

Tribulation and His Coming

by Robert B. Thompson

The Great Tribulation is not to be feared, but rather seen as an opportunity for growth and maturity, as it purifies the church and causes us to seek God.

Duration: 23:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1-2

Topics: "End Times", "Perseverance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the signs of Christ's return and the importance of being prepared for it. He mentions the possibility of a great cross appearing in the sky, surrounded by angels, as a sign of the Son of Man. The preacher emphasizes the need to be discerning in church meetings and to leave if something doesn't feel right. He also shares a story about a man who kept going despite exhaustion, highlighting the importance of perseverance in following God's guidance. The sermon concludes with a reminder that the Lord is interested in tough saints who can withstand pressure and stand firm in their faith.

Transcript

We'll turn to Matthew 24. We're going to read verses 21 through 28. For then there will be great distress unequalled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equaled again.

If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. At that time, if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or there he is, do not believe it, for false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time, so if anyone tells you there he is out in the desert, do not go out, or here he is in the inner rooms, do not believe it, for as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. Immediately after... Oh, that's where we stopped. Yes.

All right. Now we've been studying on this for two or three sessions, I guess. And the last time we were emphasizing the abomination that makes desolation, which is back in verses beginning with 15.

And immediately there follows this great tribulation, this great distress. And if you want to know what the abomination of desolation is, you'll have to get the prior tapes. But that'll stir you up.

But the point is that it's man making himself God, and whenever man makes himself God, it produces desolation, it produces tribulation. And it is this abomination that causes desolation, verse 15, that causes the great tribulation. It's called here the great distress.

Now, it says there will be a time unequaled, a time of distress unequaled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equaled again. So, boy, you know, worse than the flood of Noah. So, there's an interesting verse in Zephaniah.

I don't expect you to find it. It'll be on the board here. It's kind of a skinny book.

In Zephaniah chapter 1, verses 2 and 3, I think this may refer to the great tribulation. It says, I will sweep away everything from the face of the earth, declares the Lord. I will sweep away both men and animals.

I will sweep away the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. The wicked will have only heaps of rubble when I cut off man from the face of the earth. In other words, all that the wicked have laid up will be gone, will be rubble.

So, we see that this is going to be an unprecedented time of trouble that is coming caused by man making himself God. That's what it is. Antichrist is man making himself God.

There will be a person who sums us all up, and he will do things in the temple that we went to at length, looking at the Hebrew and everything, and prioritates. So, but if you just remember, it's man making himself God. And because that's true, Antichrist is in all of us.

There's an Antichrist spirit in all of us. Whenever we're trying to decide our own way, don't give things to the Lord, don't pray to him for our way, don't commit things to him, then we have an Antichrist spirit. We have a self-seeking, self-motivating spirit.

All right, now he says, if those days had not been cut short, so this period will be cut short, it said no one would survive. I mean, everybody on the planet would die. You know, we've heard a lot of preaching about the Great Tribulation.

There is nothing more that you can do to people that hasn't already been done. I mean, you name it, it's been done throughout history. Every form of torture that you can imagine has been perpetrated on people.

So it isn't that the Great Tribulation is going to bring things to people that are worse than have happened to people. That isn't what makes it great. It's how widespread it is.

It's how widespread it is. Not that you can do any more to human beings than hasn't already been done. I don't want to go into the thing that would just make you depressed.

But he says, for the sake of the elect, those days should be shortened. Well, that tells us quite clearly that God's elect will be on the earth during that time. The elect.

Then we went into a lot of scriptures last Tuesday night on who the elect are. I'll just give you two. One of them is Titus 1, verse 1. Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect.

So it's obviously talking about Christians. People say it's the Jews. Well, there are some elect Jews and there are some elect Gentiles.

We see that in Romans chapter 10 and 11. But we certainly, according to this verse, are God's elect. And one more is in 1 Peter, chapter 1, verses 1 and 2. What we're talking about now, he says, it would be shortened for the elect's sake.

And I'm showing you that the elect are not just Jews. They're all who are members of God's elect. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ to God's elect.

Now, Peter was a Jew, but the book of 1 Peter shows clearly that he's writing to converted Gentiles. He's writing to converted Gentiles. Later on, he says to you who once were not a people, but now are the people.

He says, chapter 2, who have been chosen. Now, you want to remember that in Christ, and this is important because it isn't often preached, it seems, but in Christ there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. No difference.

Once you have Christ being born in you, that which is born in you, that new creation, is not distinguished by any race at all. It's a new creation. It's a new race.

