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Teaching Notes

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Gazing at the Future: A Study of the End Times

Course Overview

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I. Basic Issues

A. What is “Eschatology?”

1. Definition: the doctrine of the “last things”

- a. Greek word *eschatos* = “last”

1 John 2:18 Dear children, this is the last hour

Hebrews 1:2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son

- b. Generally considered, the study of final events both from a personal and a universal standpoint

2. Always a tremendous amount of interest and speculation

- a. People very concerned about the future
- b. Many have become famous or wealthy making spectacular predictions
- c. Eschatological speculation a popular theme in every era of church history
- d. Of special interest (and danger): linking current events to biblical prophecy

B. Personal vs. General Eschatology

1. Personal eschatology: death, intermediate state, resurrection, judgment, eternal state

2. General eschatology: rise and fall of nations, future history of Israel, Antichrist, cataclysmic events in the heavens and on earth, final battle, Kingdom of God, millennium, judgment day, New Heavens and New Earth

C. “Already and Not Yet”

1. Also known as “Inaugurated Eschatology”

2. Basic concepts:

- a. the First Coming of Christ began the end times
- b. the Kingdom of God began, but will grow and grow to perfection
- c. the whole “Church Age” occurs in the last times
- d. there is not an essential difference between what the church has experienced for the last two thousand years and what we will experience to the end; but there will be a difference in intensity, in degree

3. Key passages: the Kingdom of God... “Already here, not yet come”

- a. The Kingdom is here already

ESV Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

ESV Matthew 12:28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

- b. The Kingdom has not yet come

Matthew 6:10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

D. Recapitulation: “As it was...., so it will be”

- 1. key ideas: history is essentially linear, but events occur that will be repeated in some manner in the final generation

On the linearity of history:

Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

On repetition of events:

Matthew 24:37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

2. Implications:

- a. Persecutions, sufferings, cataclysms will be repeated
- b. Jerusalem was surrounded by armies, may well be surrounded again
- c. There have been many Antichrists, there will be one final Antichrist

d. Of special interest: the rebuilding of the temple

E. Prophecy and God's Exhaustive Foreknowledge

1. God's exhaustive foreknowledge essential to this study
2. God's knowledge of the future sets Him apart from every other being in the universe

Isaiah 42:8-9 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. ⁹ See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

Isaiah 41:22-24 "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, ²³ tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear. ²⁴ But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; he who chooses you is detestable."

Isaiah 45:21-22 Declare what is to be, present it-- let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. ²² "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."

3. An example of God's astounding ability to foretell the future through a prophet: Daniel 11 (see final page)
4. Recent attacks on the concept of God's exhaustive foreknowledge of the future
 - a. "Open theism"... the idea that God cannot really know the future decisions of free will beings
 - b. The future is thus "open", not foreordained
 - c. This is a heresy of the greatest implications
 - d. If true, it would make studying eschatology worthless

F. Major Systems

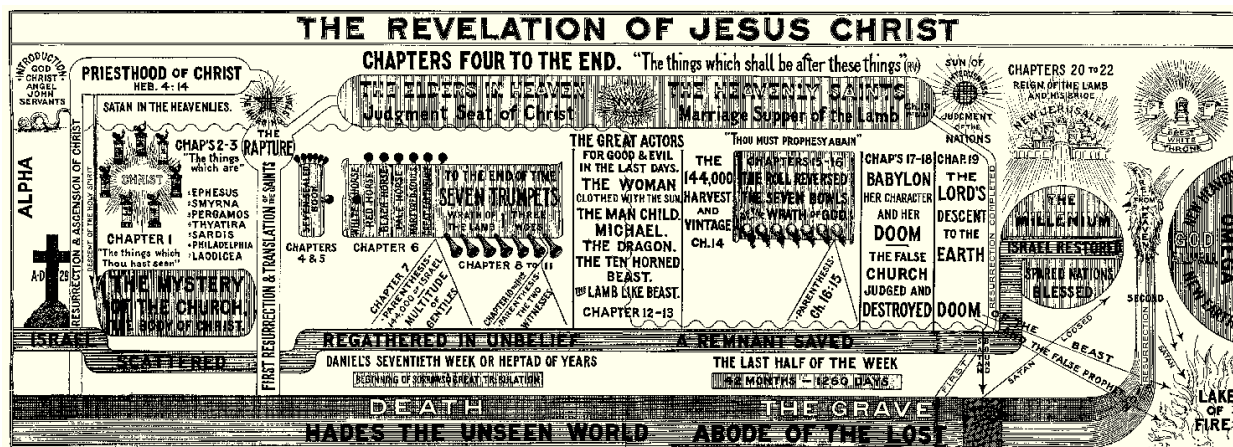
1. Premillennialism
 - a. There will be a literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth
 - b. Christ's Second Coming will occur before this thousand year reign

