

# (2 Thessalonians) the Church, the Tribulation, and the Anti-Christ

by Brian Brodersen

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*Paul teaches that the rapture occurs before the tribulation period, and the Antichrist will be revealed after the departure of God's people.*

**Duration:** 1:00:14

**Scripture:** Acts 1:11, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Thessalonians 2:15-17, Revelation 4

**Topics:** "Eschatology", "Gods Glory"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of God's glory and how he has chosen to share it with humanity through Jesus Christ. He emphasizes the grace, goodness, love, and mercy of God in forgiving and accepting former rebels. The preacher also mentions the importance of holding onto the traditions taught by the apostles. The sermon then shifts to the topic of the rapture, referencing the book of Revelation and describing John's vision of being called up to heaven. The preacher warns of the impending judgment on Earth and highlights the deception that can lead people astray.

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## Transcript

All right, let's open up our Bibles to 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2. These epistles to the Thessalonians, as we pointed out before, these were some of the first epistles written. These are the first documents, if you will, of the New Testament. And Paul, as we've already seen, he spent a period of time with the Thessalonians, and doesn't seem that he spent a whole lot of time, probably, as we've pointed out, a bit more time than some people, and some people would conclude.

We read in Acts that Paul reasoned in the synagogue there for three Sabbath days, and so some conclude that he was only there for three weeks. But I think there are other things that indicate that he was probably there longer. But he wasn't there that long, and the interesting thing is that while he was there, he taught them about the second coming.

He taught them about the rapture of the church. He taught them about things that some people say today that, well, you know, we can't really understand that. We don't want to bother with that.

We probably shouldn't be speculating about that. Nobody can really know. Paul did not have that mentality.

Paul taught them the things pertaining to the second coming of Jesus. And in the first epistle, as we studied there in the fourth chapter, he taught them about the rapture. And so he had to go back, because there was some confusion in their minds.

He had to go back and clarify to them just exactly what was going to occur. And now here, as we come to the second epistle, and in the second chapter, we find that they are once again confused a bit over some of those issues pertaining to the second coming of Christ and the different events that surround the Lord's second coming. So Paul is writing to them, and he's correcting their misunderstanding.

And in the course of doing that, of course, he's teaching us, and all the successive generations of Christians, he's teaching us about the events that will occur when the Lord returns. So he says, now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him. I believe that Paul is making a distinction here between the second coming and the rapture of the church.

Now, there is, I believe, a gap between those two things. That the rapture will occur, and then a minimum of a seven-year period will transpire before Jesus actually comes back physically to establish His kingdom on the earth. And so I think that Paul is making that distinction here.

The coming of the Lord Jesus, that is the return of Christ, the second coming. But our gathering together to Him is our being caught up, as we studied there in the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians, our being caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So those are the two things that he's going to address.

Second coming and the rapture. But I believe that he deals with the rapture first, and then moves right on into the events that follow the rapture, culminating in the second coming of Christ. So let's follow through and see if that's what he's saying.

So he says, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of the Lord had come. So, apparently, there was a word that was going around that the day of the Lord had come. And perhaps even there was some sort of a forged document.

Paul refers to a letter, possibly, that was being circulated that would have supposedly been written by him, letting the people know that the day of the Lord had come. Now, why would that be troublesome to the Thessalonians? The only reason why it would be troublesome is if they had been taught by Paul previously that they were not going to be here when the day of the Lord arrived. Now, the question is this.

What is the day of the Lord? What is he referring to? The day of the Lord is mentioned many times in the Old Testament, and it is always used of the day of judgment, or what we would commonly refer to as the Great Tribulation Period. Isaiah speaks of the day of the Lord. Amos speaks of the day of the Lord.

Joel speaks of the day of the Lord. Zephaniah speaks of the day of the Lord. Let me read to you from Zephaniah 1. The great day of the Lord is near.

It is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter. There the mighty men shall cry out, that day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.

I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord. Their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse. This is what the day of the Lord

is.

It is the day of God's wrath, and the Thessalonian believers are shaken up because word is going around, a forged letter is going around saying, hey, the day of the Lord has come. You're in the tribulation period. Again, that would only trouble them if Paul had taught them that they would not experience the tribulation.