And so there's no such thing as a Jewish church. It does not exist. The first Christian church was all Jews, Orthodox Jews, who were keeping the law.

They were keeping the law zealously, but they had also accepted Christ. Well, as we see in the book of Acts, little by little, mostly through the Apostle Paul, the gospel went from the church, which was all Jewish, to include Gentiles. But when it did, it did not create a Gentile church.

There's only one olive tree, and that is the seed, Christ. So there is only one elect of God, and it is whoever God has chosen. In history past, it was just Jews.

Now it's Jews and Gentiles. The Bible tells us in the last days God will turn again to the Jews. But the word elect means chosen.

So in Matthew 24, what the Lord is saying is that for those whom I have chosen, without regard to Jews or Gentiles, for those whom I have chosen, which is you, hopefully, and me, those days should be shortened. So all talk about Christians don't go through the Great Tribulation is an emotional issue. It is not an intellectual issue.

Any sharp high school student who knows his Bible or her Bible can easily disprove it. But what I'm pointing out to you is it's nothing to fear. It's nothing to fear.

We're so funny. You know, we live in the future and the past. And there's people who everything that's happened to them can possibly happen to them.

And they're saying, I'm so glad I won't go through the Tribulation. It is so ridiculous. They're already dying of cancer and their families broken up and everything you can imagine.

And they're in great pain. Well, thank God I won't go through the Tribulation. It is so nonsensical.

We have nothing to fear. There is a purpose for the Great Tribulation. There's a purpose for it.

And it is to purify the bride. That's the purpose of it. Because right now the bride is mixed into the Babylonian structures.

And it's Laodicean in its nature, lukewarm. And it's a mess. And anybody who studied church history will tell you that whenever the church comes under martyrdom or suffering, it purifies the church.

And you may have seen this in your own life. That when you have no trouble, you get foolish. Did you ever notice that? Or maybe that's just true of me.

If the pressure wasn't on me all the time, I'd be getting foolish. Saying things I shouldn't say and set myself back five years. But pressure and pain keeps us praying.

How many have noticed that? So there's nothing to fear in Tribulation. Acts says you must through much Tribulation enter the Kingdom of God. It does us good.

Suffering, according to 1 Peter 4, 1 and 2, purifies us from sin. The thing to fear is temptation. And in the end time, there's going to be something called the Hour of Temptation.

And that will be a time of a great and ready access to sin. And that's the thing to be feared, is temptation. Because of temptation, the love of many will grow cold.

The love of Christians doesn't grow cold under Tribulation. It grows cold when they have ready access to pornography and to fornication. And that's what causes Christian love to grow cold or to making a lot of money.

Making a lot of money and material goods will kill your spirit quicker than anything else. The rich have a terrible time entering the Kingdom if they can enter at all. So in America, we have ready access to sin.

We have ready access to money. And these two things are to be greatly feared. Greatly feared.

Because without realizing it, they chip away. See, Satan is so clever. He doesn't do things all at once.

Here's a little bit of time. And the first thing you know, you're so busy. Well, I don't have time to pray.

I don't have time to read my Bible. And then, you know what will always follow? You get mad at people in the church. So when you see yourself getting mad at other Christians, you say, Whoop, I'm getting cold.

Because that's the way Satan works. But I want to say a word of warning to all of us. The Bible says, he that sows sparingly will reap sparingly.

And it is possible to be saved and yet lose a great portion or all of your reward. So I exhort you, don't trifle with the American culture. Because it will, it will rob you of a great portion of your inheritance.

Because it's so easy to get into the stock market and into entertainment and sin and science and other things. It's so easy. And we don't recognize these as the problem.

They're a tremendous problem. Because we only have so much time and so much strength. And it's going to be spent somewhere.

And we have to take care of our families and we have to make our way in this world. But what the average American considers is making his way in the world is not making his way in the world. It's a surfeit of material things.

And that's to be feared. It's to be greatly feared. Not tribulation.

Tribulation only causes you to seek God. The message that we won't go through the tribulation, which is totally unscriptural, is pitched to the carnal man. It's not pitched to the spiritual man.

He's not afraid of suffering. It's pitched to the carnal man. Particularly the carnal Americans.

Oh good, I won't suffer. I can keep on with my way of life and then not suffer. It's not pitched to the spiritual man.

The spiritual man hears you when you begin to talk about the danger of riches and of sin. Then the spiritual man hears you. The natural man will hear you when you talk about being spared from suffering.

