1.) Babylon
2.) Silver	2.) Medo/Persia
3.) Bronze	3.) Greece
4.) Iron (later mixed with clay)	4.) Rome

5. A helpful detail: What is distinctive about the successive elements in terms of intrinsic value?
In terms of strength?
What might be suggested by this detail?
6. A hermeneutical issue: the nature of the fifth kingdom (i.e., the stone which rolls out of the mountain).
7. A blessed promise: note the destiny of the grand statue as represented in 2:35 and interpreted in 2:44. Cf. Rev 11:15.

B. Daniel 7 – Daniel’s vision of four successive Gentile powers as beasts to be feared

Note: some instructive issues and questions:

1. A chronological issue: How long had Daniel been in Babylon when this vision was given him, and what was the status of the Babylonian kingdom?
2. What were the four beasts, what did each represent?

<u>Beast</u>	<u>Nation represented</u>
1.) Lion	1.) Babylon (cf. head of gold in dream of Daniel 2)
2.) Bear, raised up on one side	2.) Medo/Persia (cf. shoulder/arms of silver)
3.) Leopard, with 4 heads	3.) Greece (cf. belly/thighs of bronze)
4.) Indescribable beast	4.) Rome (cf. legs of iron/potter’s clay)

3. An important distinction: There have been two other revelatory dream/visions in the book of Daniel (the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2, the second dream to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4), as well as the remarkable revelation given to Belshazzar in Daniel 5 [the handwriting on the wall]. However, this is the *first* vision of the book of Daniel actually *given to the prophet himself*. Notice that this vision was given to Daniel “in the first year of Belshazzar” (7:1), about 553 BC. Daniel first arrived in Babylon in 606, first functioned as a prophet in 604 (Dan 2). Thus this is well into the prophetic ministry of the man Daniel.

4. An instructive reminder: How many **kingdoms** are there in Daniel 7? (Compare Daniel 2.)

*In both chapters there are **five** world kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome [the four Gentile powers which together constitute the “times of the Gentiles” of Luke 21:24] **and** the kingdom of Messiah (the stone cut out without hands of Dan 2, the Son of Man dispatched by the “Ancient of Days” in Dan 7).*

(See Appendix 3 for a chart representing the eschatological drama by which, according to Scripture, the Messianic Kingdom is established on earth.)

5. An alarming detail: Notice the “little horn” which arose out of one of the 10 horns on the fourth beast, speaking great words against the Most High and wearing out the saints of the Most High (7:8, 20-21, 24-26). Who is this “little horn”, and what is the role he plays in the vision?

This is the first biblical revelation of the end-time individual known later as the “Man of Sin” (2 Thessalonians 2), the “Antichrist” (1 John 2, 4), and the “beast out of the sea (Rev 13). This individual dominates the account of the final stage of Gentile dominion. Thus, in 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul insists that it is the absence of this individual which demonstrates that that final stage (later revealed to be the 70th week of Daniel 9, or the Tribulation) had not yet arrived.

In this regard, it is important to distinguish between the “little horn” here in Daniel 7 (end-time, arises out of the fourth kingdom, Rome) and the similar but distinct “little horn” whom we will encounter in Daniel 9 (inter-testamental, arises out of the third kingdom, Greece).

6. An instructive parallel: notice carefully the throne-room scene of 7:9-14. Compare this scene to that of Revelation 4,5. This is deliberately parallel to the “stone cut out without hands” which rolls out of the mountain and becomes “a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” in Dan 2.
7. An important connection: the very important and defining picture of the Messiah in 7:13, 14 as “one like unto a son of man.”

Note: This was Jesus’ favorite title for Himself in the Gospels. It is clearly drawn from this passage. by claiming to be the “Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven,” Jesus laid claim to be Israel’s Messiah in a way that no Jewish listener could mistake.

8. A blessed promise repeated: note the distinction of the fourth beast in 7:12.

II. The two prophetic passages compared and contrasted.

Note: The questions below are intended to help the student ponder the significance of these two remarkable visions.

1. What design might we discern in the *chronological order* in which these two visions were given?
2. What significance might there be in the fact that the first of the two was communicated via a pagan conqueror (who had just recently vanquished the people of Israel), while the second was given directly to and through a prophet of God?
3. In what points are the two visions remarkably and deliberately similar? What might be God's purpose in repeating in the second vision so many details and/or dynamics of the first vision?
4. At what very specific points is the message of the first vision refined or enlarged in the second?
5. In connection with the foregoing, contrast the emotional reaction of the man Daniel to his revelation of the first vision and his experience of receiving the second vision.
6. Given all that we have discussed, why did Yahweh choose to reveal these two visions to Israel *at this point in her history as a nation*?

