

The Antichrist And Tribulation

2 Thessalonians 2

Pastor John Miller

Now, I want you to remember that the three main groups of Bible prophecy or the three main groups in understanding Bible prophecy by way of reminder are the Gentile nations, number one, number two is the Jewish nation of Israel and number three is the church. And I want to remind you of that as we cover this subject because we want to keep each one of those groups and God's purpose and God's design and God's plan prophetically for those individual groups in their proper place and proper category.

The first event is for the church, the body of Christ, and that is the rapture. We looked at that last Wednesday night. The three classic passages were John chapter 14, 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and 1 Thessalonians chapter four, verse 13 to 18. You remember Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." He said, "You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house," referring to heaven, "Are many mansions or abiding places." And He said, "If it were not so, I would've told you, I'd go to prepare a place, I will come again and I'll receive you to myself that, where I am, there you may be also."

That's the first disclosure in the New Testament concerning the rapture of the church. No signs, nothing to look for, simply the coming again of Jesus Christ. That is the message to the church. And if you get nothing else over these next few weeks or the past couple weeks, get this. If you are a child of God, you are to be living every day in anticipation Christ could come to take you home. And truly the rapture is the imminent hope of the believer, nothing has to happen before the church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air that's why Paul says comfort one another with these words.

But after the rapture of the church and the church is removed from earth to heaven, which takes place in Revelation chapter four and verse one where John says, "Behold, I heard a voice in heaven saying, 'Come up here.'" So, I believe the church is caught up in Revelation 4:1 to heaven. Chapter four of Revelation, chapter five, the church is in heaven worshipping around the throne. Chapter six, the book of Revelation, the antichrist comes riding on a white horse and the beginning of the tribulation.

So, after the church is removed and caught to heaven, then we focus on God's plan for Israel and the Gentile nations. It becomes the focus. So, the church, the body of Christ, has been complete. The fullness of the Gentiles has come in, the church is now caught up to meet the Lord in the air and it makes way for these 10 nations to form a revived Roman Empire out of which will come the man of sin, the son of perdition, commonly known as the antichrist, and we're going to see it unfold for us in the passages we cover tonight.

Now, I want to put the chart, the 70 weeks of Daniel chapter two on the screen once again and I'm going to have to turn around to try to relate it to you. I hope you can see it there on your screens. But we talked about the 70 sevens or 490-year prophecy from Daniel chapter nine,

actually, where Daniel got the vision. It wasn't chapter two, it was chapter nine. Or, excuse me, it was chapter two where Daniel first saw the vision of the image or he interpreted for the king and then in chapter nine he had the 70 weeks of Daniel.

It began on 445 BC, Nehemiah chapter two, when King Artaxerxes gave the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. To the coming of Messiah the Prince, will be 49 years and 430 years, seven times seven and 62 sevens which equals or adds up to 483 years. Now, that's the first segment of the 70 weeks, there's still seven years left on God's plan, God's program, God's unfolding redemption for the nation of Israel. So, this is the 70 weeks of Daniel, there are 69 weeks fulfilled, there's still yet one more week which is that seven years of tribulation.

The church age is a parenthesis in the middle of that time and, when the church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air in the rapture, you see the rapture listed there for you at the end of the church age, begins what we call and what we're going to focus on tonight, the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the tribulation, we'll look at next week but tonight we want to look at the tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble and the coming antichrist.

Now, Jesus warned of a coming time of great tribulation. Write down Matthew 24 and verse 21, it's known as the Olivet Discourse, and He was talking about His second coming and the signs that would be prior to that in the tribulation period. He said, ""For then shall be great tribulation such it was not since the beginning of the world nor to this time nor ever shall be." Now, you think about the challenge the world is facing right now with this pandemic known as the coronavirus. Well, think it's nothing in comparison to this time that is yet future, this time of the great tribulation.

Jesus said in His day, "There's never been a time as bad and there never will be a time this bad even in the future known as this time of great trouble or tribulation." This will be the last seven years of man's history before the coming again of Jesus Christ. It's known as the 70th week of Daniel or the 490-year prophecy. And as I pointed out that 483 years have been completed, there's seven years left for the nation of Israel. So, you have God's plan and purpose for Israel, God's plan and purpose for the church and we must keep them separated.