It would only trouble them if Paul had taught them that they were going to be removed from the world before the tribulation occurred, which is exactly what Paul did teach them. He taught them that the rapture would be God's means of delivering them from the wrath to come. So now he's going to go on and explain to them how it is that this hasn't happened yet.

For before the tribulation comes, certain other events must occur. And so he says, let no one deceive you by any means, for that day, the day of the Lord, will not come unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. So first of all, Paul says there's going to be an apostasia.

That's the Greek word translated falling away. Now when we use the word apostasy in English, it's just a transliteration of the Greek word apostasia. And when we use that term apostasy, we're speaking of people who leave the faith.

And that is the assumption by translators that that is what Paul is referring to here. And many Bible commentators have taught and still do teach today, very dogmatically, that before Jesus comes back, there's going to be a great apostasy, a great falling away from the faith. And many insist that that's actually already happened, or we're in the midst of it right now, that we're all in the midst of a great falling away from the faith.

But I personally challenge that. I don't think that looking at the totality of Scripture, you can necessarily conclude that during the church age, now of course during the tribulation when the Antichrist does come to power, that will obviously be the case. But during the church age, I don't think you can biblically conclude that there's going to be this apostasy or this departure from the faith that is so extensive that there's not really any recognized Christianity on the planet.

I don't think the Bible teaches that. Paul says in writing to Timothy, in the last days he said, some shall depart from the faith. He didn't say all shall depart from the faith.

He said some shall depart from the faith. When you look at Revelation chapters 2 and 3, you have the seven churches written to by Jesus. And those were literal, actual churches.

But there was also, I think, an overview of church history there. And the last four churches, the Church of Smyrna, the Church of Thyatira, the Church of Philadelphia, and the Church of Laodicea, certain things that Jesus says to them seems to imply that they will all be here on planet earth when Christ comes for his church. And of course, Philadelphia, out of that group of churches, is the faithful church.

They're the ones who have kept the Word of God. Now, the other ones have compromised, but still even in those compromised other churches, there's still a remnant of true believers. So this whole idea that's insisted upon so often that there's going to be this great departure from the faith, I don't know that we can say that that's totally accurate biblically, nor do I think we could say that today.

Now, sure, if you look at some of the historical denominations, there has been a departure from the faith. The Roman Catholic Church departed from the faith centuries ago. The Orthodox Church has not really

followed a real biblical faith.

And many of the Protestant denominations, the mainline denominations, have embraced theological liberalism, and they've certainly departed from the faith. But in their place, God has raised up a whole new work. And there are multitudes of churches that have been raised up over the past few decades, and the fact of the matter is there's probably more biblical Christianity on planet earth today than there's ever been in any time in the past.

You think of China, for example. There's an estimated between anywhere from 60 to 100 million believers in the house churches in China. There's never been anything like that before in the history of China.

If you go over to the region that was formerly the Soviet Union and dominated by communism, there's much happening today in regard to the church. God is working. He's moving.

And all over the world, you find that God is raising up works throughout the African continent in different places. So again, my point is really to challenge this insistence that there is going to be this great apostasy. Now, as I said, of course, that will be the chief feature of the reign of the Antichrist, but that's after the age of the church passes.

You see, the word apostasia is assumed to mean people departing from the faith, but that's not necessarily what it means. It's only used one other time in the New And there in that place, the word apostasia is translated forsake. The word literally means depart.

That is the actual meaning of the word. Now, when the Bible was translated from Greek into English by men like William Tyndale and those who were closely associated with him, when they came to this passage here and this particular word apostasia, interestingly, they translated this word departure. So if you were to pick up an early version of the English Bible and read this second verse or this third verse, it would say, let no one deceive you by any means for that day will not come, what the day of the Lord, the tribulation period will not come unless the departure comes first.

Now, if you read it just like that, that opens the door wide for other possibilities. Now, what is the rapture? The rapture is a departure. It's God's people departing from this world and departing from this world before the judgment is coming.

It very well could be that this is the passage in the New Testament that clearly states the timing of the rapture in relation to the tribulation period. And if this is indeed the meaning of the word, it would clearly tell us that the rapture happens before the tribulation. Of course, there's a lot of debate about that, and there's people who hold to a post-tribulation view.

