

# Anticipating the End of the Age

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5  
**Preached on:** Sunday, June 12, 2016

Will you take your Bibles and turn to 2 Thessalonians 2 where this morning we will be examining verses 1 through 5. As you are turning there, may I remind you that the Bible is unique among all books that have ever been written because it accurately foretells specific events in detail many years, sometimes many centuries before they actually occur. There are approximately 2,500 prophecies in the word of God and we see that about 2,000 of them have so far been fulfilled to the letter without error and, frankly, the odds of this happening randomly is really a statistical impossibility. So today we look at one of those prophecies, I should say several of those prophecies, in order to better understand the word of God, to find clarity in his truth, to find comfort but also to help us recognize afresh who we worship and what he has in store for the redeemed and for those who reject him and, frankly, this should cause us to fall on our faces and worship him, not to mention to feast upon his word.

I've entitled my discourse to you this morning "Anticipating the End of the Age," and that will become abundantly clear. Let me read these first five verses of 2 Thessalonians 2. The Apostle Paul says,

1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

Now, like many Christians today, the first century saints in Thessalonica were confused about matters pertaining to eschatology, especially the final events surrounding the imminent return of Christ in judgment. The severe persecution that they were experiencing combined with the false teachers, led them to believe that they were living in the day of the Lord, living in that time of judgment, a period of cataclysmic judgments that we find in prophecy, judgment upon unbelievers just prior to Christ's physical return to the earth.

Now, in his first letter, he explained to them that this would be a time of judgment for unbelievers, not for believers. And to comfort them, you will recall, he taught them about

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the great snatching away, the rapture of the church, that will precede all of this. He spoke of this in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and following, and 1 Thessalonians 5:9, he said, "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Also, John tells us in Revelation 3:10 that Jesus is going to "keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world," and so forth.

Unfortunately, however, the false teachers that had come through that town, maybe even some as a part of the church, had forged a letter purportedly from the Apostle Paul that said the very opposite; that said something different than what he told them before; that said, in essence, that they would experience the fury of divine wrath and, in fact, they were in the midst of it right now. So Paul must correct their misunderstanding. He must refute the words of the false teacher, those lies, and he's going to do it now in writing. He is going to write to them and expand upon what he had taught them earlier that evidently they had forgotten or become confused over, especially one key piece of evidence that would prove that they're not living in the day of the Lord, namely that the antichrist, the one who has been prophesied in the Old Testament, predicted by Jesus as well, the antichrist had not yet appeared.

Now, these five verses I believe are best understood by examining them as a whole unit and then, after I've done that, I will focus on the precursor of the actual day of the Lord, namely the apostasy, THE apostasy brought on by the man of lawlessness, the antichrist that will be revealed. We must also examine some other supporting passages of Scripture so you'll have to kind of bear with me as we kind of move around. You won't be able to probably get all of this down, fortunately it will be transcribed. And hopefully I won't get lost in some of the details. I want you to maintain the big picture even though I do want to deal with some of the details because of all of the critics that are going to attack me during the week when they hear this on the internet. Moreover, I want to be faithful to the word of God.

So let's look closely at what the Holy Spirit has to say through his inspired apostle. In chapter 2, beginning in verse 1, he says, "Now we request you, brethren," literally, we plead with you. We beg you, brethren, "with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The parousias in the original language, which refers to the appearing, the manifestation of the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. "And," he adds, "our gathering together to Him." Now, the Bible makes it clear that the coming of the Messiah King in his royal parousia will include numerous events, events that we see includes the tribulation sometimes called Daniel's seventieth week of judgment, and all of those things fall under the category of that time of judgment called the day of the Lord. And we know that Paul had taught them in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and so on, that believers who were alive would not have any advantage over believers that were dead at the gathering together to meet him or the rapture of the church. Both of them would ascend to meet him