It's called the time of Jacob's trouble. Write down Jeremiah chapter 30 and verse seven. I'm going to give you some references to this seven-year period. Jeremiah 30:7, time of Jacob's trouble which indicates, as I pointed out, that one of the primary purposes of the tribulation is actually to prepare the nation of Israel for their Messiah to bring them to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. It's also called the day of the Lord. Write down Isaiah 13 verses six and nine where the term the day of the Lord is used for the seven-year period of tribulation. It's also found in Joel chapter one and verse 13, the phrase the day of the Lord.

And then other titles are the day of wrath, the day of thick darkness, the day of desolation, they're all found in one verse, Zephaniah chapter one and verse 15. It's called the time of darkness, the time of great darkness, the time of desolation. Now, it will be a unique time. Why will this time be unique? Well, as I said, it's the last seven years of God's plan and purpose for

the nation of Israel, it brings us up to the end of time. But number one it will be worldwide. Write down Revelation chapter three and verse 10, it will cover the whole world.

Number two, it will be a time of great terror and, number three, it will be a time of God's wrath. In Revelation six, verse 16 to 17, the men who are in terror turn to the rocks in the hills and they cry out and they're praying to the mountains and asking them to fall on them and hide us from the face of the wrath of God who sits upon the throne. So, it'll be a time of great terror and God's wrath, it'll be a time of destruction and it will be a time of deception. Make note of that, a time of deception.

So, it has as its primary purpose, being the 70th week of Daniel, the time of Jacob's trouble, to prepare the nation of Israel for its Romans chapter 11 restoration. Remember Romans nine, 10 and 11? Israel's election, Israel's rejection, Israel's restoration. So, Israel will be restored and they will then enter into the kingdom age or the millennium. We'll talk about that in two weeks from tonight.

Now, Satan will introduce at this time of this 70-week of Daniel, this time of darkness, this time of deception, his man of sin, the son of perdition. I want you to look at 2 Thessalonians verse three and we're going to back up and cover every verse but look at verse three. Let no man deceive you by any means for that day, it's a reference to the day of the Lord which is the tribulation period, shall not come except there come a falling away first. And then notice at the end of verse three, that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

So, there's someone who's going to be revealed at the beginning of the day of the Lord, the tribulation period. He's given two titles here. He's called the son of perdition and he's called the man of sin but it speaks of him being revealed and the revelation that will take place. Now, he's commonly known, even though the Bible doesn't use this phrase for him directly, he's commonly called the antichrist. But isn't it interesting that we commonly use that term but the Bible doesn't directly use that term for this man of sin, the antichrist. It does in 1 John talk about the spirit of antichrist.

Now, why the term antichrist? For two reasons. Number one, he comes as a fake or phony or pseudo Christ. He comes trying to take the place of Christ. And then number two, he is opposing Christ and the things of God. So, he tries to take the place of Christ and, secondly, he opposes Christ and the things of God. Now, where is he in the Bible? As I mentioned, he's mentioned all through the Old and New Testament, there's a lot of references but I've whittled it down to some of the essentials and key verses and I want you to write them down so you can look them up because we can't cover every one of them.

In the Old Testament, it starts with Daniel chapter nine and verse 27. And that's the end of that time when he makes a covenant with the nation of Israel for one week, one seven-year period. So, that 70th week or that tribulation period, the day of the Lord, the time of Jacob's trouble will be a covenant made by the antichrist with the nation of Israel for one seven-year period. Then he's mentioned again in Daniel seven and verse eight, Daniel 7:8, and then in Daniel eight and

verse 23 to verse 25. You can consult my series in the book of Daniel and we talk about those verses.

And in the New Testament, write is down, Matthew 24 verse 15. Jesus talked about the abomination of desolation that was spoken by the man Daniel, so there's a reference there to the antichrist. And then our passage tonight, which we're going to unpack for you, 2 Thessalonians chapter two verses one to 12. Those are classic, clear passages about the antichrist. Daniel nine, Daniel seven, Daniel eight, Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians chapter two, verses one to 12. And then one more to throw in for good measure, Revelation 13. Revelation 13, if you study that whole chapter, you get a lot of insight about this man of sin that comes on the scene and exalts himself above God.

Now, let's study 2 Thessalonians chapter two. Follow me, let's read verses one down to verse three. Paul says, "Now we beseech you, brethren," so he's obviously writing to believers there in Thessalonica. "By the coming of the Lord Jesus or by the coming of Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him that you be not soon shaken in mind or troubled neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us as that," here it is, "The day of the Lord is at hand."

