



Gaining A Strategic Grasp of Scripture

Acts 1-7: The Extension of Mercy to Israel

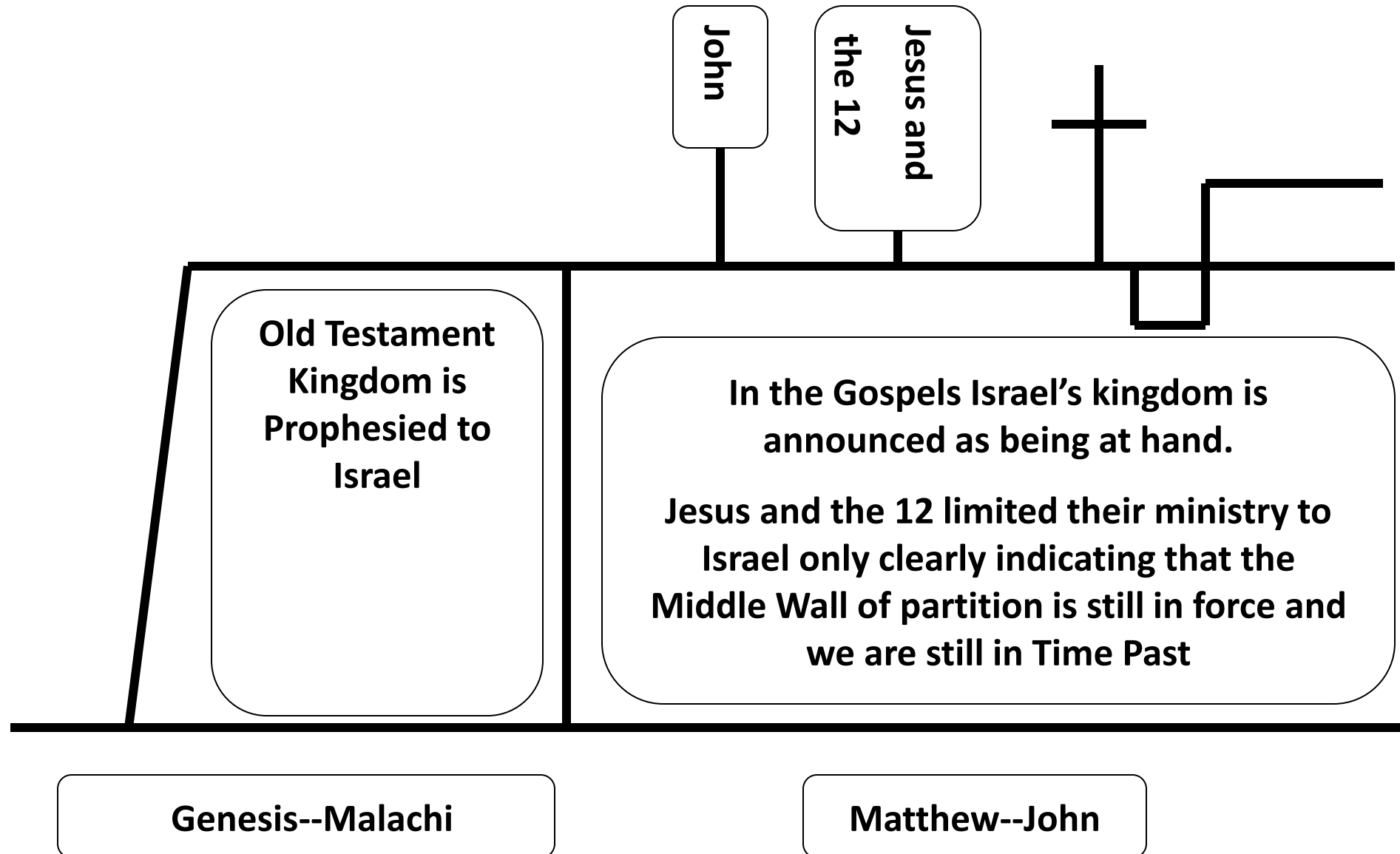
Sunday, December 1, 2024

Grace Life Bible Church

Grand Rapids, MI

Pastor Bryan C. Ross

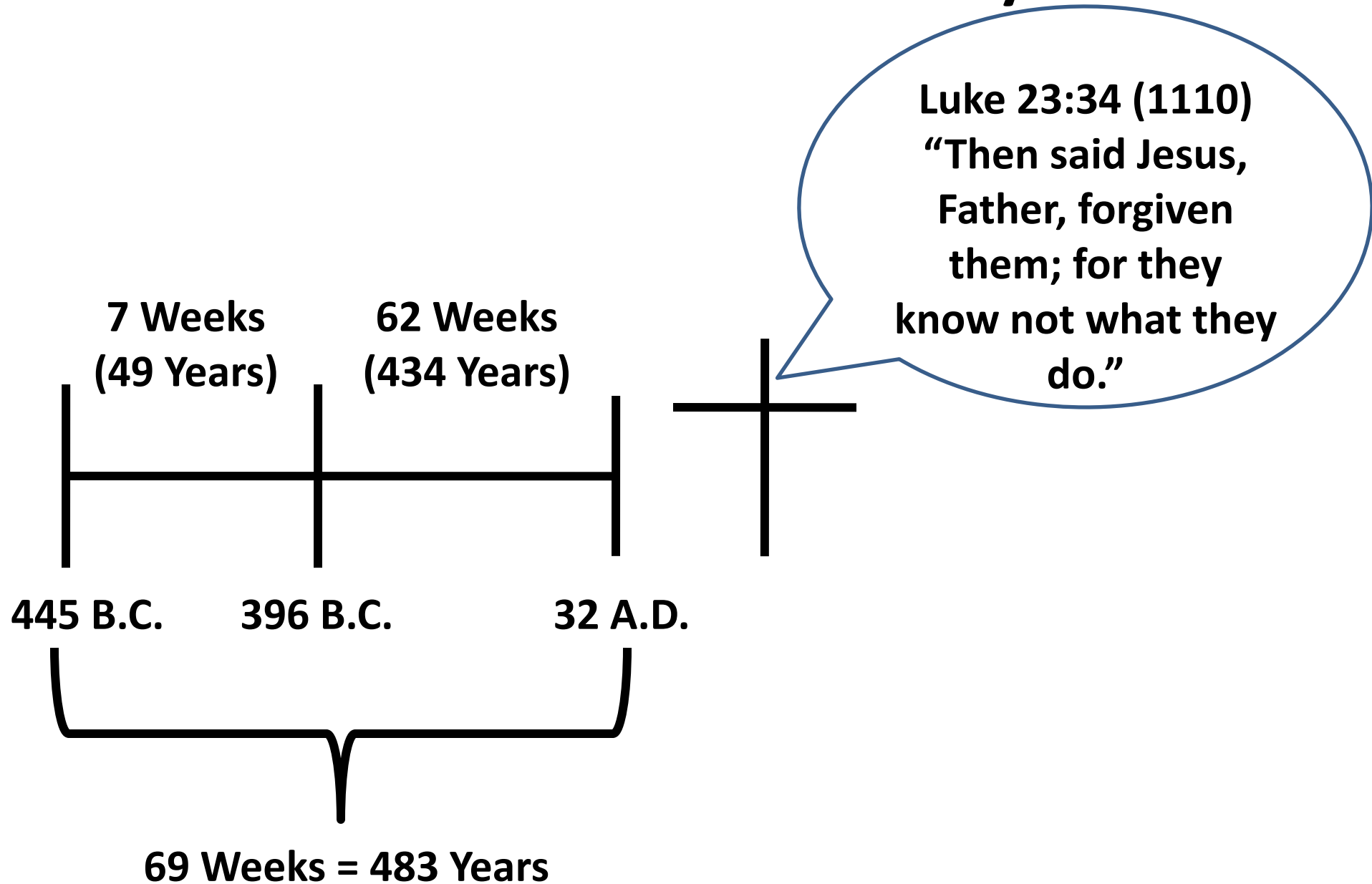
The Gospels Are Still Time Past?



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- John 1:11-12
 - “He came unto His own” —the nation Israel
 - “His own received Him not” —the nation rejected him.
 - Matthew 12:14-16—De-emphasis on His Public Ministry
 - Matthew 16:20—De-emphasis on His Messianic Office
 - Matthew 17:9—De-emphasis on His Messianic Glory
 - “As many received him” —He trained the “Little Flock” for the ministry they would have during His coming absence.
 - “Gave He power to become” —the early Acts period will continue the ministry He had committed to them.