You see that? The spiritual man isn't afraid of suffering. He knows what it does for him. He doesn't like it.

But he looks back on his life. He wouldn't trade one bit of suffering he's experienced. Because he sees what it's done within him.

Is that true of you? Don't you appreciate the things you've suffered? You see what they've done for you? They've cast you toward God. They've given you a breath of compassion for people who also are suffering. It's made you patient.

All kinds of good things. Calms your spirit down. Suffering does all kinds of good things for us.

But if we deliberately avoid suffering, first of all, we have to sacrifice our integrity to do so. In order to avoid suffering, you have to sacrifice your integrity inevitably. And then what happens is we never grow.

We don't realize it. But we have possessed our joy, usually at the expense of someone else. And we never grow.

You don't start growing until God begins to demand of you to deny yourself. And you're willing to do that rather than to take your joy at the expense of other people. What I'm talking about is very critical to the Christian life.

You have to be willing to deny yourself. It's the very basis of salvation. The very basis of it is denying yourself, taking off your cross.

Because apart from that, you don't grow. That's the trigger. That's the dynamic that causes growth.

It's when you go through the day in the name of Jesus. And because it's the right thing to do. Because you don't have any real choice other than by sinning.

But you take the hit. You go through it. It causes you to grow.

So God knows what he's doing. And he's made us all little gods, according to the scripture. And the only way God can deal with little gods is by destroying their ability to be their own god.

Because he can't have other gods running around in the creation unless they're totally obedient to him. Do you see that? So it's suffering that does that. So there's no fear of tribulation.

And every seasoned, mature Christian has been through plenty of denial. Plenty of perplexity. Plenty of pressure.

Because that's how you get there. And there's no other way. And we know that when we go to the doctor.

We know we may go for a painful procedure. But we look beyond that and we say, well, I sure don't like this. And I prefer not.

But if this is what it means to bring me up to help on the other side, I'll put up with it. Now, you see, babies can't do that. They only know the immediate.

Well, the needle's hurting now. So therefore, it's bad. So therefore, I'll scream.

So if you see, that's the difference between a baby and an adult. An adult is able to time bind. They're able to say, well, yes, this is going to hurt.

But what I want is on the other end of this thing. So I'll take my hits and I'll look for the little flowers. There are always little flowers along the way.

If you don't feel sorry for yourself, start looking for them. There's always some grace for the day to get you through. And that's an adult.

But a baby Christian, and they can be 70 years old. A baby Christian will not do this. Anything comes up they don't like.

They start blaming people. And start saying, how can I get out of this? Everything. That's a baby.

It's like a baby would do if you took him down to get vaccinated. How can I get out of this? I don't want this. Well, because they're babies.

And God wants us to be mature and realize when God brings us through suffering and pain, and perplexity, frustration, then we look up to God and make sure we're not bringing it on ourselves. And we look up to God and God is saying, this is the way, walk in it. You know, and there's no relief in sight.

And you say, thank you, Lord. I know that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. I trust you.

And I know that life is both pain and pleasure. And if you try to make it just pleasure, you lose your soul. I'll tell you another little trick, too, that is helpful to understand.

Sometimes we're in great pain and distress and pressure about things. And we pray and we pray and we pray. And it doesn't go away.

It just seems to hang in there day after day, month after month, year after year. More often than not, more often than not, before God removes that circumstance, He will give you perfect victory in the middle of it. So, you'll find it doesn't go away and it doesn't go away.

And you begin to accommodate it by prayer and reading your Bible and however. And you get so, OK, you know, the edge of the cross gets worn down and it's not biting your shoulder and you're just kind of used to

it and everything. And finally, it's livable.

Situation hasn't changed, but it's become livable. And that's when God removes it. That's so funny.

But that's what he does. He gives you victory in the middle of it until you're a conqueror right where you are. Now, this isn't always the case, but I dare say it's more often than not the case because the Lord delights in finishing his work through the trouble so that it isn't troubling you that much anymore.

Most of our trouble is coming because there's something being triggered internally. And when that's finally lit, God said, I don't know if this anymore. He removes it.

It reminds me of a story with Brother Fullerton, who was an old man that was a great inspiration to us. He was walking quite a distance to the Bible school and he got so tired he could hardly move one foot in front of the other. Well, he was in his 60s and he'd had tuberculosis.

And so he said, Lord, can I sit down? The Lord said, no, keep going, keep going. Can I? So pretty soon he began to feel pretty good, stepping along, you know, and he's got his second wind and his legs fell all right and everything. And the Lord said, now rest.