A better translation and a lot of modern translations render it as the day of the Lord is at hand. The King James Bible has the day of Christ is at hand, it's a reference to the day of the Lord. And my preferred rendering of that is the day of the Lord is present or the tribulation is right now. Don't be freaking out thinking you're in the tribulation. And he said, "Let no man deceive you by any means for that day," What day? The day of the Lord, the tribulation, "Shall not come except there come first a falling away and the man of sin," the antichrist, "Be revealed, the son of perdition." So, Paul the Apostle writing to the believers in Thessalonica.

Now, there are two events that must happen before the day of the Lord. There must first be, verse three, a falling away and, secondly, verse three, the man of sin be revealed. So, these two events, and I want you to notice this very carefully, two things Paul tells them must happen before this man of sin is revealed or for the day a perdition comes. The first thing is a falling away. Look at it with me in verse three, he says there has to come a falling away first. Now, that falling away is the Greek word apostasy and it means the turning away. But some Bible scholars, I don't know that that's what Paul is referring to, actually feel that this may be a reference to the church being raptured or caught away to heaven.

And if that were true, that would be fascinating. And when I get to heaven and I talk to Paul, I'm going to ask him if that's the case and, if so, you should have put the word rapture in there instead of a falling away or apostasy. But the word apostasy, listen, literally means a departure. It means a departure. Generally, in the context, it's referring to a departure from the faith. But if it's used standalone in the context, it could be a reference to a departure in reference to the church being caught up to be with the Lord. And if that is true, and it's possible, if it's true, then it would be a clear reference to a pre-tribulational rapture of the church.

The second application, which is a little more common and the one I tend to believe is more

likely, is that it's referring to the end of the church age. And at the end of the church age, that we will see a definite, distinct falling away from the faith. Now, he doesn't say a falling away from the faith but it's used that way quite commonly in the New Testament. And what that means is that we're going to see in the church age, toward the end of the age prior to the rapture, we're going to see an apostasy, a turning away from Christ, a turning away from orthodoxy, a turning away from the essentials of Christian belief and a turning away from God.

Let me give you a couple references for this apostasy. 1 Timothy chapter four in verse one says, "Now the spirit speaks expressly that, in the latter days, some shall depart from the faith." Again, they will apostatize, they will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. So, there will be, in the last days, a falling away. Then 2 Timothy chapter three and verse 13 refers to a turning away from the faith. My favorite is 2 Timothy chapter four, verses three to four where Paul told Timothy to preach the word, [inaudible 00:18:16], reprove, rebuke, exhort with, all long-suffering and doctrine and then he tells him why, verse three and four. For the time will come when men will not endure, listen carefully, sound doctrine. But after their own lust or desires, they shall, here it is, turn away their ears from the truth.

That's an apostasy. They'll turn their ears away from the truth and they'll be giving in to fables. So, Paul tells Timothy, you preach the word, don't tickle men's ears but preach the truth of God's word. When Paul met with the elders in Ephesus in Acts chapter 20, he said, "I know that, after I depart, shall grievous wolves come in among you, not sparing the flock and will turn people away after themselves." Now, false teachers have always been a part of the church age and false believers have always been a part of the church age. Read Matthew chapter 13. There's the tares with the wheat, there's the birds and the branches of the tree, there's the leaven in the meal.

So, there's always going to be the false with the true but, in the end of time, it will escalate and it will grow more common. And today, I believe before our very eyes that it's one of the signs of the times that we're watching that a lot of professing Christians, a lot of churches, a lot of pastors have abandoned the faith, have abandoned the apostle's doctrines and the clear teaching of the word of God. So, we see here that there will be a departure. But notice the second thing that has to happen, the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, verse three.

It was still a future event in Paul's day. Paul is saying, "Look, we're not in the day of the Lord, we're not in the tribulation," which indicates he didn't believe the church would go through the tribulation, he actually said there has to become a falling away and then the man of sin is revealed. Now, another reason I believe in the imminent rapture of the church is that, if we believed in a mid-tribulational rapture or a post-tribulational rapture, then we would be looking for the antichrist. We're not, we're looking for Jesus Christ. Sometimes people are more interested in who the antichrist is rather than that Jesus Christ is coming again for us. I don't believe the church will be here so there's no need for us to speculate on who he is because we're looking for Jesus Christ.