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in the air to be with him forever. So he taught that the rapture would occur first; the church is going to be removed. Then Daniel's prophecy of the seventieth week judgment will come upon the world and Daniel makes it clear that this will be a time when God completes his judgment upon Israel. The church will be removed. He is going to preserve a remnant of his covenant people to enter the kingdom, and so forth. So we know that the rapture must take place first, not only because of what Paul says in these texts, but also because of the reaction of the believers in Thessalonica. I mean, think about it, if Paul had told them that they must go through the tribulation judgments first, they would have rejoiced knowing that the parousia is about to occur. But that's not what's going on here. He says that they are shaken, "You've lost your composure. You're disturbed." In other words, they're thinking, "Wait a minute, that's not what he told us before. What is going on here?" So their hope and their joy and their focus on the Gospel have now been eclipsed in all of this confusion.

So Paul pleads with them in verse 2, he says, "that you not be quickly shaken from your composure." In other words, "I don't want you to be disoriented. I don't want you to be confused." "Or," he says, "be disturbed." The term means to be alarmed by fright. "I don't want you to be disturbed either by," and he's going to mention three things. Either by, 1. "a spirit," or 2. "a message," or 3. "a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come." Now, what is he referring to here? Well, when he speaks of a spirit, he's referring to a charlatan or maybe several charlatans who claim that they had received, or so they thought, some special revelation from God and this is always a great danger in the church when someone claims to have a prophetic voice, that they've received some inspired message and now they're going to pass it on to everybody. But, secondly, there was a message referring to a sermon or maybe a series of sermons, a series of teaching. And then, thirdly, there was a letter that was obviously a forged letter purporting to be from Paul. Now, evidently all forms of communication of false doctrine were being used in the church at that time.

By the way as a footnote, this happens all the time today. Not through forged letters, obviously we don't have that, but through claims of direct revelation from God like the inspired revelation received by the apostles. And this is so very dangerous to the church. We have to be so very careful with this. I was reading a best selling female author, Sarah Young. She has a devotional book "Jesus Calling." And she claims to receive special messages from God during times of communing with him which, in essence, promotes kind of a new age mystical spiritual discipline that we need to be a part of and therefore that would trump Bible study and so forth. And she says, "I listen to God with pen in hand and write down whatever I believe he was saying." She adds, "I know that God communicates with me through the Bible, but I yearn for more." Said differently, the Scripture is not enough, I have to have something else. And so as you read her syrupy

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kind of saccharin devotionals, you see that this is basically an attempt whereby she is saying that Jesus is speaking through her to us and, of course, her own personal experience is the only arbiter that she has for this type of thing. Well, these types of deceivers are as old as the serpent in the garden, and Paul even described them in 2 Timothy 3:5 as those who "hold to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Now, with respect to the false teachers in Thessalonica, they were quite successful in duping the saints there. I mean, I can imagine what it would have been like. You know, some are saying, "Oh yeah, you know, the Lord told me this and the Lord told me that! Oh yeah, well, he told me some of this too! Oh really? Yeah, and not only that, did you hear Brother So-and-so's sermon or his series on all of this? And by the way, that's all based on this new letter that we've gotten from Paul where he says something different than what he said before." So now everybody's in turmoil and as a result of all of this chaos, their hope and their joy has been robbed and they're beginning to doubt the goodness of God and his grace towards them and just the authority of the apostolic word and so forth.

So Paul says in verse 3, "Let no one in any way deceive you." Now, I might add given the construction of the verb that Paul uses here combined with the grammar of this phrase, it could literally be translated, "Don't let anyone by any means, by any method, mislead you. Don't let anyone use any method to trick you with doctrinal error that would cause you to believe that you were currently living in this period of time of divine judgment called the day of the Lord." By the way, Jesus said the same thing in his Olivet Discourse. Do you remember that where he described and delineated the sequence of events that would accompany his second coming and the day of the Lord? For example, in Matthew 24 as well as Mark 13 and Luke 21, he says, "See to it that no one misleads you." And this is the grave danger that we have in the church today. There are so many voices that mislead people, little subtle things and, of course, a good counterfeit is something that looks as much like the real thing as possible but it's not. According to Ephesians 4, one of the primary responsibilities of a pastor/teacher is to assist with this very thing, to help us all. Paul says, "to attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God." He goes on to say, "as a result, we are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming."