7. Notice the highlighted phrases in the two following passages:

Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, **until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.**

Rom 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**

Given the two visions we have been considering in Daniel, how do you think the phrases in those passages ought to be understood? And in that connection, should the concept "times/fullness of the Gentiles" be considered primarily positively or negatively?

(See Appendix 4 for charts representing competing constructs of end-time events; notice especially the role of Israel – or the absence of such a role – in each system.)

8. Given the specific truth embodied in Dan 2:35, 36 and 7:11, 12, what should be the attitude of the believer with regard to the prevailing spirit and ethos of the present age?

Appendix 1: THE THEOCRACY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

The theocracy¹ is well defined as the “form of government under the sole, *accessible Headship* of God Himself,” who was “the Supreme Lawgiver in *civil and religious* affairs . . . and when difficult cases required it . . . the Divine Arbiter or Judge.” In sum, “the *legislative, executive, and judicial* power was vested in Him, and partially delegated to others to be exercised under a restricted form.”² Gleig emphasizes that in this arrangement, God “assumed not merely a religious, but a political, superiority, over the descendants of Abraham; He constituted Himself, in the strictest sense of the phrase, King of Israel, and the government of Israel became, in consequence, strictly and literally, a Theocracy.”³ Again, Oehler summarizes the relationship: “*In Him, as King, all political powers are united* (their earthly bearers are only Jehovah’s organs); . . . As King, He is the *Lawgiver and Judge* of His people, . . . Legal and civil regulations are but an efflux of the divine will. . . . as King, God is also the *leader of His people’s army* (comp. Num. xxiii.21); Israel forms the hosts of Jehovah, Ex. xii. 41 (כל־צבאות יהוה). He goes before them as leader in the combat, Num. x. 35; Israel’s battles are מלחמת יהוה [“the wars of Yahweh”], Num. 21:14.”⁴

That theocratic relationship, formed by Yahweh with Israel, was unique to human history.⁵ Thus, the term should not be taken as descriptive of God’s perpetual rule over all creation; as Oehler insists, “The Old Testament idea of the divine kingship expresses, not God’s general relation of power toward the world (as being its creator and supporter), but the special relation of His government toward His elect people.”⁶ Indeed, there has never been another people who knew God as their King in this immediate and actual sense (Deut 4:7). Peters makes this point carefully: “The simple fact is, that since the overthrow of the Hebrew Theocracy, God has not acted in the capacity of *earthly Ruler*, with a set form of government, *for any nation or people on earth*. . . . the application of the word to any nation or people, or organization since then, *is a perversion and prostitution of its plain meaning*”⁷

Thus the remarkable enthronement scene in Exod 40:34-38; King Yahweh, majestically manifested in the Glory-cloud which represents his very real and special covenant presence with Israel, takes up his regal place above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. In so doing he formally initiates his direct and genuine rule over a newly formed “holy nation” which he has made his “own possession” in order that this people might function as a “kingdom of priests” (Exod 19:5,6). Briggs summarizes: “As holy, the Israelites are the subjects of their holy King, and as priests they represent Him and mediate for Him with the nations.”⁸

Nor should the presence of human mediators of the rule of Yahweh be taken as an indication that the governing arrangement established at Sinai was anything less than a true theocracy. Given the majesty of King Yahweh and the essentially unapproachable character of his holiness, it was essential that he minister his daily rule of the nation through such mediators. As Peters observes, “the institution of such subordinate rulers is *an integral part of a pure Theocracy*, leaving the *Supremacy* untouched and fully acknowledged. The purest Theocracy, adapted to the government of nations, that reason can suggest, must *necessarily*, as a means of honoring the Supreme Ruler and advancing His authority, etc., have its subordinate rulers.”⁹

As discussed in another essay, King Yahweh provided a very special ministry of the Spirit by which those human mediators might be enabled to function as his personal representatives.¹⁰ The ruling arrangement developed in the course

¹G. F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. George E. Day (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889), 199, who credits Josephus with inventing the term “theocracy,” defines it briefly as “the government of God,” and characterizes the concept as “the form of government in the commonwealth founded by Moses.”