So, how will this all unfold? Now, I want to point out that Paul was writing to them, not to be

shaken, verse two, because someone had written to them a letter, forged a letter in his name saying we're in the day of the Lord. Someone said in the spirit or had a word from the Lord, verse two, that we're in the day of the Lord. Years ago in my church, I used to pastor in San Bernardino, someone came in and jumped up in the middle of the service, and that's back when Ronald Reagan was the president, and they said, "Thus sayeth the Lord, Ronald Reagan's the antichrist." Well, obviously, Ronald Reagan isn't the antichrist but people come along and make these prophecies and make these predictions.

I used to laugh, we had all kinds of prophets show up at that church. We had Elijah, Jeremiah and Moses and all these prophets showed up, we just told them we were non-prophet ministry and chased them away. But the Bible tells us that this false prophet will come on the scene and lead people away during the time of the tribulation. Now, I want to list for you how it's all going to begin to unfold and this is going to be a one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Obviously, I can't tarry on each one but I put a bird's eye view of how it unfolds after the rapture in eight consecutive points.

The first is the emergence of a 10-nation confederacy or a revived Roman Empire. So, after the church is raptured and the world's thrown into upheaval and the chaos, what happens is we see the revival of the ancient Roman Empire which will start with 10 nations or 10 kings. And we read about this in Daniel chapter two where Nebuchadnezzar had the image where there was the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and then feet and toes of iron and clay.

So, it represented Babylon, Medo-Persia, the Grecian Empire and then the Roman Empire. And then the Roman Empire, at the end of time, when Christ would return in the second coming at the end of the tribulation, would be a mixture of iron and clay and there were 10 toes which coincide with the ten horns and the ten heads on the beast known as the Roman Empire revived. So, there'll be a revival of this Roman Empire.

Now, a good possibility is that it will be a formation of the European Union and the European Union will eventually be just 10 nations and they are unified together and it will be out of those 10 nations that the antichrist will arise. So, the 10 toes of Daniel two and then write down, you already have Daniel seven verse 24 where he comes as the horn, there's 10 horns, and then he springs up as a little horn. And then Revelation chapter 13, there's a beast that comes out of the sea having 10 horns and, out of those 10 horns comes another little horn and has a mouth on it speaking great words, it's a reference to this antichrist.

So, the first thing that happens after the rapture is that there becomes United States of Europe, a confederacy of 10 nations which is a revived Roman Empire. It's interesting that the Medo-Persian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, the Grecian Empire, all had an end in scripture but the Roman Empire had no end. It will happen when the second coming takes place. But here's number two in the chronology, the emergence of the antichrist. So, first the rapture, then, secondly, the formation of these 10 nations, then, thirdly, there will be the emergence of the antichrist or number two on my list, Daniel chapter seven and verse eight.

Now, I don't think the antichrist will be a Jew, he is not going to worship the God of heaven and the Jews will not recognize him. And then the Muslims, they wouldn't acknowledge him either if he is speaking against the God of heaven but he will probably be a gentile coming out of the Roman Empire. Here's number three, let's move on. He makes a covenant of peace with Israel for seven years. And I know this is a little repetitious but I wanted to lay them out in chronological order. So, the first, there's the revived Roman Empire, out of which comes the antichrist, that little horn, and then we have, thirdly, the covenant of peace with Israel for seven years.

This is very, very important. Daniel 9:27, this is that last seven year period and we looked at it in the 70 weeks of Daniel. So very important. In 1 Thessalonians chapter five, verse two and three, it says that they will cry for peace and safety during this time before sudden destruction will come upon them as travail upon a woman with child and they will not escape. So, it will be a peace treaty with the nation of Israel. Daniel 9:27 says it's a covenant made with them for one week. Now, the beginning of the tribulation period is not the rapture, it follows the rapture but it doesn't start the seven years. The beginning of the seven years starts with the covenant made by the antichrist which, at that time, Israel doesn't see him as an antichrist but made by the antichrist with Israel for seven years.

As I said, this is the 70th week of Daniel, the time of Jacob's trouble. This period of time is also referred to by Jesus in Matthew 24 and chapter 25, the Olivet Discourse, it is not for the church. It's 70 sevens determined upon Thy people and Thy holy city to make an end of sin and to bring in the everlasting righteousness. So, it's primarily for Israel and for the judgment of the gentile nations, it's covered in Revelation six through 18. Then number four, in sequential order, the covenant will be broken.