So with this in mind, he says in verse 3, "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come," referring to the day of the Lord, "unless the apostasy comes first, and the man

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of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?" Beloved, here we see that eschatology was a continual theme of Paul's teaching underscoring its importance in the church, and unfortunately today many people view the study of Bible prophecy and so forth as, "It's just so controversial and it's just not really all that important. Let's just focus on the Gospel." But beloved, I would submit to you that eschatology is part of the Gospel. We need to understand these things and so he's asking them here, "Don't you remember I was telling you these things?"

Now let's look at this closely. First of all, what is this apostasy which basically means rebellion that must take place before the day of the Lord? And how does this relate to the man of lawlessness that is going to be revealed? These are obviously truths that Paul had taught them but they had either forgotten or they had just been so deceived they're thinking something differently.

Now, I want you to notice it says "the apostasy." The use of the definite article there, "the," indicates that this is some kind of a specific unique rebellion. But notice also this specific rebellion will be in association with the man of lawlessness who will be revealed, and I might add that the use of the aorist tense of the verb here indicates that this person will suddenly be exposed for who he is at a specific definite time. So as we piece together the syntax of all of this, we see that this man of lawlessness will be previously known to the people but his act of apostasy will reveal just the lawless destructive nature of his character and his intentions, all of which will then trigger the sequence of judgments known as the day of the Lord.

Now, this fits perfectly, as we will see, with all of the other Old and New Testament passages that speak of the person and the work of the final antichrist. Daniel 7, Daniel 9, Daniel 11, Matthew 24 and so forth. But, first of all, let's notice how he is described here. He is described as the son of destruction. Now, the Jews would use the phrase "son of" to indicate a close association; a unique affinity like a son shares with the nature of his father, and in this case, the antichrist will be the very embodiment of destruction. He will be utterly devoted to thwarting the purposes and the plans of God.

Notice also he's described as the man of lawlessness. Lawlessness simply means without law; one who lives in open rebellion against the most high God. Now, we're seeing this all the time today. I mean, it's escalating at an alarming rate in our political leaders, leaders around the world. In fact, in Matthew 24:12, Jesus prophesied that as the end of the age approaches, "lawlessness will increase," and we see that kind of momentum, that

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kind of defiance against the most high occurring today. But what we must understand as we look at Scripture, through the deceptions of the antichrist, this satanically controlled leader will one day produce unprecedented rebellion against God and become the engine of "the apostasy," which Paul goes on to describe in verse 4. This lawless and destructive one is one "who opposes," he says, "and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God."

Now, as we look at other passages of Scripture, for example in Matthew 24, Jesus tells us that the antichrist will one day desecrate the temple by committing what he calls the abomination of desolation and deifying himself which will be the greatest act of apostasy in the history of the world. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus says, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains." And he goes on to describe that. When you see the abomination of desolation, literally it means the abomination which makes desolate; the abomination which lays waste or causes desolation. And an abomination biblically is a detestable thing; an object of utter abhorrence; that which is repulsive in the eyes of God. For example, in the Septuagint, the term is used to describe idols that are used in cultic practices; sacrilegious objects, paraphernalia; and rites of wicked pagan worship. So this is speaking of something that is repulsive and vile and revolting, things that would desecrate a holy place; an odious stench in the nostrils of a holy God; and a direct insult to the glory of his name. And this will become the final straw, shall we say, that will then trigger God's wrath. The term is used in Revelation 17:4 to describe the great whore of the final apostasy. She's called "Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth." That's referring to the ultimate ecumenical church, an enormous amalgam of apostate religions led by the false prophet that will deceive the world, a man who will work in concert with the antichrist. So an abomination is anything that offends the holiness of God and incites his wrath therefore Jesus warned those who will be alive during that day, "When you see this abomination that causes desolation, when you see it standing in the holy place," by the way, the holy place is a reference to the temple; we see this in Acts 21:18 and other passages. He says, "I want you to run for your lives. You've got to seek refuge."