c. Various types of Premillennialism: most noteworthy are “Historic Premillennialism” and “Dispensational Premillennialism”

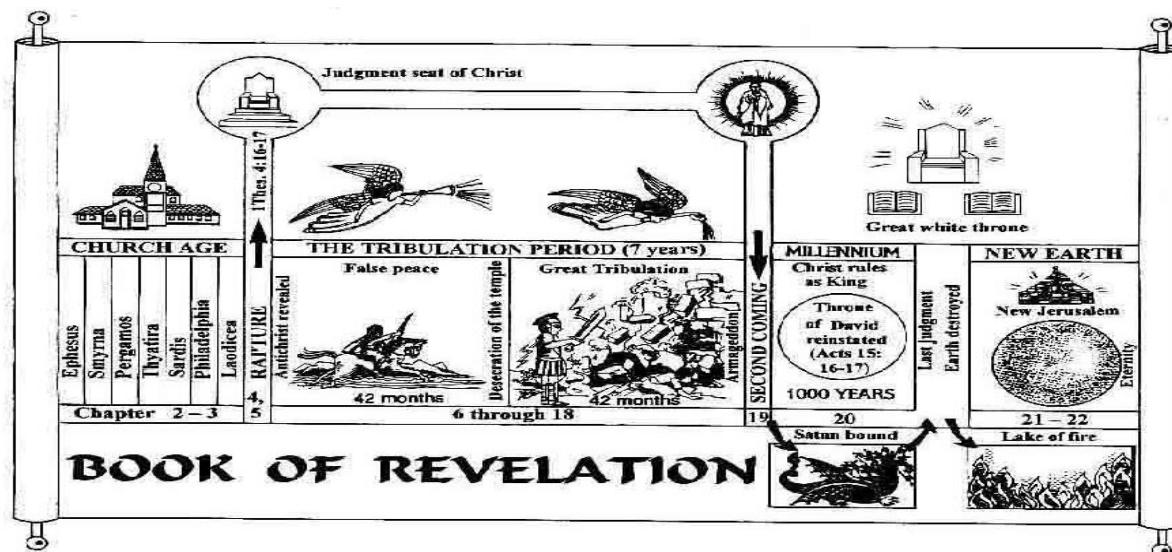
d. General description

“The premillennialist believes that the return of Christ will be preceded by signs including wars, famines, earthquakes, the preaching of the gospel to all nations, a great apostasy, the appearance of Antichrist, and the great tribulation. These events culminate in the second coming, which will result in a period of peace and righteousness when Christ and his saints control the world. This rule is established suddenly through supernatural methods rather than gradually over a long period of time by means of the conversion of individually. The Jews will figure prominently in the future age because the premillennialist believes that they will be converted in large numbers and will again have a prominent place in God’s work. Nature will have the curse removed from it, and even the desert will produce abundant crops. Christ will restrain evil during this age by the use of authoritarian power. Despite the idyllic conditions of this golden age, there is a final rebellion of wicked people against Christ and his saints. This exposure of evil is crushed by God, the non-Christian dead are resurrected, the last judgment conducted, and the eternal states of heaven and hell are established.” [Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, p. 715]

Famous for charts: “If you can’t chart it, don’t believe it!!”