He said, but I don't want to rest. Rest. So, I don't know, I get the feeling sometimes that the Lord likes to be in charge.

Did you ever get that feeling? Well, be comforted because there's no temptation taken any of us. But God, oh, and that's saved and unsaved people. There's no temptation taken anybody, but such as is common to man.

But God is faithful, who always makes a way of escape for us. So, we do not fear tribulation because that's what Jesus said. Pray, if it doesn't come on the Sabbath day, pray it doesn't come in the winter.

It always, none of the things of God are inevitable. They all yield to prayer. And your situation and my situation are not inevitable.

They will yield to prayer. So, never, never, never think God does not hear you when you pray. He does hear you and he set the machinery in motion to answer that prayer.

God has to answer because the covenant is, if you ask anything in my name, I will do it. Well, that can't be broken. But you say, I don't see it.

Just know that God heard that and he will prepare the answer, which will bring you the greatest love, joy and peace. He will prepare the answer that will bring you the greatest love, joy and peace. You can count on it.

God is good. And the reason we go through stuff is because there's rottenness inside and God's getting at it. And he knows we'll never be truly happy until he gets us out.

So, trust the doctor. He knows what he's doing. He knows what he's doing.

And you come out of the fire. You're going to be all right. All right.

Now, as we go ahead, you notice here, at that time, if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ. There he is. Do not believe it.

For false Christ, I'm in verse 24, and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect, if that were possible. Now, we can look for this in the end time, because these verses are just prior to the Lord's coming. Now, we have seen how gullible the people in the charismatic move are.

We have seen them swallow the prosperity message, which is clearly unscriptural. We have seen them swallow the faith message, which is not faith in Christ, but faith in faith. It's really metaphysics.

It's not really Christianity. And God's people are not reading their Bible, not praying, and so they become prey. And these people are not even working miracles.

What would it be like if they gave off the prosperity message, said the name of Jesus, and then performed a miracle in front of us? How many Pentecostal people would know enough? You know, whenever anything's wrong, you can always kind of sense it. There's not something quite right about this. Think of that of buying cars.

You know, the job of a salesman, not Larry or anybody in the church, the job of a salesman is to convince you that a dog is really a worthwhile car. And so what happens is you go in and you go and you look at a car in the line. That's a dog.

I don't want that. But then the salesman begins to say, well, look at this. And he points out it's got, you know, quad stereo and it's got this and it's got new headlining, whatever it is.

And, of course, the motor's been, engine's been steamed clean. And it always shows you the engine, you know, like most of us wouldn't know a clue. We look at the engine, we haven't a clue what we're looking at.

You kick the tires and it's been painted out. And you think, you know, that's not too bad. I'm going to make you a deal.

So let me tell you something about the car business. There's no such thing. The men with the sharp pencils, you know, they say two thousand cash back, zero interest and all.

This is all calculated. People just know that. You don't believe me.

Ask Larry. They don't miss a penny on it. All right.

So here you're sold on this thing. You know, you've got a thousand dollars cash back. You've got zero financing and you get it home.

You get up in the morning, look at it and guess what it is. It's a dog. Oh, glory.

Well, you've all experienced that, I'm sure. That's the art of selling is image building. Well, the same thing is true of a church meeting.

And you want to remember this. When you go into a church meeting and it doesn't feel quite right. Get out of there.

Just get out of there. Because that's your best assessment of that service. Because when it goes on, there's other things will take over the church spirit, enthusiasm.

And they say, well, let's say in the name of Jesus, they might even come down the aisle and lay hands on you. A warm glow went through you. But you see, your initial thing was the correct one.

And so we may come into this. Now, one time I was praying. Believe it or not, I was in the piney woods of Arkansas.

I was in the piney woods and I was praying. And I said, Lord, how about this faith message? How long is this going to go on? Is it really going to receive power so that it takes over? And this was 15 years ago, I guess. And the Lord said, no, it's not.

It will die off. But later, it's going to come back and then it's going to be given power. Sure enough, since that time, it's all kind of faded away, except I understand certain parts of Texas.

But it is largely faded away. You don't hear it much anymore. But the Lord said it's coming back.

And I see it here. You see, Pentecostal people and charismatic people are not up to coming into a church. They come in and they don't feel quite right.

But let's see what's going on. OK. First thing you know, you're all carried away.

And the minister comes in and says, it doesn't sound quite right. But he calls someone up, blind, prays for them. Eyes are created.

And he says, in Jesus name. My radar must have been followed up this morning because that is God. Well, let's see if that's what he said.