Now, what is this abomination, this vile object? Well, Jesus gives us a hint. He says, "that which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet." So I think it makes sense to look and see what Daniel the prophet had to say about these things and if we look in Daniel's prophecies, we see that Daniel spoke of this at least three times in Daniel 9:27, in Daniel 11:31, and in Daniel 12:11, prophecies, by the way, that will often speak of something

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that's going to happen in the near future but also portends or is a harbinger of something much worse that will happen many centuries or even millennia later.

In Daniel 11, for example, we have a clear reference to the hideous defilement of the temple by the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who ruled Palestine as a surrogate of the Greek empire from 175-165 BC, and you can read about this in Daniel 11:21-35. Now, Antiochus Epiphanes demanded to be called "Theos Epiphanes" which means "manifest god." Pretty bold, right? Manifest god. And we know historically that he slaughtered thousands of Jewish men; he sold wives and children into slavery; he even sacrificed a pig on the altar of the temple; he even forced the priests to eat the flesh of what they would consider to be the most unclean of all animals; and worse yet, he erected an idol of Zeus in the temple and considered himself to be the manifestation of Zeus. Now, this was a bad bad character. In fact, enemies of Antiochus Epiphanes nicknamed him "Epimames," which means "madman or the insane one." And ironically, his inability to defeat the Jews, remember under Judas Maccabeus, drove him insane and he died as a madman in 165 BC. A rather interesting piece of history. But obviously in Matthew 24, Jesus wasn't only talking about a past historical event, nor was Daniel as we're going to see, but something yet future. You see, Daniel's prophecy of Antiochus Epiphanes was a preview of the ultimate abomination of desolation that will be committed by the antichrist.

You will recall in the book of Daniel some of the context that Daniel is a young man, is exiled into Babylonian captivity. Earlier in the book of Daniel in Daniel 2, he explains Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statute, remember there God revealed to him the successive stages of Gentile world domination that's going to exist throughout history. He described there Babylon, then Medo-Persia, then Greece, then Rome, and then eventually a revived Roman Empire. And finally in all of his prophecies we see that the Messiah ultimately defeats them all and he reconciles his covenant people to himself in saving faith. He re-establishes them back into the land of promise, establishes his kingdom and so forth. So we know that in Daniel, Daniel prays for his people. In Daniel 9:2, we read how Daniel recalls the years of captivity that the Lord had prophesied through Jeremiah, 70 years, and he knew that that time was almost over so he implored the Lord with all of his heart to re-establish his beloved Israel back into the land of promise, and in the context of that, God speaks to him through the angel Gabriel in Daniel 9:24 and he says this, "Seventy weeks," which by the way, literally means seventy sevens, seventy units of seven so seventy weeks ultimately translates into 490 years. "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place."

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Now, here God reveals the future, a future way beyond Antiochus Epiphanes, a future that will include the antichrist; 490 years of judgment must occur before those six glorious objectives could be realized; 490 years before the Messiah would establish the long awaited kingdom for which Daniel prayed and the next verse told him when the clock would begin ticking. In verse 25 he says, "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks." That translated into 69 weeks or 483 years and then, he says, "it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress," and we know this is exactly what happened. In Nehemiah 2, we read how King Artaxerxes issued a decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem. That happened in 445 BC. Then as God promised, after 7 weeks and 62 weeks or 69 weeks or that is 483 years after that elapsed, then indeed just like it was prophesied, Messiah the Prince, the Lord Jesus Christ, passed through the multitudes, came into Jerusalem with all of the Jews cheering him as their Messiah.