They say the rapture is going to happen after the tribulation. There are others that hold to a mid-tribulation view. They say the rapture is going to happen at the midpoint, three-and-a-half years into it.

Some even hold to what's known as a pre-wrath position. They say, well, we don't know exactly when, but there's going to be a moment when the wrath of God is poured out sometime after the Antichrist comes to power, and that's when the rapture is going to take place. But we believe that the rapture is going to occur before the tribulation begins, and I think that that's quite possibly what Paul is actually teaching here.

Now, Kenneth Wiest, who is a well-known authority in the Greek language and has written an entire commentary on the Bible from the point of view of the Greek language, he looks at this passage right here, and he says that to translate apostasia as a rebellion or a falling away is an interpretation rather than a translation. It's an interpretation. It's not actually a translation because a more accurate translation would simply be a departure.

Now, think about that for a moment and look at what it says. It says that that day, the tribulation period, will not occur until the departure comes first. The rapture comes first, and then what happens? The man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.

And I think that that's the biblical order. If you look at the book of Revelation, and you know, in the book of Revelation, there's not a clear statement regarding the timing of the rapture. Jesus said to the church of Philadelphia that because you have kept the word of my patience, I will keep you from the hour of trial, which will come on the whole earth to test those who dwell on the earth.

It's Revelation 3.10. But there's not a specific place that tells you, okay, the rapture occurred right here. But interestingly, when you come to the fourth chapter, the fourth chapter begins with these words, after these things. Now, the things that have just been talked about are the things of the church.

So when you read after these things, then it would stand to reason that what he's saying is that what takes place now takes place after the things of the church. And what happens then? John says, heaven was open. I heard a voice speaking to me like a trumpet saying, come up here.

Sounds to me like John is describing the rapture. And then he finds himself in heaven. And there in heaven is the throne of God, and this whole scene that takes place there.

And there's a group in heaven, an interesting group. There's a group of 24 elders. They're clothed in white, they have crowns of gold on their head, and they're surrounding the throne.

Now, who are these 24 elders? How do we even begin to interpret who they might be? Well, a good way to start is to look for the number 24 somewhere in the Bible. And guess where you find it? Back in Chronicles, David interestingly took the priesthood, which was made up of thousands of priests, and he divided them up into 24 separate groups. So the entire priesthood was included in those 24 groups.

So 24 became a representative number for the entire priesthood. Now, we are told that we are actually a kingdom of priests. So you have the 24 elders.

It seems to me that they are representative of this kingdom of priests, who would be, of course, the church. And so you have the church in heaven, and there we are, and there's this song that's being sung to the Lamb because He's redeemed us out of every tribe and tongue and nation with His blood. That's a song only the church can sing.

And this group is singing that song in heaven. And then, when you come to the sixth chapter, you come to the Lamb beginning to open the scroll and to loose the seals. And the first thing that happens is the Antichrist is released to take dominion over the world.

So again, the order follows perfectly. The church is taken out of the world, and the Antichrist comes to power. That's what Paul says here.

A departure takes place first, and then the man of sin, the son of perdition, rises to power. So I personally think that, because of a failure to translate, and instead a decision to interpretate a word, that the rapture in this particular passage has been missed by many. But it's my conviction that that's what Paul is actually telling them.

He's saying, don't be shaken, don't be worried. I told you you're not going to go through the tribulation period. Remember, you're going to depart.

There's going to be a departure. Then the Antichrist will come to power. Now, listen to what he says.

The Antichrist, speaking of him, or we use this term Antichrist, and I'm using it. But you know, the Antichrist is only used one time in Scripture. And sort of indirectly, John says that, he points to the future, and he says, we know that Antichrist is coming.

And he says, but there are many Antichrists that have already gone out into the world. Those who deny that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh, they are Antichrist. But he does pinpoint in the future that there is Antichrist is coming.

So that title has sort of stuck. But this person has many other titles. And here are the titles that Paul gives him here.

The man of sin and the son of perdition. So he's the man of sin. He's, in a sense, he's sort of the incarnation of sin.