So, the covenant is for seven years and we don't know what the covenant will involve, some feel that it'll be an agreement for peace in the Middle East between Israel and their Arab nations. Certainly, if someone could come along and work out a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians and the issue on the West Bank, they would be hailed the savior of the world. So, that could be involved in that, perhaps they believe it'll be given the Temple Mount to the Jews to rebuild a temple which indicates that a temple will be rebuilt because the covenant will be broken in the rebuilt temple. This is known as the abomination of desolation.

Now, we come back to 2 Thessalonians chapter two and I want you to notice it in verses four and five. This is the middle of the seven years and this is what the antichrist does. He opposes and exalts himself, verse four, above all that is called God or that is worshiped so that he, as God, this is the antichrist, sitting in the temple of God. So, that means that the temple will have to be rebuilt during the time of the tribulation showing himself that he is God. Paul says, verse five, "Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things." This is what Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24 as the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet. So, when Daniel describes in chapter nine, verse 27, the covenant made for one week, he actually mentions, in the middle of the week, he shall make it desolate, that he would desecrate the temple.

And as we read in Revelation 13, it tells that the antichrist will erect an image of himself in the rebuilt temple commanding everyone to worship him as God. Isn't it interesting, in the book of Daniel, that Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a large statue and head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and clay, feet and toes of iron and clay and he found out that he was the head of gold. But in defiance of that image and the defiance of God, he then turns around and makes an image all of pure gold and he erects this image in Babylon and tells everyone to bow down and worship this image.

And if you don't worship this image, you're thrown into the fiery furnace and we know the story of what happened to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They wouldn't bow, they wouldn't bend and they didn't burn. But it's a picture of how the Jews will enter into the tribulation and they will then be betrayed by the antichrist who erects an image of himself in the rebuilt temple commanding everyone to worship him. Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15 and Revelation chapter 13 verses 14 through 15 will give you a lot of detail about this. I am God and he will actually have everyone to take a mark on their right hand or their forehead, it's called the mark of the beast, it's the number of a man, six, six, six. No one can buy or sell without this mark on their right hand or on their forehead.

Now, that'll be the last three and a half years. So, the first three and a half years had a semblance of peace, there was fighting and war and things going on underneath a white horse rider and then the other horses in revelation six. But the last of the seven-year period, last three and a half years, there will be seven seal judgements, Revelation six, there'll be seven trumpet judgments, Revelation eight through 11, and there'll be seven bold judgments of God's wrath being poured out upon the Christ-rejecting world.

Now, you can go to the book of Revelation and read from chapters six to chapter 18, and it's not all in chronological order, but you can read about the wrath of God poured out upon the world at that time. You can read about the 144,000 that are sealed Jews from the 12 tribes that will go everywhere preaching the gospel, the angel who preaches the gospel. So, it'll be a time of Jewish evangelism and even Gentiles will come to believe in Jesus Christ. Probably the greatest time of souls being saved will be in this time of terrible trouble. Leave it to a worldwide pandemic for people to be brought to their knees and see their need of God. How about when the wrath of God is being poured out directly on mankind and it's very clearly all of these catastrophes are happening upon earth?

So, this covenant is broken, the antichrist then reveals himself, Satan's desire has always been to be worshiped as God. Remember, he wanted to take the throne of God so, on earth, he's going to declare himself to be God in the person of the antichrist and command everyone to worship him. It's not so farfetched, not so farfetched to believe that some a demon-possessed political leader will actually stand up and say, "I am God, worship me or bow down to me." It's happened before and it'll happen again. I won't mention any names right now because I don't know who the antichrist will be but it's not so farfetched when people have this idea that I am God and he will demand that people worship him.

But notice the fifth in the sequence of what happens after the rapture. I want you to note the power that the antichrist has as described in verse nine of 2 Thessalonians chapter two verse nine. It says, "Even him," referring to the antichrist, "Who's coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." So, it's believed, and I think rightfully so, that this man will be satanically empowered to do miraculous signs and wonders. And Revelation 13 says the whole world will follow after the beast and worship him and say, who is likened to the beast and who is able to make war with him, he will have satanic power.

Now, just because someone can do a miracle doesn't mean that they are right with God or preaching or teaching the truth of God. Satan has power as well and he likes to duplicate, to deceive people to following him. But I want you to notice number six, the deception of the antichrist. This is a scary thought. Verse 10 and 11 of 2 Thessalonians two, he will have all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish because they receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved. And he says, "And for this cause, God shall send them," or the idea is that God will allow them to have strong delusion. Why? Because they did not believe the truth, they believed the lie.