But then notice in verse 26 of Daniel's prophecy, he says, "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing," and indeed after the 62 sevens, that 483 years after the 69 weeks had begun, the Messiah was cut off and had nothing. Had nothing could be translated literally no one. He had no one. All of his followers abandoned him. He was arrested. When he was arrested, during his trial, his crucifixion. And so what we know, dear friends, is that in that prophecy the first 69 weeks were fulfilled precisely in toto. Are you with me? Precisely. Then 43 years later, we read, "the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary," which is a clear reference to the Roman invasion in 70 AD. But bear in mind all of this occurred before the final seventieth week as revealed in verse 27 that we're going to get to. Back to the end of verse 26, God then reveals what will happen after the fall of Jerusalem. He says, "And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined." A more literal rendering "and the end of it will be in the overflowing and unto the end there will be war, a strict determination of desolations," or you might say, "the determined amount of desolation."

Now, dear friends, these are undeniable parallels of Jesus' prophecies in Matthew 24:7-22 where he describes the entire intervening period before that final seventieth week judgment. Now, when we examine the content of verse 27 along with other parallel prophecies, we must conclude that many years are going to transpire before verse 27, and we ultimately discover that the seventieth week occurs just prior to Christ's second coming therefore there is going to be a long period of what Jesus described as war and desolation and what Daniel described in verse 26, I should say. And of course, that has been the fate of the covenant people down through millennia and that's going to happen even through that seventieth week until the kingdom is ushered in.

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But then notice the events of this seventieth week and this is where I ultimately want to take you. All of that is kind of introduction so you can see where Daniel is going here and what the Lord Jesus was referring to and what Paul is describing. In verse 27, we read, "And he," stop right there. Who is the "he"? Who is this? Well, the Hebrew grammar requires that the subject of the verb be linked to the last eligible antecedent and namely that would be "the prince" in verse 26, the ruler of the Roman people who destroyed Jerusalem. But because of these events described at the end of verse 26 and those described in verse 27 and other parallel passages, we can see that this can't be referring to what happened in AD 70 under that Roman ruler when Jerusalem was destroyed. So it's reasonable to assume that this is referring to another ruler of a Roman Empire and this, we understand, can be linked to what Daniel said in chapter 2 regarding the ten-horned beast, the antichrist. Now, as we come to, for example, Daniel 7:24, we learn that the antichrist is one day going to rule a massive kingdom that will basically comprise the old Roman Empire, a Western confederacy of a revived, unified Europe that Daniel describes as a ten nation empire and we read some of that earlier in our Scripture reading.

So then we come back to Daniel 9:27. Again he says, "And he," referring to this antichrist, "will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." So 69 weeks of judgment have elapsed, 483 years from the decree of Artaxerxes to the crucifixion of Christ, but there is one more week left. One more week has been decreed and it is that last week that we see here in Daniel 9:27 that Jesus is referring to as frankly the prophetic template that we are to use to determine the chronological sequence of what Jesus calls the beginning of birth pangs in Matthew 24, Mark 13. And I might also add that all of this perfectly corresponds with the seal judgments of Revelation 4 through 6.

If I can digress for a moment, in Revelation 6:2 we have the first seal judgment, it will be an era of unparalleled peace, world peace, but it's going to be a great hoax; it's going to be the calm before the storm. We read that this leader will come on "a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow." Notice there is a bow with no arrows implying there will be a diplomatic not a military defeat; a peace that is sealed, we know, by a covenant, not by war. "And," he says, "a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer," and so forth. And this is just a picture of the antichrist, the one who will come to conquer the world in a bloodless triumph.