And he's the son of perdition. He's the son of damnation. He's the son of the devil, in a sense, really.

Notice it says, concerning him, he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. So what Paul is telling us here is the same thing that's told, been told in other places. Back in Daniel's prophecies, there was the prophecy of the abomination of desolation.

When you see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, that's when destruction is going to come. Jesus referred to it in Matthew 24, and the parallel passages, Mark 13 and Luke 21. The abomination of desolation.

Paul's describing the abomination of desolation right here. It's this man of sin going into the temple. Now, the word temple here speaks of the inner sanctuary of the temple, speaks of what we would know historically as the holy of holies.

Now, there's been a ton of confusion historically in the church when it comes to prophecy and future events. And many commentators have been very confused over this passage. Some have been confused in regard to the temple.

Well, what does the temple mean? And because there are places in the New Testament where the church, we collectively, are referred to as the temple of God, they say, well, this is speaking of this man taking over the church entirely. He's going to bring the church under his complete authority. But if he did that, then the church would not exist any longer.

When Paul's talking about the temple in this context, I think he's clearly talking about the temple in Jerusalem, which would have still been standing in Paul's day at the time that this was written. He's talking

about that structure that was originally built by Solomon, then rebuilt by Zerubbabel and them, and then, of course, beautified by Herod. He's talking about the temple that will yet be rebuilt in the future.

There's a great desire among the Jewish people today to rebuild the temple. There's a whole group of people over in Israel that are working behind the scenes to try to bring that to pass. There's something in Jerusalem known as the Temple Institute.

And there at the Temple Institute, they've been working to develop all of the different implements that would be needed in the re-establishing of the sacrificial system that would be re-implemented in a built temple. They've gone and actually reproduced the priestly garments and those things. You can go to Jerusalem today and you can see this.

And they're just waiting for the temple to be rebuilt. You know, here's the frightening thing. If you ask some Jews today in Israel how they will identify the Messiah when He comes, some of them will say this, we'll know when the Messiah comes because He will enable us to rebuild our temple.

That seems to be the thing that this man of sin is actually going to do. It could indeed be the very thing that brings him into a covenant relationship with the Jewish people, allowing them to rebuild their temple. That's what Paul's talking about here.

He's talking about the Jewish temple and he says that this man of sin, the son of perdition, he is going to go into the sanctuary. He's going to go into the Holy of Holies and he is going to declare himself to be God at a given point in history. And this will bring the wrath of God upon the earth.

This is the abomination of desolation. Now he says, notice in verse 5, he says, do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things? He says, and now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. Now, Paul could have done all of us a huge favor by giving a little more information here.

Now, the Thessalonians, they knew what he was talking about because they had had this dialogue between them. Unfortunately, nobody else was there, so we have to speculate a little bit on what he's talking about. And there's been a ton of speculation over what he's referring to here when he speaks of something that's restraining.

He says, you know what is restraining, that he, the Antichrist, may be revealed in his own time. He said, for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, only he who now restrains, restrain of course means to keep back, to hold back, he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Oh, Paul, if you only would have said, hey, remember exactly what I told you about that? Let me remind you.

If Paul would have done that, there wouldn't be any dispute. But because he didn't do that, there's dispute over who this restraining force is. But what we know for sure is Paul is saying that there is some force that's restraining the man of sin, the son of perdition, the Antichrist.

There's something that's keeping him from coming to power. And he cannot come to power until that something is removed, whatever that something is. Now, some commentators have said, well, that was a reference to, they say this, they actually, some commentators actually say that the man of sin, the son of perdition, was none other than Nero himself.

And that the restraining force was the emperor that preceded Nero. Nero couldn't come to power until that emperor was removed. But that's almost not even worth discussing because it just doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

And there's been all kinds of theorizing and speculating about who this restraining force is. Now, Paul uses the masculine here. He says that he is restraining.

I think out of looking at all of the different possibilities, the only one that really makes any sense is that the he is a reference to the Spirit of God. That it's the Lord Himself, it's the Holy Spirit in particular, who is restraining this man of sin, who's keeping him back, who is not allowing him to come to power until that God-ordained moment. But it says that the restrainer will be taken out of the way.