I'm not sure that's what he said. He said, false Christ and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect. So you know they're going to come in the name of Christ.

Well, you say, can you preach wrong in the name of Christ? It's done all the time. It's being done right now. Antichrist is being preached from the pulpit in the name of love, love, love.

We all should love one another. Jesus said we all should love one another. God loves us so much we'll never be any trouble in the name of Jesus.

So when the Lord says watch out for something, guess what he means? Watch out for it. Be alert to it. Signs and wonders are not a sign that it's right.

That's why we have the Bible. Feelings, Satan can simulate the Holy Spirit and you can't tell the difference. It's the Bible, the Bible, the Bible.

We never would have got into this rapture thing if people had read the Bible. It's an emotional issue. It's not a scholarly issue.

It's an emotional issue. People ignore the context of this. I feel better now.

I don't know how you feel. All right, now, he said, For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Well, they have no lightning out of here to speak of.

They don't have any thunder. They don't have anything like that at all. They don't have any decent weather out here.

If it gets below 70, people are late for church. But I tell you, back east, they have lightning and they have thunder, and it's not a secret. Boy, I'm telling you, it rattles China where, in good shape, and the dogs hide and the babies cry and everything else.

I mean, it shakes the house. Gives you a sense of the majesty of God. Well, that's what Jesus said is coming.

Well, you know, sneaking. I'm going to come and sneak everybody out and turn invisible and the buses all crash into each other. Dear Lord, it's enough to make a horse laugh.

All right, now, here's a wonderful expression. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. Well, it's talking about any bird that eats carrion.

It could be an eagle, and I prefer eagle, and some translations say eagles, because this is talking about Christians. Christians. Well, you see why I prefer eagles instead of vultures.

Because what it's talking about is a reference to Job 39, verses 27 through 30. This is the reference to this verse. Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high? He dwells on a cliff and stays there at night.

A rocky crag is his stronghold. From there he seeks out his food. His eyes detect it from afar.

His young ones feast on blood. And here's where Jesus was quoting. And where the slain are, there is he.

Now, you notice that wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. Now, what it's referring to is the body and blood of Christ. And in order to be resurrected, you have to be living by the body and blood of Christ.

Doctrine will not do it. You can say the four steps of salvation 10,000 times. It will not raise you.

Only the body and blood of Christ will raise you. Because when he comes, what it is is the lamb, the slain lamb, is calling to those who live by his body and blood. And it's the blood and his body that answer.

Not your mind, not your doctrine, but his body and blood. Now, we see this in the Gospel of John, chapter 6, verse 54. John 6, 54.

You'll see the connection between the body and blood and the resurrection. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Now, what raises you up is the body and blood.

See, where the carcass is, the slain lamb, there the eagles gather because we live by him. And blood calls to blood, life calls to life, love calls to love, and I'll raise you up. See? Drinks my blood, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Now, how do we do that? You live by the body and blood of Christ by, at every decision, choosing Jesus. When you do, he feeds you with his body and blood and gives you eternal life. Now, if you come to a decision in your life, and I like to use this because it's something that young people face, it's like, I'm going to choose who I'm going to marry, or I'm going to choose my boyfriend or my girlfriend.

Now, it's very easy in youthful passion and a romantic spirit to really become enamored of someone. Probably all of us have experienced that. You really get a crush on someone, you get enamored of someone.

Okay, well then, brains go out the window. And so, what you have to do is go to the Lord. And the Lord may say, well, they're not for you.

Well, then you've got a decision. You say, but everything I know, it must be God because it makes me feel so good. I can't live without this person.

And the Lord says, it's not for you. Well, you've got a decision. Right then and there.

And if you go ahead against the Lord's will, what you're doing is entering a curriculum. And I don't know what you want to call it. Domestic Uproar 1 and Domestic Uproar 2 and Domestic Uproar 3 and Domestic Uproar 4. Until you have a graduate course in Domestic Uproar.

But if instead you obey the Lord, even though it's tearing the heart out of you, guess what he does? Feeds you with his body and blood and you receive eternal life in place of the passion of the flesh. Does that make sense to you? And they're the ones that are raised. So, my doctrine is perfect.

Cool, I hope it is. But that isn't what raises you. What raises you is the body and blood.

Where the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. There are those who feed on that carcass will be gathered together. Does that make sense to you? So, you really, in this life, what we actually are doing is shaping our own resurrection.