So then with this in mind when we come back to Daniel 9:27, we read that this antichrist is going to "make a firm covenant with the many for one week," in other words, for seven

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years, "but in the middle of the week," or after 3 ½ years, it says, "he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering." Now obviously this means there has to be a Jewish temple. We don't have one right now, right? We don't have one. We've got the Islamic temple, the Dome of the Rock. But we know that plans are in place to build this temple. They say that they could build it in less than one year and the plans are magnificent. I can take you onto the internet and you can walk through and see what they've got planned. I've been to the Temple Institute in Jerusalem. I've seen the multi-million dollar furnishings that they have made; the priestly garments that they have made; the sacred vessels and on and on and on. So there is going to be a temple, the antichrist is going to come along and he's going to demand that that worship that was occurring in the temple is going to be stopped.

So again at the end of Daniel 9:27, "and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." So in the middle of the week, 3 ½ years, this satanically possessed antichrist will seize the temple; he will betray the Jews; he will demand to be worshiped like his forerunner, Antiochus Epiphanes; and he will be allowed to do this for 42 months according to Revelation 13:5, the last half of the seven years.

Now, this wicked fiend is also pictured in Revelation 13. He's the beast that comes up out of the sea, it says, and he "was given a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him." Verses 7 and following, "It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain."

Now, we have to ask: what will he do that is so utterly abhorrent to God? Well, the answer is in our text this morning in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. This "the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, is going to take his seat in the temple of God and display himself as being God." Now, we know as we look at Scripture that Satan has always wanted to be worshiped and this is why he is so determined to deceive through false teachers and so forth; he is the father of lies. And if we look at 2 Thessalonians 2:9, getting ahead of ourselves a bit, notice that he is described as, "the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." And the grammar indicates that this detestable thing standing in the holy place will be some kind of permanent image, probably that of the antichrist displayed in the temple.

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# Anticipating the End of the Age

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5  
**Preached on:** Sunday, June 12, 2016

So, folks, this is the abomination of desolation to which Jesus referred in Matthew 24 and this is what Paul is referring to in our text this morning as "the apostasy" associated with the man of lawlessness that must come first before the final day of the Lord. So he's saying, "Folks, this has to happen first. It hasn't happened yet so you're not living in the day of the Lord."

My friend, David Larson, in his great book "Jews, Gentiles and the Church," says this, quote, "The stage for the beast and his religious cohort, the false prophet, is the tribulation period, the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world, Revelation 3:1. Or the time of 'messianic woes' as the Jews have spoken of them. In this time frame, certain gigantic collectivism will arise to form the driving wedge of Satan's massive effort to frustrate God's purpose. Problems on earth seem insurmountable. No human leadership seems competent to address the complexity of the issues. A demographic explosion with moral, social, economic, ecological and political ramifications baffles the think-tanks of the world. Humankind's vaunted self-sufficiency evaporates in the face of insoluble questions. The church, notwithstanding her frequent impotence and perennial failure, is now gone and the salt and light she has afforded are missing. Homo sapiens are adrift, rudderless. Nature abhors a vacuum, the old adage has it," as he goes on to say, "The Scriptures depict a brilliant charismatic personality, a demagogue of the first order, striding dramatically onto the stage of human history. It is George Orwell's '1984' and Aldus Huxley's 'Brave New World.' So desperate is the human race for solutions and answers that freedom easily becomes a casualty in the panic for security. As the late Paul-Henri Spaak, a prominent Belgian diplomat and astute European strategist put it so boldly, 'We do not want another committee, we have too many already. What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man, be he god or devil, we will receive him.'" How frightening and how true.

Now, there is much speculation about who this man will be, where he will come from, but that's all it is, it is speculation. We know some about his character from some of what we've read this morning. We could add what Daniel said in his description of the antichrist in Daniel 11:37. There we will learn that, "He will have no desire for nor interest in women," which probably means he will be a homosexual or at least heterosexually celibate. Because of this and so many other things that describes this man, not to mention his power over this massive ecumenical church and setting himself up as an object of worship, some believe that this will be a Roman Catholic pope, but we don't know; certainly they call him the Holy Father and many people worship him right now.