Now, here's the problem that some people have had in regard to this being the Holy Spirit. They say, well, the Holy Spirit can't be taken away. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent.

The Holy Spirit is God. He's everywhere. He can't be removed.

True, that's true. The Holy Spirit can't be taken away like that. And I don't think anybody who really believes that this is the Holy Spirit would ever suggest that that is what's going to happen, that the Holy Spirit is going to be taken out of the world.

That's an impossibility. Not only is it an impossibility, but that's not what anyone that I know of believes. But what is believed is that the Holy Spirit manifested in the church will be removed.

You see, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does reside in the church. The presence of the Spirit is indeed living within the church.

And think about this. Isn't it even true today that for the most part, it is the church that is restraining evil in the world? You know, think about it. Just think, if the church itself was just suddenly removed, who would stand against evil? It doesn't seem like there are many that would do that.

And as we have coming along quite frequently these days, different legislation and all kinds of things promoting every imaginable evil, the church is getting a bad rap today because we're the only ones that are standing up saying, no, that is not right. That's not going to happen. We're going to oppose that.

You cannot just alter the meaning of marriage after the entire human history testifies that marriage has always been between a man and a woman. No, we're going to resist that. We're going to oppose that.

We're going to stand against that. And all of that kind of stuff, that's just one example, but all of those kinds of things, it's the voice of the church that speaks out. And of course, we see there are repercussions to that because there's a lot of people that just absolutely hate the fact that we do speak out and speak up.

But it just shows you that for the most part, I'm not saying that everybody would necessarily agree with the things that are going on, but you know, it's sort of live and let live. Hey, you know, if that's what they want to do, we're not going to worry about it. We're just, you know, I'm not into that, but they are, so we'll leave it alone.

But the church presently restrains much of the evil that would just dominate the world. So imagine a world where there's no church. Imagine a world where there's no voice speaking up for righteousness.

There's no one standing and speaking on behalf of God. What would then hinder evil from just completely taking over the culture? Nothing. And so likewise with the Antichrist himself, I think what Paul is saying here is that the church's removal is what is going to allow this man to come to power.

And if you look at this closely, you will see that verse 3 and verses 7 and 8 are saying the exact same thing. What does verse 3 say? It says, there's going to be a departure, then the man of sin will be revealed. What does verse 7 and 8 say? That the restraining force is going to be taken out of the way, and what happens? The lawless one will be revealed.

You see, I don't know if you've ever heard this, but I think Paul's saying the same thing over again. He's just reiterating what he's already said. The Antichrist cannot come to power as long as the church is in the world.

When the church is removed from the world, the Holy Spirit is not taken out of the world, but the Holy Spirit's presence in the church is removed, and the Holy Spirit's emphasis is then shifted from gathering in a bride for Christ, which he has been doing for the past 2,000 years, shifted back to bringing the remnant of Israel back to faith in their God. You see, that's what happens. When the church is removed from the world, the Spirit of God turns His attention toward Israel, and immediately we see 144,000 Jews are brought to faith in Jesus as their Messiah, and they're sealed by the Spirit of God, and they're no doubt sent out into the world to testify.

The church is now removed, but God has now His faithful group of Jews who are going to be that witness for Him in the world. That's what Paul's talking about here. The church is not going into the tribulation.

The church is not going to experience the wrath of God. Before the Antichrist can come to power, the church will be removed from the earth. So, we're not looking for the Antichrist.

Now, people are always trying to figure out who the Antichrist is. They've been trying to figure that out for ages, all the way back to, practically back to New Testament times, and there were certainly some that probably thought, and with good reason, that Nero was the Antichrist. He sure seemed to fit the bill, but then there have been many that have followed him, and I would imagine that it would have been pretty tempting back when Hitler was in his heyday, it would have been pretty tempting even then to think that maybe this is the Antichrist.

He sure looked a lot like what the Bible describes, but we know now, of course, that he wasn't. So, who is the Antichrist? Is there someone that we can point to today and say, I think that might be him? I think that any attempt to identify the Antichrist is a foolish attempt. For those that are here, when he comes, they will know it.