In the Greek that should read the lie. That they all might be damned, verse 12, who believe not the truth but notice they had pleasure in unrighteousness. So, the antichrist will be very, very, very deceptive, very persuasive, very powerful, very deceptive. And he will be empowered by Satan, be a great oratory, has a mouth speaking great things and he will deceive people. Now, the Bible indicates too that he will have a companion known as the false prophet. So, the antichrist will come on the scene more as a political leader but he will have a religious leader following him and there will be a worldwide church, a unification of the world politically, socially, economically and religiously.

The globalism that we see going on in the world today is the precursor, no doubt. That it's the sign that we're living in the last days, that the Lord will come for the church, the antichrist will be revealed and, again, the world will become one. The last world ruling empire was Rome, it's not over yet, it's going to be revived and he's going to take power of the whole world and command that everyone worship him and he'll have a false prophet read Revelation 13 who comes alongside him. So, if you reject the truth right now, there's only one thing for you to believe and that's the lie. If you reject the truth of God's word and the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, then you are believing the lie and you can easily be deceived by this antichrist and his false prophet.

Number seven, what is holding back the revelation or the revealing of this antichrist, this man of sin, this son of perdition? Go back with me to verse six and seven of 2 Thess chapter two. He says, "Now we know what withholdeth," there's something hindering or holding back this man of sin, this son of perdition, what is it that is holding him back, "That he," the antichrist, "May be revealed in his time." So, there's going to be a revelation, an unveiling of this man of sin but something's holding it back right now. It is completely futile to try to speculate on who the antichrist is and nowhere in the Bible is the church instructed to be looking for the antichrist but we are looking for Jesus Christ. But we see that, when he comes, that he will be held back before his unveiling.

Verse seven. For the mystery of iniquity, death, already work. The demonic, Satanic influence is already in the world. Only he, and I believe that's a reference to the Holy Spirit, who now hinders will hinder until, notice this, he be taken out of the way. Now, in verse six, when he says we know what withholdeth, the idea is hindering again, that word what there is neuter. I think that's a reference to the church. And then when it says he shall be taken out of the way, I believe that's a reference to the Holy Spirit. So, here's the question we need to ask and seek to answer. What is it that's holding and hindering the antichrist from being revealed?

The only logical explanation is God, the Holy Spirit. Only God can keep back Satan. I sometimes laugh when people are binding Satan or loosing the Holy Spirit and telling Satan where to go and what to do, I sometimes want to just cover my eyes and say I don't want to watch. I think Satan laughs at that. Only God can deal with the devil. Even Michael the Archangel said the Lord rebuke you. He didn't say I rebuke, he said the Lord rebuke you. And only God omnipotent has power against someone as powerful as the devil.

But the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, and I believe working in conjunction with the church and the world today, the church is the habitation of God through the Spirit. That when the church is taken out in the rapture, and this is consistent with the pre-tribulation rapture, when the church is taken out, I believe the restraining force of the Holy Spirit is withdrawn. Now, that's not to mean the Holy Spirit who's omnipresent won't be around during the time of the tribulation but it does mean that he takes his hands off and he allows the antichrist to come on the scene. One of the purposes of the tribulation is for people to decide to follow the antichrist, Satan's man of sin, or to follow Jesus Christ who will come in a second coming. It's going to be a great dividing, it's going to be a time of separation. So, the withholding or the hindrance, I believe, is the Holy Spirit working in conjunction with the church.

Now, it's interesting, the tribulation, the seven-year period, the seventy week of Daniel, time of Jacob's trouble is called it time of darkness. Jesus said to the church you are the light of the world. So, what happens when the light of the world is taken out? Darkness, the tribulation. Jesus said to the church you are the salt of the earth. So, what happens when the salt is taken off the earth? Corruption. Can you imagine right now if there were no Christians in the world? What a dark place this would be. Can you imagine what it would be like no true believers? After the rapture of the church takes place, there will only be the professing church left, the liberal apostate church and we read about it called the Mother of Harlots and it comes riding on this beast with seven heads from the city of Rome.

It will be an ecumenical movement of religions and groups that come together and they come under the sway and the power of the false prophet and the antichrist. There'll be a unification of world religions but this will be a horrible time because the church is caught up and the world becomes very dark and very corrupt. But here's my last point and my eighth point, and I ask this question, how will the antichrist come to his end? How will the antichrist come to his end?