²George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 3 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972), 1:216 [emphasis original]. Cf. J. H. Kurtz, *Manual of Sacred History*, trans. Charles H. Schaeffer (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1855), 113, who states, “Theocracy is a government of the State by the immediate direction of God; Jehovah condescended to reign over Israel in the same direct manner in which an earthly king reigns over his people.”

³G. R. Gleig, *The History of the Bible*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), 1:218.

⁴Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 200 [emphasis original]. Cf. Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* (trans. Wm. Whiston) 4.8.41, who speaks of God as the “supreme commander” in Israel’s battles, “ordaining for a lieutenant under him, one that is of the greatest courage.”

⁵The character of the theocracy in Israel is not universally recognized as distinct. For instance, Roland de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, trans. Damian McHugh (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1971), 154, describes that governing arrangement in some detail (which he takes as the tradition preserved by the “Deuteronomist editor”), but then insists that “there is nothing in all this which really sets Israel apart from her neighbors in the Ancient East.” He then surveys various contemporary cultures (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria, Babylon) in which the kings represented themselves as serving on behalf of their gods. The issue at this point, however, becomes presuppositional, and as such goes beyond the scope of this study. It will suffice to say that to the degree that one acknowledges the supernatural character of Israel’s religion and of the Old Testament record, he has the capacity to acknowledge the absolute qualitative distinction between the actual theocracy administered by the living God of Israel and the politically motivated and deliberately manipulative claims of pagan monarchs to rule in the name of their gods.

⁶Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 199. The term is sometimes used too broadly, as for any situation in which God rules. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 217, insists that “the word is abundantly perverted; Romanists apply it to their church; Protestants, to the Christian Church; Unbelievers, to priestly rule; writers, to Christian states, . . . thus violating the fundamental and essential idea involved in its meaning.” He then affirms, “The Theocracy is something then *very different* from the Divine Sovereignty, and must not be confounded with the same” [emphasis his].

⁷Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 1:217, [emphasis original].

⁸Charles Augustus Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1889), 102. Cf. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 108-109, who concludes concerning the phrase “kingdom of priests” that “it was to be true of everyone in the nation,” but then posits that the nation “declined the privilege of being a national priesthood in preference to representation under Moses and Aaron (Exod. 19:16-25; 20:18-21).” This seems to vitiate the point of Exod 19:5-6. The terms of the covenant included Israel’s service as the mediator of God’s truth to the nations; this the nation did regardless of the willingness of that first generation to approach Yahweh individually and personally on the Mount.

⁹Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 1:217 [emphasis original].

¹⁰See the essay entitled “The Old Testament ‘Theocratic Anointing’ of the Holy Spirit” under Resources at www.bookmanministries.com.

of the theocracy, from leaders who were personally selected by Yahweh (Moses, Joshua, the Judges) to a series of kings who rose to leadership by reason of dynastic succession. But throughout the years when the Glory-cloud was resident in the tabernacle/temple, every individual in that succession of human leaders was obligated to acknowledge that he was in fact ruling only as the proxy of King Yahweh.

As to its duration, the theocracy is properly understood as formally beginning with the ratification ceremony of Exod 24:1-8; that ceremony occurred as a result of Israel's acceptance of the covenant relationship initially offered them in Exod 19:3-6 and then reoffered (after more careful explication of the relationship) in 24:1-3.¹¹ Bush says that as a result of the series of events recorded in Exod 19-24,

a peculiar constitution was adopted, familiarly known as the *Theocracy*; according to which God became *the temporal king and supreme civil magistrate of the nation*. Not that it was possible for Jehovah to sink his character of Lord and Master of the universe in his capacity as civil ruler of the Hebrews. He was still, as Creator and Judge, the God of each individual Israelite, as he is the God of each individual Christian; but he moreover sustained, both to every *individual* Israelite, and to the whole *collective body* of the Israelitish nation, the additional relation of *temporal sovereign*. In this character he solemnly proffered himself to the people at Mount Sinai, and in this character he was, with equal solemnity, accepted by their united voice.¹²

By the same token, the theocratic relationship was abandoned in 592 BC,¹³ when the Glory-cloud departed the temple in the final days before the Babylonians sacked the city of Jerusalem and carried Judah into captivity. Feinberg summarizes the solemn scene depicted in Ezekiel 9-11.