Remember in Hebrews 11, where they suffered so much, it said they were seeking a better resurrection. And you directly affect your resurrection by your conduct today. We spend too much time thinking about where we're going to go when we die.

Well, that's an interesting thought when you get 75. I'll tell you where we're going to go when we die. But that's not nearly as important as the resurrection.

Because we don't receive our reward when we die and go to heaven. We receive our reward when the Lord returns. And that's the issue.

Going to heaven is fine. It's a kind of a waiting thing. But it may be restful.

In fact, I have never been there and I don't know what it's like. But the resurrection, that's what's important. That's what you're affecting by your conduct.

And when you charge around in your flesh, all you're doing is sowing for yourself distress. When the time comes to bring people into the kingdom of God, into the new age, you won't be in the shape you could have been. That's what it means when it says, when you sow sparingly, you reap sparingly.

It doesn't say you'll be damned if you sow sparingly and burn forever in a devil's hell. We've got more stuff going like that. What it says is you will reap sparingly.

And instead of coming in in glory and becoming a shining light in God's kingdom, you'll come in but won't be the greatest. And so remember that because we've got a lot of temptations in America. We've got a lot

of access to fun things.

And if we let them swerve us from what we're doing, we're going to suffer when the Lord comes. And that's as clear in the Bible as a red bug on a green leaf. It's just as clear as it can be.

No question about it. All right. Now, where do we go from there? Immediately after the distress of those days.

Now, this verse here tells us that the coming of the Lord comes after the tribulation. I mean, it could not be more clear. Unless we're saying that there's a coming of the Lord prior to the coming of the Lord.

And that simply is not scriptural. There is no scripture for that. Immediately after.

The Lord will come right after. OK. And I'll give you another verse because it's not good to build a doctrine on one verse.

This is 2 Thessalonians 2 verses 1 through 4. 2 Thessalonians 2 verses 1 through 4. Are you getting this, Shelley? You lay it on them people up there. Man. Just tell them I said a sharp high school student can disprove the rapture with one hand tied behind his back.

It is not a scholarly doctrine. It's an emotional doctrine. And you have to cut and paste all over the place.

Now, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 1 concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word there is parousia. Now, why that's important is because in Matthew 24, which we're studying, the disciples said, tell us about your parousia.

This is the parousia. Greek. Coming.

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him. Which is what Matthew 24 is going to send out and gather his elect. 1 Thessalonians 4. He's going to bring all the dead saints with him and bring us up together with them.

Gathering of the elect. And our being gathered to him. We ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter, supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord.

Now, that's important. Because 1 Thessalonians 4 is talking about the day of the Lord. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 is talking about the day of the Lord.

2 Thessalonians chapter 2 is talking about the day of the Lord. There's not days of the Lord, the day of the Lord. That day.

That day. The parousia will not come. Until the rebellion occurs.

Now, the Greek term for a rebellion is apostasia. From which we get the word apostasy, which means falling away from the truth. Every translation I've read translates it.

Rebellion or falling away from the truth. So it's a falling away from the truth until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed. The apostasia and lawlessness go together because an apostasy is lawlessness.

It's a falling away from law and rule. I think back in the Greek language prior to the Koine Greek. The New Testament is in Koine Greek.

But there's a classical Greek which precedes, goes before the Koine. And I think in that case, this word apostasia meant mutiny. Mutiny.

Mutiny. I think the derivation of the word is mutiny. Until the mutiny occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed.

And this, of course, is Antichrist. Sets himself up in God's temple, which is the abomination that works desolation. And he says the day of the Lord will not come until that occurs first.

You see what I mean? By saying it's not a scholarly doctrine, I mean it's totally disproved. Well, I don't care about eschatology. Eschatology is a branch of theology that deals with the end time.

And a very distinguished minister asked me a few weeks ago. He wanted to get together with me. He knows my position and he said, I want to discuss eschatology with you.

So I said to him, it's against my religion to discuss eschatology. So he laughed and he said, I like that. And that was the end of that.

Because I don't want to argue. I will never argue a doctrine with anybody. I won't even argue this with anybody.

I may yell about it, but I won't argue with anybody. But I don't even preach stuff to be novel or informative. I preach it if it has a bearing on Christian living.

That's the only thing I preach. I will not get into all esoteric comments about Daniel or anything else. Only if it impacts on righteous Christian living.

And believe me, the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture has impacted directly on Christians. Because when they come to Ephesians, the sixth chapter that says, prepare yourself to stand in the evil day. What they say is there is going to be no evil day.