But what is fascinating and I want to conclude with these thoughts, the biblical descriptions of the person and the work of the antichrist are precisely how the Muslims

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describe their redeemer in the Koran and the sunna, sometimes called the hadith, which are words and practices spoken by Mohammed, oral traditions and so forth. And what's fascinating is the Christian Jesus, our Jesus is their antichrist. Another satanic counterfeit. Yes, Muslims believe in Jesus just not the Jesus of the Bible, alright? The Muslim Jesus plays a very crucial role in their eschatology. They teach that Jesus was not the second member of the Triune Godhead, that he was not the Son of God, but that he was merely a man. He did not die. He went to heaven like Elijah so he didn't provide an atonement so he's in heaven right now sitting alongside Allah, waiting for Allah to send him back. And why will Allah send him back? Well, according to them to correct all of the Christians who have misunderstood the truth and believed a lie. They say that he will come back, he will get married, he will have children, he will die and be buried next to Mohammed.

And in Islamic eschatology, there are three things that I think are very revealing, three great signs that surround certain men in their scheme of things at the end of history. First of all, is their Mahdi, the redeemer of Islam, sometimes called the twelfth Imam. He's going to come and slaughter all who will not worship Allah. They say that he will establish the everlasting world dominating kingdom of Islam, the final Caliphate. He will have an army. They will carry black flags and there will be one word in Arabic on those flags: punishment. And today the Iranian army and ISIS carries that black flag of Islamic jihad. They claim that the Mahdi's ascendancy to power will be preceded by an army from the East that will be carrying these black flags, these banners of war, and in the hadith there's an indication that these black flags will come from an area of Khorasan and that will signify that the appearance of the Mahdi is at hand and Khorasan, that place is in today's Iran and some scholars have said that this hadith means that when the black flags appear from central Asia, that is in the direction of Khorasan, then the appearance of the Mahdi is imminent.

They tell us according to their eschatology that this Mahdi is going to make a peace agreement with Israel and the West for seven years. Isn't that interesting? He will reign and his reign will last seven years. They say that he's going to come riding on a white horse which, by the way, is exactly how the antichrist, our antichrist in Revelation 6 is going to come. And according to their sources, he will be loved by all of the people but he's going to massacre the Jews. He's going to establish his rule on the Temple Mount and he will discover there on the Temple Mount hidden scriptures in the Torah that will show that we are all wrong. And of course, as you look at their description of the Mahdi, it fits perfectly in the description of the biblical antichrist.

But, secondly, they speak of Jesus who will also return as a prophet. Bear in mind now, the Mahdi is greater than Jesus but he is going to return as a radical Muslim. He is going to arrive in a minaret near Damascus and he's going to help the Mahdi prove that the

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Christians and the Jews were all wrong. He will worship and serve the Mahdi. He will establish sharia law. He will "shatter crosses," which means destroy Christianity. He's going to refute all of the truths of the Gospel, all of the truths of the person and the work of Christ, and he will kill the Islamic antichrist which is the true Jesus that we worship, and then he will die and be buried by Mohammed. So biblically all that the Muslim Jesus is and does parallels the work of the false prophet we read about in Revelation 13, Revelation 16, Revelation 19, the beast coming up out of the earth. Not out of the sea, that's the antichrist, but coming up out of the earth. By the way, Satan is a master counterfeiter and you folks must realize that. He's got a triune godhead just like the true God has a Triune Godhead. Satan is the father, as we look at it, the antichrist is the son, and the false prophet is the holy spirit. So he counterfeits all of this.