Ezekiel set forth the fulfillment of the warning uttered by Moses (Deut 31:17) and later by Hosea (Hosea 9:12). God had determined to forsake His sanctuary. There are several steps in His action, showing the Lord's great reluctance to abandon the abode of His own choosing. First He removed the cherub to the threshold of the temple (9:3); next, He lifted His throne over the temple's threshold (10:1); with the cherubim remaining on the right side of the house (10:3), He mounted up and sat on the throne (10:4); finally, He and the cherubim, after lingering at the door of the east gate (10:18-19), left the house (11:22-23) and did not return until the time of 43:2. . . . God was about to desert the temple, and soon there would be written over the entire structure, as well as their entire religious life, "Ichabod" ("the glory has departed").¹⁴

To be sure, Yahweh's covenant relationship with Israel did not terminate at the departure of the Glory-cloud; it is not until the coming of Messiah Jesus that the covenant ratified at Mt. Sinai "is ready to disappear" (Heb 8:13; Rom 10:4; Gal 3:19, 24).¹⁵ As Andrews states, "This departure of Jehovah from His temple and land . . . marked a change in His theocratic relation to His people—a change that continues even to this day. They did not cease to be His covenant people (Lev. 26:44). His purpose in them was still unfulfilled, His promises respecting the Messiah and His kingdom were not withdrawn, and He continued to accept their worship."¹⁶ But the relationship of immediate rule by a divine King who manifested his special presence via the Glory-cloud does come to an end at that point.¹⁷

¹¹Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 199, corrects those who regard the theocracy as antedating Mt. Sinai: "The patriarchs called Him *Lord* and *Shepherd*, and it is not until He has formed a people for Himself by bringing Israel up out of Egypt that He is called, Ex. xv. 18, 'He who is *King* for ever and ever.' But the real beginning of His kingly rule was on that day on which He bound the tribes of Israel into a community by the promulgation of the law and the forming of a legal covenant: 'Then He became King in Jeshurun,'" Deut. xxxiii.5" [emphasis original].

¹²George Bush, *Exodus*, 2 vols. in one, (New York: Newman & Ivison, 1852; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1981), 2:3 [emphasis original]. See also his discussion of the appropriateness of the tabernacle prominently placed in the center of the nation, "where the pavilions of all kings and chiefs were usually erected" (2:6). Cf. Num 23:21; Isa 41:21; 43:15; 44:6; Ps 44:4[5]; 68:24[25].

¹³Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," *Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1242. Ezekiel 8-11 constitute a single vision, and the date of the vision is given in 8:1. For a reaction to critical discussions of the date, see Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 299-302.

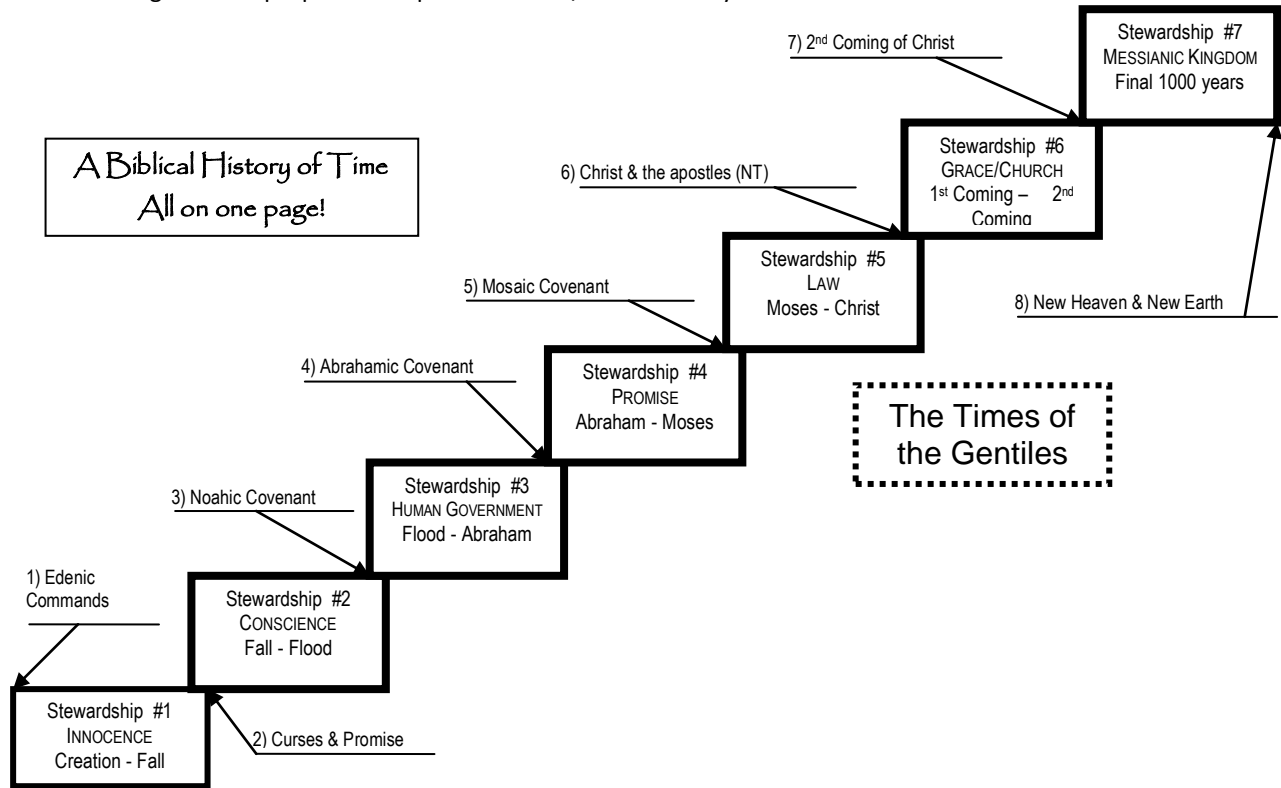
¹⁴Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 61.