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- Luke 23:34—the first words from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ while they crucified Him, while He hung on the cross, "**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,**" demonstrates the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ as He was beseeching and interceding to the Father for His murderers. Christ was identifying where the cross stands in the program of God. There is a tremendous significance here about what is going on dispensationally.
- Luke 4:17-19—Isaiah 61:1-2
- Psalm 69:20-26—God's attitude and response in all of Scripture to the rejection of His Son was to pour out His wrath in vengeance on the Christ-rejecter. Now, when you come to Calvary, the first thing you hear Christ say is, "Father, forgive them." ***Don't pour out your wrath upon them "for they know not what they do."***

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- Acts 2:23—So, as He looks out over them from the cross and says, "**Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.**" That's an expression of marvelous love. You don't find anything of a positive nature in the people standing at the foot of that cross to suggest that they would merit mercy of any kind. In the face of the evidence, they were crucifying Him. They lied and convened a mock trial with false witnesses to gain their end. They used political chicanery and pressure of the most blatant kind to have the Roman governor crucify Him. They weren't even going to do the deed themselves.
- Deuteronomy 21:22-23—They weren't satisfied just to kill Him. They wanted Him held up as rejected and cursed of God. And it was on behalf of those people that Christ asked, "**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.**" You and I look at that and think that they did know what they are doing. But Christ says: *No, they really don't know. They sit in the blindness of unbelief.*

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- John 12:35-40—They couldn't believe. They had the evidence and **chose not to believe**. They heard the Word and rejected it; and rejected it, over and over. Finally, there came a point where God said: *Okay, you don't want it? I'll fix it so you can't have it. I'll give you your will.* Then He blinded their minds so they would not, could not see. He just gave them their wish, so there's no way they could complain about not being able to see. The worst judgment that God could give you, in your life in human time, is to leave you to yourself, to be abandoned by God to your own devices.
- The judgment of God that is prophesied to fall upon Israel because of their rejection of Christ is postponed, and an extension of mercy is given to Israel. There is something wonderful going on here, for while there is nothing in them of a positive nature that would call forth or require, or even suggest, the extension of mercy, the Lord Jesus Christ uses a loophole in the Law which is for sins of ignorance. A sin of ignorance is no excuse, but it does make a difference in the penalty under the Law. Christ is claiming it for them. They were not seeking it. He claimed it for them.

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- Acts 3:6-8—this is a perfect example of what Christ sent the apostles to do for Israel. Here, Israel is lame and unable to walk; he can't go in and worship God. Through what Christ has provided, the apostle restores and heals him, and he goes with them into the temple, praising God.
- Acts 3:12-17—God Himself, through Peter (filled with the Spirit, speaking as the Spirit gives him utterance), claims the loophole in the Law. Ignorance does not excuse the crime. What it did do under the Law, was to make a difference in the sentence.
- Numbers 35:6, 11-12, 15-27—in Numbers 35, under the Law, when someone caused the death of another through ignorance, the avenger of blood (the nearest of kin to the slain) would come to get vengeance on the killer. But because it was done in ignorance, there were cities of refuge where that man could go. He would go to the judge or the council of that city and say, "I killed someone, but it wasn't murder; it was manslaughter." He could stay in that city until the high priest died, and the avenger of blood couldn't get to him. He was safe as long as he stayed in that city.