And finally, the true Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior, is called the Dajjal. He is the great deceiver. This is their antichrist. They say he's going to be blind in one eye. He's going to return on a mule. He'll be an infidel, a false miracle worker who claims to be Jesus, the Son of God, and he will attempt to stop the Mahdi and the Islamic Jesus who will come together and slaughter him. You might say, "Do you mean to tell me that you're saying that some day the United States could be under the authority of the black flag of Islam?" Well, I don't know but I think there's a high probability. I mean, what's this place going to be like when all of the saints are snatched away? I mean, we already see what's happening in Europe and we see the way so many people in our country and our leaders are so sympathetic to Islam and God has warned us that just before Christ returns, Israel will be surrounded. Zechariah 12:3, "all the nations of the earth will be gathered against Jerusalem." All includes the United States.

So in summary because I know some of you may be a bit confused if this is new to you, what we await right now is the great snatching away of the church and at that point, God will once again deal with his covenant people, Israel, as he has promised in Daniel's seventieth week. The antichrist will then appear. He will offer a phony peace plan to the world and protection to Israel, and after 3 ½ years, he will betray them. He will demand to be worshiped. That will be the abomination that brings about desolation resulting in unprecedented desolation through the last half of the tribulation as Satan tries to destroy Israel through the antichrist and his vast armies. Jeremiah describes this in Jeremiah 30 as the time of Jacob's trouble. It's not the time of the church's trouble, the church has been taken away. It's the time of Jacob's trouble. And then in the moment of their greatest peril, the Messiah King, the Lord Jesus Christ, is going to appear in all of his glory as he has promised and he will crush Satan. Israel will repent. They will be reconciled to Jehovah God. They will be restored to their Promised Land the the Lord Jesus Christ will establish his kingdom upon the earth for a thousand years which will be the consummating bridge between human history and the eternal state.

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Beloved, let me remind you that God is not finished with Israel. Even though today they exist in unbelief, he has not finished with them. The church has not replaced Israel. Isaiah 62:11, the prophet says, "Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Lo, your salvation comes; Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.' And they will call them, 'The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD'; And you will be called, 'Sought out, a city not forsaken.'" World leaders today simply cannot understand why the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is the most disputed piece of real estate in all of the world and the reason they don't understand this is because according to Scripture, there is going to be a Jewish temple that will be built on that particular Temple Mount, and that Temple Mount is today the epicenter of two opposing kingdoms: Satan's kingdom and God's kingdom. We see this all through Bible prophecy and, folks, what is absolutely unfathomable to me is that because of God's great love and grace for me and for you, he has made us a part of that kingdom and some day we are going to see him glorified when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord.

So may I challenge you, get serious about living for the Lord of glory because he is coming and there is every reason as we look at the constellation of prophetic signs, there is every reason to believe that he could come and snatch us away at any moment. You know, set aside all of your screens and all of the silly things that you waste your time on and start focusing upon what is real. Immerse yourself in the word of God. Learn the word of God. Meditate upon it. Live it out. Get involved in the church. Get involved in small groups. Get involved in discipleship. You need to be equipped. You need to be prepared. You need to be discerning. And everything in the world contradicts what I've just said and your flesh loves all of that and not what I just said. So bear that in mind. Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out those desires of the flesh. And when you do, you will manifest the glorious fruits of the Spirit and enjoy his presence in ways that you cannot fathom. We serve a glorious God, don't we? Oh, how exciting it is.

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Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Thank you for your prophetic word that stirs our hearts, that causes us deep within our souls to just leap with joy knowing that the sufferings that we currently experience are not worthy to be compared of the glory that will be coming. And Lord, we long to see your glory. We long to see Jesus face to face. And finally, Lord, I pray if there be one within the sound of my voice that really does not know you as Savior, that just kind of plays the religious game like so many people do, O God, only you can penetrate that recalcitrant heart. I pray that you will convict them of their sin and I pray that this day, they will come running to the foot of the cross and cry out for that undeserved mercy that you will so readily grant. May this be the day that they too believe and experience the miracle of the new birth. So, Lord, we thank you and we give you praise in Jesus' name. Amen.*

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).