It'll be clear. But I don't think that we can necessarily identify him prior to his rise to power. There are people on the world scene today that some are looking at and saying, you know, hey, that guy looks like a good candidate, and, you know, perhaps they're right.

And maybe so, but we don't know. And so, to come up with a name, I remember back in the 80s, people were even talking about people like Henry Kissinger, or some even were saying Ronald Reagan. The Democrats, of course, were saying Ronald Reagan was the Antichrist.

But, you know, there's always been all kinds of speculation, and when we start speculating like that, I think, obviously, it's proven to be an unwise thing to do. So, we don't know. But the world will find out soon

enough when he does rise to power.

But we don't need to be preoccupied with that because we're not going to be here in the first place. Now, some people say, oh, that's, you know, that's just such escapism. Hey, call it what you want.

Escapism, that's fine with me. I don't have any desire to be here during the reign of the Antichrist. If I can escape, sounds good to me.

And Jesus, as a matter of fact, he said, pray that you can escape these things. So, yes, I am an escapist, I will admit. But that's the promise of God.

We're going to escape this time of unprecedented wickedness. And as a result of unprecedented wickedness, unprecedented judgment upon the planet. Now, he goes on and he describes what the program of the Antichrist is going to look like.

But first, he says in verse 80, he says, a lawless one will be revealed, and I love this, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming. The very coming of Jesus Christ will be the end of the Antichrist. Just his very presence will destroy the Antichrist.

But listen to what he says about the Antichrist. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan. It's according to the working of Satan.

So the Antichrist is the devil's man. You know, of course, our God is a triune God. We have the Father, we have the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Satan is the power behind the Antichrist, and the Antichrist is also accompanied by one we commonly call the false prophet. But here's really probably the more accurate picture. I'm using the term Antichrist to speak of the political ruler, but the reality is the false prophet is probably more the Antichrist.

The false prophet, Revelation 13 tells us that there are two leaders that are going to rise. One out of the sea, which is out from among the Gentile nations. Somebody asked me recently, what is the nationality of the Antichrist going to be, this man of sin? Well, there are two people.

The one, the political ruler, the one we commonly refer to as the Antichrist, is probably going to be a Roman, probably ethnically an Italian, actually. Why do I say that? Because in Daniel chapter nine, we're told this, that the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Who destroyed the city and the sanctuary? It was the Romans who destroyed the city and the sanctuary in 70 AD.

So the people are the Romans, the prince is their prince. So it could very well be that he is Italian, but maybe not limited to that. Rome, of course, was the center of the empire, but the Roman empire was an empire that encompassed the entire Mediterranean world.

So he will rise up out of Europe is where he will rise up from. What his exact ethnicity is, I don't know that we can identify that, but perhaps literally a Roman. But this other one, who's really more properly the Antichrist, he rises up out of the land we read in Revelation 13.

The sea from which the first beast arises is a way of referring to the Gentile nations. The land is always a way of referring to Israel itself. And so this second beast who looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon and has all the authority of the first beast, he rises up out of the land of Israel.

Now, it's interesting again, back in Daniel, when Daniel speaks of this person, and it's almost again in Daniel and back in the Old Testament, there isn't a distinction made or it's not necessarily seen that there are two people involved in this, but we know that from the more full revelation in the book of Revelation. But in Daniel, we read an interesting thing about this person. It says that he does not worship the God of his fathers.

He does not worship the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women. Now, the desire of women is an Old Testament phrase that refers to the Messiah, the desire of women or the desire of all nations. And it says he does not worship the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, but in their place, he worships a God of fortresses and and he honors that God and he advances its glory.

Interesting thing, he advances its glory. Read Revelation 13, read about the second beast. That's exactly what he does.

He advances the glory of the first beast. He makes an image and he's the one who says that all the world is to worship the image of the first beast. See, Daniel's describing more literally the Antichrist.

The Antichrist is the false prophet. He's the spiritual leader. The one we commonly call the Antichrist is the political leader.

So there are two figures involved here, but you have an unholy trinity. Just like you have the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, you have the unholy trinity, you have Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet or the Antichrist. And that's what Paul says here, that his coming is according to the working of Satan.

Listen to this, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. Oh, the deception. When these satanic beings come to power, the deception is going to be so overwhelming.