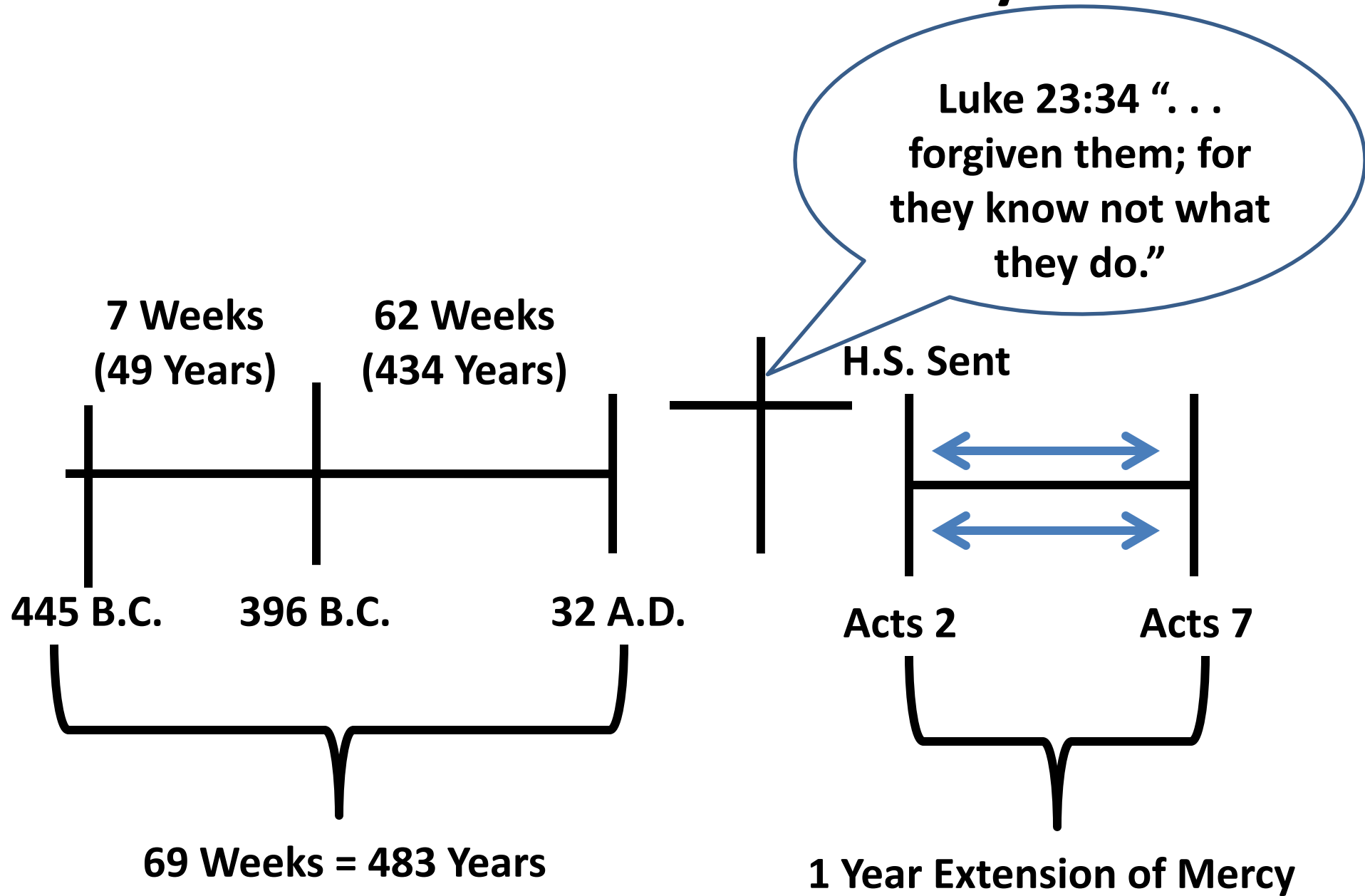
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- Acts 3:18-26—That's what is going on here for Israel: an opportunity for repentance and for Israel to respond to Christ's pleading and God's changing the verdict from murder to manslaughter. He offered Israel a place of refuge from the wrath that is going to come. He was giving Israel a renewed opportunity for salvation. He invited them to that place of refuge in Christ, their Messiah. He lifts the blindness that had been placed upon them because of their unbelief.
- When you start listening to Christ from the cross, it is critical for you to understand that the first thing He said is: *I'm not setting Israel aside because of this.*

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- Luke 13:6-9—The Father sends Christ, and He seeks fruit from Israel. They don't bring forth any fruit in the three years of His earthly ministry.
 - The Father says: *All right, let's cut them down, and let's do something else.*
 - Jesus says: *Wait. Let's give them one more year. I'll dig about it and fertilize it. I'll put some extra effort into it.*
- He sends the Holy Spirit upon them, and now there is not just one man in their midst doing miracles, there are a whole host of people going out doing these wonderful signs, confirming the Word, between Acts 2 and Acts 7. Do you know how long that is? One year. The nature of the early part of the book of Acts is defined for you by the very first word that Christ speaks from the cross.

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- The great blunder that the Church, the Body of Christ, has made for almost the last two thousand years, has been to think that God set Israel aside at the cross, and that on the day of Pentecost something brand new started; that is, the Body of Christ.
- Acts 7:51-60—do you notice that Stephen does not say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" Stephen could not plead ignorance for them any longer. He could not plead ignorance for his murderers. Rather, his prayer exposes their guilt.
- At Calvary, Christ secured for Israel an extension of mercy. That mercy extended into the early part of the book of Acts. The first saying of Christ from the cross defines the nature of the ministry that is being carried on in early Acts. That which is going on has nothing to do with God setting Israel aside and forming the Church, the Body of Christ. That first word from the cross tells us that Israel had not yet fallen, that there was this renewed opportunity for her repentance. The wrath of God toward Israel was delayed while God extends mercy.