¹⁵It is the persuasion of this researcher that the book of Esther is intended to teach Israel how Yahweh would administer his rule in the days following the dissolution of the theocracy proper: via providential oversight rather than direct intervention. Thus, after that time God continues to send prophets according to his will, but there are no miraculous interventions on the part of the nation (compare the deliverance from Egypt with the return from Babylon) and God is not available for oracular consultation. This latter point is discussed below.

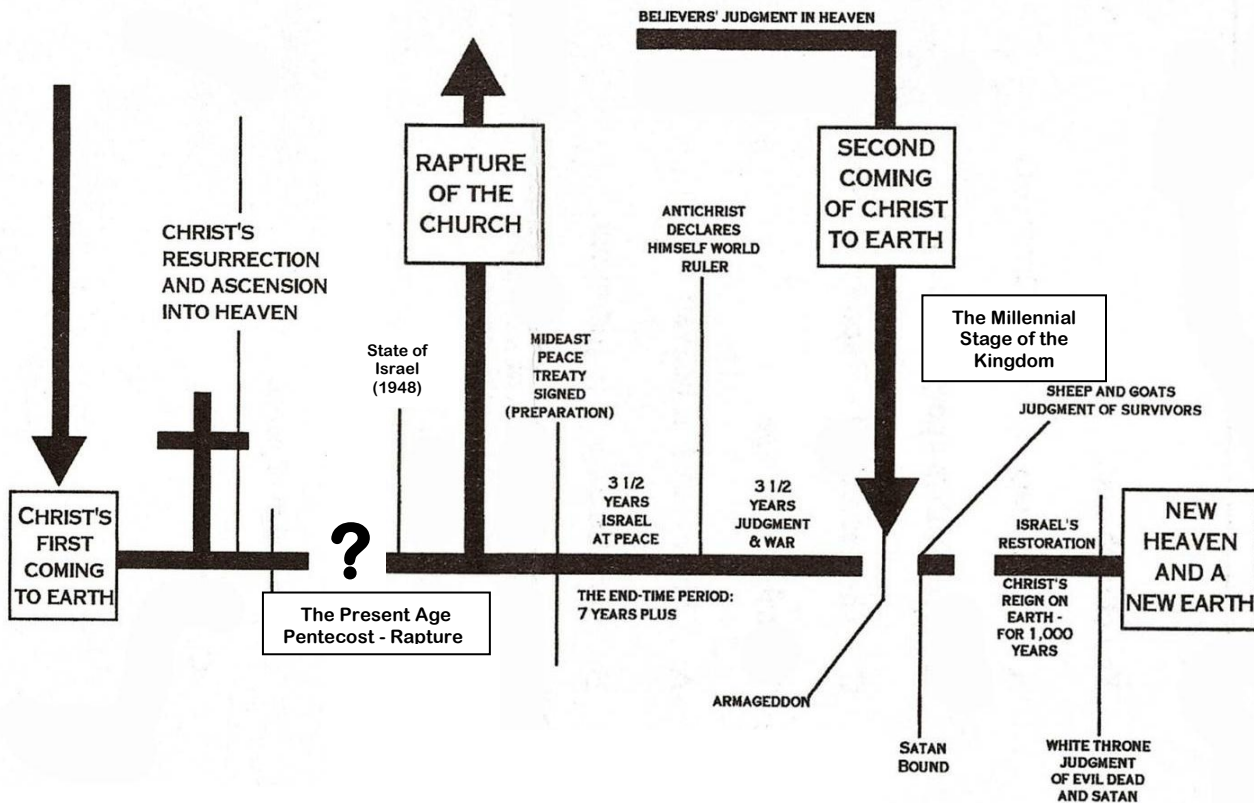
¹⁶Samuel J. Andrews, *God's Revelations of Himself to Men* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1886), 112-13. Andrews goes on to acknowledge this; he states that after the event seen in vision by Ezekiel, "[God] Himself was no more reigning at Jerusalem; the Visible Glory no more dwelt between the cherubim; the Ark was not in the Most Holy Place; the holy fire no longer burned upon the brazen altar; there was no response by Urim and Thummim."