You know, it's interesting, Revelation 13 actually tells us that the first beast is wounded with a deadly wound, and his deadly wound is healed. And the second beast, that's what he says, make an image to the first beast who was wounded and whose deadly wound was healed. And they say, who can make war with the beast? You know, it seems that there's a possibility that there will be a seeming death and resurrection of the first beast.

And that's radical. Power, signs, lying wonders, miraculous things. The devil has power.

And a lot of times people are sucked in by something supernatural, something that indicates that there's some supernatural power. They say, oh, that must be of God. Oh, no, not necessarily.

The devil has power. He has great power. Remember the magicians in the court of Pharaoh.

They could duplicate to a certain extent the miracles of Moses. How could they do that? Satan has power. And when this beast, this man of sin, this son of perdition comes to power, and this antichrist, this false prophet, the way they're going to bring the world into their program ultimately is by demonstrating miraculous power.

And people are going to be sucked up into it. But notice, and with all unrighteous deception, among those who perish, oh, the deception is going to be huge. It's going to be unthinkable.

But it's among those who perish, and listen to what this says, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion that they should

believe the lie. Man, this is so frightening.

This is so serious. Not only does the beast and the false prophet, not only do they have great miraculous power to deceive people, but because people did not receive the love of the truth, because they turned away from that royal summons that we talked about previously, that divine invitation to heaven, because they scoffed at that, and mocked that, and rejected that, God himself will send them a delusion. God will let them believe the lie.

This is what's going to happen in the future. God is going to turn the world over to deception. You think people are deceived now.

We haven't seen anything yet. You know, you look back at some of the things that have gone on historically, with the rise of various dictators, and all that sort of thing, and the stuff that they said, and the things they ended up doing, and the horrors that they perpetrated upon their fellow men, and you wonder, how did anybody ever believe that stuff? How did they buy into this? Several months ago, a movie came out. I think I mentioned it before.

It was a movie depicting the last hours of the Third Reich, and it was unbelievable to sit and watch this. It was all absolutely historically accurate, and the amazing thing was to watch these people that followed Hitler all the way through, and came to the point where the whole thing was now a lost cause, and they were still worshiping this guy. They were still telling him that they knew that he was really right, and they couldn't go on without him, and they were all taking and blowing their brains out, because the thought of not being able to serve with him, or live under his reign, was too much for them.

They had come to that kind of deception, and that was huge, and there's, of course, all kinds of deception all over the world today, similar to that. When a young man or a young woman straps on a bomb, and goes into a hotel, and blows themselves up, because they think they're going to go to paradise, that's that kind of delusion, but this is going to cover the entire planet. It's not going to be isolated.

It's not going to be limited to just certain areas. This is the judgment that's coming. God will give them strong delusion that they should believe the lie.

Notice it's the lie. This is the ultimate lie. The lie that Satan is somehow God.

Did you know that that idea is put forth in the occult realm? That idea is put forth in the New Age realm. If you look into the New Age thing at all, you'll find that they're very much into serpent power, and they will actually even go so far as to say that the serpent is the real God. They will even say things like, Lucifer is the true God.

Jesus is an imposter. I mean, that's believing the lie, but the whole world's going to believe that lie. That's what's coming.

That's what's going to go down here on planet Earth in the near future, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. This will bring the utter condemnation of man. And of course, that's what is laid out there in the 13th chapter of Revelation.

Again, that's where we're told about the mark, and anyone who doesn't have the mark cannot buy or sell. Anyone who refuses the mark is going to be put to death, but God's warning is anyone who receives the mark, they will drink of the undiluted wrath of God, and they will be punished day and night forever. There

will be no mercy, no forgiveness, no salvation for those that worship and serve the beast and receive the number of his name.

This is, obviously, this is sobering, sobering stuff, but thank God that none of us have to experience this. God has not appointed us to wrath. Thank God that there's a departure, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the Lord is going to take his people, those who have been faithful to him, he's going to take them out of this world.

And that could come at any instant. It could come at any moment. It could come tonight.

It could come a month from now. It could come next year. It could come 10 years from now, 20 years from now.

We don't know. But what the scripture always tells us is to be ready, because that's the whole point in not knowing. It could come at any time.