H.A. Ironside’s “Revelation Chart”



Dispensational Premillennial Chart

2. Amillennialism

“Amillennialism states that the Bible does not predict a period of the rule of Christ on the earth before the last judgment. According to this outlook, there will be a continuous development of good and evil in the world until the second coming of Christ when the dead shall be raised and the judgment conducted. Amillennialists believe that the kingdom of God is now present in the world as the victorious Christ rules his church through the Word and the Spirit. They feel that the future, glorious, and perfect kingdom refers to the new earth and life in heaven. Thus Revelation 20 is a description of the souls of dead believers reigning with Christ in heaven.” [*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 715]

3. Postmillennialism

“Postmillennialists emphasize the present aspects of God’s kingdom which will reach fruition in the future. They believe that the millennium will come through Christian preaching and teaching. Such activity will result in a more godly, peaceful and prosperous world. The new age will not be essentially different from the present, and it will come about as more people are converted to Christ. Evil will not be totally eliminated during the millennium, but it will be reduced to a minimum as the moral and spiritual influence of Christians is increased. During the new age, the church will assume greater importance, and many economic, social, and educational problems can be solved. This period is not necessarily limited to a thousand years because the number can be used symbolically. The millennium closes with the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment.” [*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 715]

II. Topics and Supporting Scriptures

A. The Kingdom Arrives

ESV Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

B. The End Times Begin

Hebrews 1:1-2 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

C. The Intermediate State

What happens to the soul at death, before the resurrection?

1. for the Christian:

KJV 2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

2. for the non-Christian

Luke 16:23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

D. The Spread of the Gospel

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

E. The Tribulation

Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now-- and never to be equaled again.

F. The Apostasy

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs

Matthew 24:12-13 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

G. The Antichrist

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

H. Signs in the Heavens, Judgments on the Earth (Seals, Trumpets, Bowls)

Matthew 24:29 *"Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."*

Revelation 8:7-10 *The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. ⁸ The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, ⁹ a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. ¹⁰ The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water*

I. The Salvation of Israel

Romans 11:26 *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob."*

J. The Second Coming of Christ

Matthew 24:30 *"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."*

K. The Rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*

L. The Final Battle (Armageddon)

Revelation 16:16 *Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.*

Revelation 19:19-21 *Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. ²⁰ But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. ²¹ The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*

M. The Millennium

Revelation 20:1-6 *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. ⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

N. The General Resurrection

John 5:28-29 *"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out-- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*

O. The Final Judgment

Revelation 20:11-12 *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.*

P. The New Heavens and New Earth

2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.*

Revelation 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

Q. The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:2-3 *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

III. The Benefits of Studying Eschatology

A. Living in Hope

Romans 8:23-25 *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

B. Living in Wisdom, Ready at Any Moment

Matthew 24:42-47 *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. ⁴⁵ "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.*

C. Boldness in Evangelism

Matthew 24:14 *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

D. Personal Holiness

2 Peter 3:11-14 *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. ¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*

E. Storing Up Treasure for Eternity

Matthew 6:19-21 *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

F. Fervency, Confidence, and Power in Prayer

Matthew 6:9-10 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask-- we know that we have what we asked of him.

G. Courage in the Face of Death

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

Job 19:25-27 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; ²⁷ I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

God's Awesome Foreknowledge on Display

Daniel 11:1-45

122 uses of the word "will" in one chapter!!