So you see, they don't prepare themselves because they say, honey, I won't be here. And that's why I talk about it. Not because I care a fig about eschatology.

I don't. But I do care about people that got back in their cross somewhere. I won't be here.

For the elect's sake, he shall shorten the days. So this is a terrible heresy that has caused Christians to remain babies. They remain babies because they say, well, I won't be here.

Let the Jews, you know, 144,000 Jewish evangelists, let them preach. But not me. I'm up in heaven with the Holy Spirit in my mansion.

Complete fable. Nothing to it. The truth is, and Daniel, when it's talking about the perils of the end time, it says, many that do know their God shall do mighty things.

And so there'll be no opportunity on God's earth to show forth the witness of Christ that there will be during the great tribulation. That's the time when God's heroes of faith will stand in the name of the Lord because they've got to go through. So when the Lord comes, they're ready to meet him.

But the baby Christians of today will never go through. They'll be like straws in a hurricane. All right.

Now notice, having got that off my chest. That's so much for eschatology. It's against my religion.

All right. Immediately after the distress of those days, which Jesus said is an unprecedented, it's the one ordinarily translated great tribulation. NIV says great distress.

It's the same thing. 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.

Now, that's enough to cause consternation. Don't you agree? So you can see this in the Old Testament. For example, whenever it talks about the day of the Lord, you see these.

You see these signs in the heavens. Isaiah 13, 9 through 11. So this thing is not going to be done in a corner.

Isaiah 13, 9 through 11. See the day of the Lord. Paul talks about the day of the Lord is coming, a cruel day with wrath and fierce anger to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.

Now, here you go. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. Now, that will happen when the Lord returns.

And if you and I have attained the first resurrection and are with the Lord, we will be instrumental in accomplishing this. Because according to the Scripture, it is given to the saints to judge the world. This will not happen at the great white throne judgment.

At the great white throne judgment, there is no heaven and earth. It's vanished. This will happen when Jesus comes.

This is the coming of the Lord. And when he comes, he will bring with him his victorious saints. You see, this is the type of Gideon where a remnant is used.

This is shown clearly in several passages. When the Lord comes, he will not come with his entire church. Not until after the thousand-year kingdom age.

He will come. This is the next coming of Jesus. That's why Amos says, Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord.

It's out of the frying pan, into the fire. This is what the church is facing. If it's not ready for God, this is what.

This is what everyone will be facing, church and unchurch, unless they are living by the body and blood of Christ. Then they're part of the Lamb. That makes us part of the Lamb.

The Bible never refers to the bride of Christ. Never. Never.

That's an unscriptural expression. Only to the bride of the Lamb. And that's because we marry the Lamb by eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

Just as Eve was made part of Adam by being made from his substance, so we are married to the Lamb by becoming part of his substance, by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. And that's why we're caught up to him. It's because we are an integral part of him.

Now, if we have lived as the average American Christian, trusting in doctrine, coming to church, paying the tithes, but otherwise living completely, as someone said recently, like Blondie and Dagwood or like the Cleaver family. You see, if we live like that, you can forget about being in resurrection when the Lord comes. This Blondie and Dagwood syndrome, this is an illusion.

Many American, if not most American families are in chaotic uproar. When I notice when there's trouble in the paper, you seldom see children with the same last name as their mother and father. And I'm not downing anybody.

I know things come up that we can't help. I understand that. We're in a time of enormous stress in America.

They're not simple solutions. But nonetheless, we have to recognize that the families are not, we don't want to live in that image. That's not a true image of what the average family is like.

This is tough beans today. This is tough. And the people that make it through with the Lord are going to be something quite up several levels above the average American Christian.

The Lord hasn't called your number yet. Enjoy yourself while you can. Because the Lord is not interested in leave it to beaver families.

He's interested in tough saints that know the Lord and that can stand under pressure. Because this is the kind of thing that's coming. We see it again in Joel 2, verses 10 and 11.

I think sometimes John Arterbury wonders what in the world the kids are doing, running around saying, blow the trumpet in Zion, blow the trumpet in Zion. John, it comes from Joel 2, the army of the Lord. And before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are dark, and the stars no longer shine.

You see, that is the coming of the Lord. And he warned us, this is it. It's going to be as the lightning shines from the east to the west.

It's not going to be any secret thing. Widespread, seen by everyone. Not he's there in the closet or he's there, we're all going to disappear any moment now.

All right, now. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. Now, I don't know what the sign of the Son of Man is.

I don't have any great revelation as to what the sign of the Son of Man is. But the sign of Christ throughout the centuries has been the cross. So I think a great cross will appear in the sky.