¹⁷Cf. McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*, 126, who says that "the Mediatorial Kingdom of Israel was officially terminated by the departure of the Shekinah-Glory." He relates this to Jeremiah's pronouncement of doom upon the Solomonic line in Jer 22:29-30. "Since the kingdom of the Old Testament was finished, in the mind of the prophet there could be no king in Jerusalem until the kingdom would be re-established in Millennial glory."

Appendix 2: The chart below represents the progress of revelation which is at the heart of the dispensational understanding of God's purposes and plan in human/sacred history.

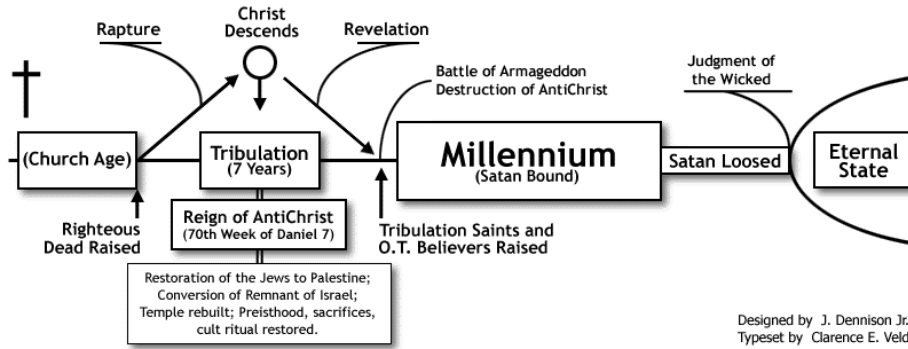


Appendix 3: The chart below represents an overview of the end-time drama by which, according to Scripture, the eternal Kingdom of God's Messiah will be established.

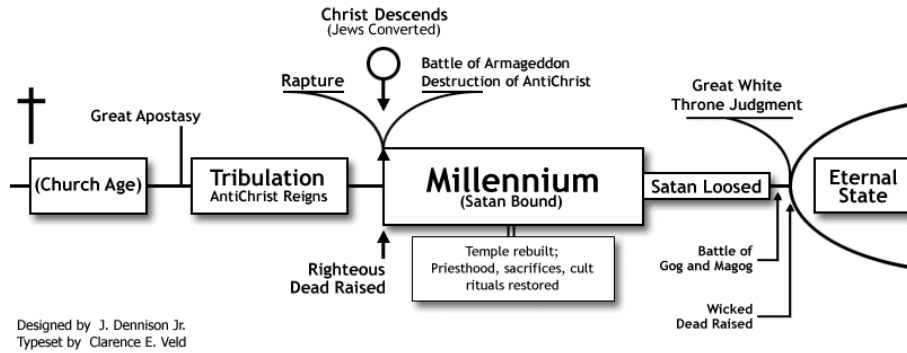


Appendix 4: Charts of various eschatological systems accepted in the Christian world

The chart below represents the dispensational premillennial concept of the end-times. [Exponents: C. C. Ryrie; J. Dwight Pentecost; R. D. Culver]



The chart below represents the historical premillennial concept of the end-time drama. [Exponents: G. E. Ladd; J. Barton Payne]



The chart below represents the amillennial concept of the end-times; notice that there is no drama at all.

[Exponents: Geerhardus Vos; O. T. Allis; Herman Ridderbos; Jay Adams; Philip E. Hughes; Anthony A. Hoekema]



The chart below represents the post-millennial concept of the kingdom of God; notice that it is not an essentially eschatological concept at all. [Exponents: Jonathan Edwards; Lorraine Boettner; Marcellus Kik; David Chilton; Kenneth L. Gentry]