And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.) ² "Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings **WILL** appear in Persia, and then a fourth, who **WILL** be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he **WILL** stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. ³ Then a mighty king **WILL** appear, who **WILL** rule with great power and do as he pleases. ⁴ After he has appeared, his empire **WILL** be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It **WILL** not go to his descendants, nor **WILL** it have the power he exercised, because his empire **WILL** be uprooted and given to others. ⁵ "The king of the South **WILL** become strong, but one of his commanders **WILL** become even stronger than he and **WILL** rule his own kingdom with great power. ⁶ After some years, they **WILL** become allies. The daughter of the king of the South **WILL** go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she **WILL** not retain her power, and he and his power **WILL** not last. In those days she **WILL** be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her. ⁷ "One from her family line **WILL** arise to take her place. He **WILL** attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he **WILL** fight against them and be victorious. ⁸ He **WILL** also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he **WILL** leave the king of the North alone. ⁹ Then the king of the North **WILL** invade the realm of the king of the South but **WILL** retreat to his own country. ¹⁰ His sons **WILL** prepare for war and assemble a great army, which **WILL** sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress. ¹¹ "Then the king of the South **WILL** march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who **WILL** raise a large army, but it **WILL** be defeated. ¹² When the army is carried off, the king of the South **WILL** be filled with pride and **WILL** slaughter many thousands, yet he **WILL** not remain triumphant. ¹³ For the king of the North **WILL** muster another army, larger than the first; and after several years, he **WILL** advance with a huge army fully equipped. ¹⁴ "In those times many **WILL** rise against the king of the South. The violent men among your own people **WILL** rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success. ¹⁵ Then the king of the North **WILL** come and build up siege ramps and **WILL** capture a fortified city. The forces of the South **WILL** be powerless to resist; even their best troops **WILL** not have the strength to stand. ¹⁶ The invader **WILL** do as he pleases; no one **WILL** be able to stand against him. He **WILL** establish himself in the Beautiful Land and **WILL** have the power to destroy it. ¹⁷ He **WILL** determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and **WILL** make an alliance with the king of the South. And he **WILL** give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans **WILL** not succeed or help him. ¹⁸ Then he **WILL** turn his attention to the coastlands and **WILL** take many of them, but a commander **WILL** put an end to his insolence and **WILL** turn his insolence back upon him. ¹⁹ After this, he **WILL** turn back toward the fortresses of his own country but **WILL** stumble and fall, to be seen no more. ²⁰ "His successor **WILL** send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. In a few years, however, he **WILL** be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle. ²¹ "He **WILL** be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He **WILL** invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he **WILL** seize it through intrigue. ²² Then an overwhelming army **WILL** be swept away before

him; both it and a prince of the covenant **WILL** be destroyed. ²³ After coming to an agreement with him, he **WILL** act deceitfully, and with only a few people he **WILL** rise to power. ²⁴ When the richest provinces feel secure, he **WILL** invade them and **WILL** achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He **WILL** distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He **WILL** plot the overthrow of fortresses-- but only for a time. ²⁵ "With a large army he **WILL** stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South **WILL** wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he **WILL** not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. ²⁶ Those who eat from the king's provisions **WILL** try to destroy him; his army **WILL** be swept away, and many **WILL** fall in battle. ²⁷ The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, **WILL** sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end **WILL** still come at the appointed time. ²⁸ The king of the North **WILL** return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart **WILL** be set against the holy covenant. He **WILL** take action against it and then return to his own country. ²⁹ "At the appointed time he **WILL** invade the South again, but this time the outcome **WILL** be different from what it was before. ³⁰ Ships of the western coastlands **WILL** oppose him, and he **WILL** lose heart. Then he **WILL** turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He **WILL** return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. ³¹ "His armed forces **WILL** rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and **WILL** abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they **WILL** set up the abomination that causes desolation. ³² With flattery he **WILL** corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God **WILL** firmly resist him. ³³ "Those who are wise **WILL** instruct many, though for a time they **WILL** fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. ³⁴ When they fall, they **WILL** receive a little help, and many who are not sincere **WILL** join them. ³⁵ Some of the wise **WILL** stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it **WILL** still come at the appointed time. ³⁶ "The king **WILL** do as he pleases. He **WILL** exalt and magnify himself above every god and **WILL** say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He **WILL** be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. ³⁷ He **WILL** show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor **WILL** he regard any god, but **WILL** exalt himself above them all. ³⁸ Instead of them, he **WILL** honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he **WILL** honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. ³⁹ He **WILL** attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and **WILL** greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He **WILL** make them rulers over many people and **WILL** distribute the land at a price. ⁴⁰ "At the time of the end the king of the South **WILL** engage him in battle, and the king of the North **WILL** storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He **WILL** invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. ⁴¹ He **WILL** also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries **WILL** fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon **WILL** be delivered from his hand. ⁴² He **WILL** extend his power over many countries; Egypt **WILL** not escape. ⁴³ He **WILL** gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. ⁴⁴ But reports from the east and the north **WILL** alarm him, and he **WILL** set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. ⁴⁵ He **WILL** pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he **WILL** come to his end, and no one **WILL** help him.