So be ready all the time. He goes on, and he says in verse 13, But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which he called you by our gospel. Listen to this.

For the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is so amazing. He has called us to the obtaining of the glory of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, who is the eternal God, God the Son, and glorious beyond human comprehension, he has chosen to share his glory with us. Remember, in John 17, Jesus is praying. He says, Oh, Father, these that you've given me, I want them to be with me so that they can behold my glory that I had with you before the world was.

Jesus is glorious beyond description. The scriptures over and over remind us of the fact that we could not live in his presence. No man can see him and live.

But that glory that's his, he has chosen to share it with us to the obtaining of the glory of Jesus Christ. The grace of God, the goodness of God, the love of God, the mercy of God that he would take us who were formerly rebels. Haters of God, and he would forgive us and not simply forgive us, but that he would bring us in and say, I want to share my glory with you.

This is stuff that quite honestly, we have to have divine revelation to even comprehend it. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and our God and father who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good work.

You see, Paul just, he just brought these Thessalonians out of an agitated state right back into a place of comfort. He said, don't you remember? I told you that these things would not happen. These horrible things will happen, but they won't happen until there's a departure first.

God's going to take you out of here, rest in that, be comforted by that. And oh, I'm sure that they were greatly relieved. You know, the thought, any thinking person, for any thinking person, the possibility of going through the great tribulation, it's, it's horrific beyond words.

60 million people died from 1939 to 1945 in the second world war. When you look at the numbers in the book of Revelation compared with the population of the world today, there's over 6 billion people on the planet today. And when you look at the seals being opened, the trumpets being sounded, the bowls being poured out, and the numbers, a third of the population, a quarter of the population, all that, we are talking about literally billions of people dying in the tribulation period.

And as I mentioned before, the tsunamis, the earthquakes, the hurricanes, the things that we've seen just recently, these things are nothing. These things are absolutely nothing. As devastating as they are, they are nothing compared with the judgment that's going to come on this planet.

It is unimaginable. It is horrifying. It's, it is your worst nightmare.

Somebody came up to me last week and gave me a good illustration. She said she has had nightmares in the past a lot of times. And you know, how many of you have ever had a nightmare? One that you were just, you know, it was a horrible, horrible thing.

And thank God there's a deliverance from that. You wake up and your heart's beating a million miles an hour, but you're like, oh, thank God that was a dream. That was a nightmare.

I'm awake. That wasn't real. The tribulation is a nightmare that there's no waking up from.

You go into it and it doesn't stop. It just gets worse and worse and worse and worse and worse. And then of course, beyond the tribulation for those who continually reject Christ, then there's hell.

And that's really the thing you never wake up from. In the tribulation period, there will be people who come to faith in Jesus. There will be believers.

The way you wake up from the tribulation period is you're executed for your faith. So the great news about all of this is that nobody has to go through it. Not a single person has to go through the tribulation.

But of course, most people will because they refuse to receive the grace of God and take that gift of salvation. Don't be one of those people. And as we're living in times where we're seeing things begin to escalate, we want to be serious about the Lord and we want to make sure that we're right with Him.

We want to make sure that we're seeking Him and serving Him. Because the last thing I'd want to do is wake up one day and find out, I missed the boat. I missed the rapture.

God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. As we put our trust in Him and as we're living for Him, we can rest and be assured that even though the earth is removed and the mountains are cast into the midst of the sea, that we will not be moved because God is with us. He's our refuge and strength and He will deliver us.

And Lord, we thank you for that. And as we contemplate these things that are one day to come to pass here on this earth, oh, how we thank you for your promise that the man of sin will not be revealed until the departure comes first. Lord, that you haven't appointed us to wrath, that the day of the Lord is not for us who love Jesus, but for those who despise and reject Him.

Thank you, Lord, that we can rest assured and be comforted in the promise that because we have kept your word, you will keep us out of the hour of trial. And Lord, we thank you that you reminded us to pray always. And you told us that we could escape the things that were coming.

And so, Lord, keep us close to you. Keep us seeking you, following you, serving you in these days diligently and faithfully as we wait for your return. And Lord, come quickly, we pray in your name.

Amen.

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