If I'm wrong, I'm wrong. That doesn't affect your daily conduct, so I won't push it. But for what it's worth, that's usually the sign of Christ, is the cross.

So I think there's going to be a great cross appear in the sky, perhaps surrounded by angels. Glowing, shining, the sign of the Son of Man. Coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call. And they will gather his elect. They will gather his elect, his chosen.

From the four winds. From one end of the heavens to the other. Now, you could get hung up on that and say, well, that's only talking about the heavens, not the earth.

But it's customary for us in our ordinary way of speaking to talk about things coming to four winds, referring to the earth. But according to 1 Thessalonians, the fourth chapter refers to heaven and the earth. Wherever the elect are, that's where they're coming from.

If they're still on the earth, they'll come from the earth. And if they're in the spirit realm, where the great majority of the people that are going to be raised in the Lord, I mean, 99.9999% are coming from the spirit realm. They won't be on the earth.

There will only be a handful of people on the earth of God's elect. They're all coming from the Lord. We got this thing going.

1 Thessalonians 4 is not about the going of the church. It's about the coming of the church. Well, leave it to us to get things upside down.

All right. Now, I'm going to be through here. You're born up very well.

1 Thessalonians 4.13. 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. So what we're talking about is the dead. We believe that Jesus died and rose again.

And so we believe that God will bring with Jesus. This is a message about the coming of the Lord, not the going of the church. Hallelujah.

These will be the righteous saints from the time of Abel. Millions upon untold millions of saints are going to appear with Christ. Best funeral passage in the Bible.

It's the thing to preach when somebody dies. They're coming again. Hallelujah.

When the Lord comes, those who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with Him. This is about the coming of the Lord. It's about Matthew 24.

It's the coming of Christ. Thank you very much. We'll bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the parousia. Parousia. The coming of the Lord.

That's the word that's used. We'll certainly not go before those who have fallen asleep. They thought, well, they died, so they missed the kingdom.

For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God. And if that isn't the same thing as Matthew 24 says, I'm going to eat the guaranteed genuine leather off my Bible. It's the same thing.

It's not a secret rupture. This is a secret. You want to hear a secret? The Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, the voice of the archangel, the trumpet call of God.

That's a secret. God give us a brain. Shelly, be sure you're getting this.

Shelly's trying to convert up there where she's going to school. All right. After that, we who are still alive and are left.

See, that's kind of a second issue. The big thing is the return of the Saints. This is about the return of the Saints.

Millions and millions and millions of them. And the graves popping up all over the world. The Saints coming up, shining like a thousand watt bulb.

Who do you think the people on the earth are going to feel when they see that? I mean, the greatest testimony in the history of the world. The Adullam children saw that in vision. And on top of what you could see, they heard a sound when the graves opened.

It sounded like cannons going off. In visions beyond the veil, which is a reputable vision of these orphan children in China. It would be a tremendous noise as these graves break open and these shining beams come out.

Millions of them. Millions of them. I saw it in vision one time.

I myself saw this thing happening. Not clearly, but I saw it. And I saw them.

And they were all gathered together. And they were having the greatest time of fellowship. And they were hugging each other.

And having a wonderful time. And the Lord didn't blast them up into the air. This was, you know, like Christ was raised from the dead.

And then he had 40 days that he cruised around on the earth just enjoying himself. Because, you see, Satan attempted him by saying that if you'll follow me, I'll give you the kingdoms of the world. And you'll have bread and jump off the pinnacle of the temple and all the rest.

Well, see, that is a shortcut. The thing that's what you have to watch out for, people, are shortcuts. What's in your heart, God will give you.

But don't take a shortcut. In order to take a shortcut, you've got to worship the devil. See, Jesus went through it, bore up with it.

Three years later, after that temptation, here he was in an impervious body. No sickness, no pain forever. Totally glorified.

40 days to get everything that Satan had promised him. Only now in the will of God. If you do God's will and deny yourself and put up with the pain of this life, the day will come when God will give you everything you desired, if it's worthy, and will bring you joy.

God will give it to you. Don't take shortcuts. Take the Lord's way.

To take a shortcut, you've got to break God's law. You've got to serve Satan. If you will worship me, I'll give you this.

Who needs it? Jesus had it three years later, but he had it in the presence of God. And if you do it the way God wants it, you'll have what your heart is crying for, and you'll have it in the presence of God. Don't take shortcuts.

Hallelujah. Oh, glory. Let's stand.

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