Let me tell you this, he won't be voted out of office, there'll be no election. What happens is, and this is a glorious truth, Jesus Christ comes back and destroys him merely with the word coming

out of His mouth and the brightness of His coming. Look at verse eight of 2 Thessalonians chapter two. And then shall the wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume. So, after the antichrist is revealed, the Lord will consume him with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy him with the brightness of His coming. This is a reference to the second advent, the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Read the description in Revelation chapter one when John, on the island of Patmos, saw Jesus coming in power and majesty and glory. His hair white as wool, His eyes like the flame of fire, His feet like polished brass, His voice like many waters and out of His mouth comes the sharp two-edged sword. Read the description of Jesus coming in the second coming in Revelation chapter 19. He had a vesture written King of Kings and Lord of Lords riding upon His white horse with the armies of heaven, the church coming back with Him.

Now, at this very moment, and again I haven't gone into any detail, this is a bird's eye view, all the armies of the world will be gathered together in battle against the antichrist. His troops against other soldiers and armies and this will be World War III, it's called the Battle of Armageddon. And in the height of this battle, Jesus Christ will come back in His second coming. And I want the chart again on the screen as we seek to wrap this up.

So, there is the first 483 years, Jesus was crucified and the church then born on the day of Pentecost, the church will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air in the rapture and then the antichrist will come to be revealed through the 10-nation confederacy of nations, a revived Roman Empire, then there'll be the seven years of tribulation. In the middle of which, the abomination of desolation spoken about by Daniel where there's a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, the antichrist erects an image, commands everyone to worship him, the Jews realize they've been betrayed, Jesus warn them in Matthew 24, He said to flee into the mountains, into the hills and to hide.

And they'll realize he's not their Messiah, not the Savior and then God's wrath being poured out upon a Christ-rejecting world that lasts three and a half years. But at the end of that time, there'll be the Battle of Armageddon and that's when we have the second coming of Jesus Christ. What a difference it's going to make when Jesus splits the sky and, as the lightning shines from the east to the west, so shall the coming of the son of man be. That's what we're looking for, that's what we're yearning for, that's what we're desiring. For the Lord Jesus Christ to come back and set up His kingdom and we're going to talk about that next Wednesday night. My favorite subject, the second advent of Christ, it's what all of scripture is looking forward to.

All of the Old Testament prophets anticipated it and look forward to it. The coming of Messiah and the kingdom age for a thousand years flowing into the eternal state, the new heaven and the new world, that'll bring the end of time. So, you can read about the Battle of Armageddon, Revelation 19, and the second coming of Jesus Christ. Now, how does this chapter in 2 Thessalonians two end for us? I want you to see it, verse 13 to 17. So, he said, "I don't want you to freak out, don't want you to be troubled to think that we're in the day of the Lord. Someone falsely prophesied we're in the tribulation, no we're not. There's people saying right

now we're in the tribulation, no we're not."

He said there has to come a falling away then the man of sin has to be revealed but notice in verse 13 the contrast now with the true believers, the church. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord. So, there's a contrast. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you. And he calls the believers in Thessalonica brethren, beloved of the Lord. Why? Because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. So, Paul is thankful, even in light of all these horrible things that are yet future, in light of the fact that God's chosen them and us for salvation and sanctification of the spirit and because of our belief in the truth.

Notice verse 14, whereunto He called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, notice, number one, He saved you, He sanctified you and He called you. Because we believe the truth, we're called to obtaining glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's basically saying God saved you, He sanctified you, He's calling you and you're on your way to heaven. And the whole passage indicates a contrast for those who believe the lie and reject the truth. Then he closes, verse 16 and 17, now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, which have loved us and given us everlasting comfort, consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, establish you in every good word and work.

Notice how this ends again like other passages on this subject of the end of time. God has called you to glory and hope. So, what he tells him to do in verse 15, stand fast and take note of God's word. Stand fast and continue in the things which you have been taught, whether by word or by epistle or letter, as from us. Don't listen to the false teachers. And then he closes with comforting your hearts and establishing you in every good work.

Now, next Wednesday, we'll be able to take right off from where we just stopped, the second coming of Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ is coming again and He will enter in the kingdom age, He will bring in the millennium, the thousand years. And we're going to talk about the millennium and the characteristics and the purpose of that thousand-year reign of Christ. Let's pray.