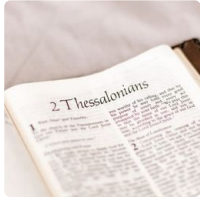


# OpenTheo

## 2 Thessalonians 1-2



### 2 Thessalonians - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg delves into the theme of thanksgiving and the endurance of tribulations within the early Christian community. Gregg explores how the church faced persecution and the need for believers to continue in faith despite suffering. The letter also touches on the concept of the day of the Lord, connecting it to the gathering of believers and the potential hindrance of the rise of the Man of Sin, seen by some as the Antichrist. Overall, the teachings in 2 Thessalonians encourage believers to remain steadfast in their faith amidst trials and to rely on the grace of God.

### Transcript

Okay, we come now to 2 Thessalonians, and we will take this book in two sessions. It's three chapters long, and as such it may seem like it has, you know, it may seem like a book of reasonably good size, being three chapters long, but they're all short chapters, and the total number of verses in the book of 2 Thessalonians is actually fewer than the single longest chapter in 1 Corinthians, which, in fact, the whole book of 2 Thessalonians has ten verses fewer than 1 Corinthians 15 has. So, even though we're looking at a book that's divided into three chapters, we're really looking at material that could be expected to take as long as a very long chapter in some other books of the Bible.

There are many, for instance, many chapters in the book of Genesis that are longer than the entire book of 2 Thessalonians. Like 1 Thessalonians, it is largely taken up with the subject of the coming of Christ, or at least so it appears. There's not too much that needs to be said by way of introduction to 2 Thessalonians that has not already been said of 1 Thessalonians.

Scholars are fairly in agreement that it was written a very short time after the first epistle. We know that the first epistle was written from Corinth, and we know the background of Paul's visits to Thessalonica, his later trips to Berea, Athens, and then over to Corinth, where he remained for 18 months. And it was during that 18 months in Corinth, apparently, that he wrote both of the epistles.

So, at least as near as we can determine, there'd be some unknown number of months,

but measurable in months, not years, between the first and second epistles. Now, that means this was probably around 51 or 52 AD that this epistle had been written. There were three principal problems in the church of Thessalonica when Paul wrote his first epistle.

He was concerned, it would seem, first of all, about immorality, a problem that existed in Greek churches probably most of the time. We saw there was a tremendous problem in that area, or we shall say, I should say, in that area. In 1 Corinthians, there was immorality in the church, another Greek church.

However, Paul addressed the subject of immorality in 1 Thessalonians, and he does not find it necessary to address it again in 2 Thessalonians. We find no reference to that problem, and it would seem that the first epistle and its comments about this subject were sufficient to bring about correction and adjustment in the moral lives of the Thessalonian Christians. So, at least one of the three problems that existed when Paul wrote the first epistle seems to have been solved, or no longer a serious matter, by the time the second epistle was written.

The other two problems that existed in Thessalonica and the church at the time Paul wrote the first epistle were the problem of a misunderstanding or inadequate understanding of the Second Community of Christ, on the one hand, and the third would be problems with laziness or, for some reason, people refusing to do their share of the work. No doubt there was some kind of a community of goods. It might not have been a common first community, but Christians, being generous, sharing people as they are, would not usually allow one of their needy members to go without, and those who would have would tend to share with those who were poor, and some people were taking advantage of this, and allowing themselves to be deliberately poor and living at the mercy and the generosity of those who were working.

And in 1 Thessalonians 4, in verse 11, Paul had said that he wanted them to learn to aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind their own business, to work with your hands as we commanded you. He only has made a passing reference in 1 Thessalonians to the need for them to be quiet and work with their hands, but by the time he wrote 2 Thessalonians, this problem had not been remedied, and if anything it needed a stronger word. Now whether the problem had escalated, or whether it simply had not improved sufficiently, and Paul felt like he had to say, read my lips, you know, I thought I'd mentioned this before, but if he didn't get it that time, I'll make it very, very clear.

We can see that that was the leading, well, one of the leading problems in Thessalonica at the time he wrote the 2nd Epistle. He devotes the better part of chapter 3 of 2 Thessalonians to the discussion of that problem and what to do about it. He actually advocates church discipline of those that will not work, and he advocates not feeding them, not giving them anything in their need if they are simply refusing to work.

I do not expect to come to that chapter in our study today, that's the third chapter of 2 Thessalonians and should probably be covered tomorrow. The first and second chapters, which I do hope to cover today, of 2 Thessalonians, deal with the question of the second coming of Christ. There was some inadequacy in the Thessalonians' understanding of the second coming of Christ when Paul wrote the 1st Epistle.

He devoted the latter part of chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians and a good portion of chapter 5 to the subject of clarifying what the fate would be of those who had died, particularly those who had died in the Lord, and how that they would not be at any disadvantage when Jesus came. They would rise first before we who remained alive until his coming were caught up to meet the Lord in the air. He also went on to talk about further matters of the unexpectedness, the unheralded nature of the second coming of Christ in 1 Thessalonians 5. Well, in 2 Thessalonians, it would appear by the information in chapter 2 that some had felt that maybe the day of the Lord had already come.

And exactly why they would have gotten this impression, we really don't know. We don't know that there was persecution of the church going on. And some have felt that the persecution of the church is what they expected to immediately precede or even accompany the day of the Lord.

It's not really clear if that is the reason that they were saying this, but Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians to point out that the day of the Lord cannot have yet come because there are certain things that must happen first, namely what he calls the apostasy and the appearance of someone named the man of sin. And we will deal with those passages in some length today, I believe. So, the main features of the church in Thessalonica at the time that this 2 Thessalonians were written were, one, that persecution was continuing, that we saw existed in 1 Thessalonians, that persecution was still going on, perhaps even intensifying.

The church apparently was remaining strong in general in the face of persecution, as was the case in 1 Thessalonians. You might recall that the first three chapters of 1 Thessalonians are talking about how Paul had been so concerned that this infant church, left without an apostolic overseer, and facing tremendous persecution, which we know from the book of Acts was coming from the Jewish segment of the city, that this church would have been destroyed. But in 2 Thessalonians he tells how he had sent Timothy and received a report back and found out that they were doing very well and he was very encouraged.

So the first three chapters of 1 Thessalonians give us that background. In 2 Thessalonians we have, again, references to their suffering, and so we shall get right into that. And then we'll find also references to a need to clarify a mistaken notion about the second coming of Christ, and also in chapter 3 we shall find the treatment of what to do about those who are refusing to work.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Silvanus is a form of Silas, a longer form of the name Silas. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were the main participants in the second missionary journey where Paul had visited Thessalonica.

Actually, when Paul and Silas and Timothy went into Greece, initially they had Luke with them, but when they went into Philippi, their first stop in Greece, and were persecuted and driven out of that city, they left Luke there, apparently to oversee the church, and it was just the three companions, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, that went on to Thessalonica. So the Thessalonians had never met Luke, in all likelihood. And of course, in the interim, Paul had left Silas, apparently in Berea, and had gone with Timothy down to Athens.

Then from Athens he had sent Timothy back to check on the Thessalonians, and while Timothy was away checking on the Thessalonians, Paul had made his way over to Corinth, and in chapter 18 of Acts we read of Timothy and Silas rejoining Paul in Corinth. And now, of course, at the time of the writing of the letter, Paul, Silas, and Timothy are regathered in Corinth, and sending this letter as a joint project. To the Church of the Thessalonians, and God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

This greeting, Grace to you and peace, is one that we could comment on every time we come across it, but we come across it so frequently, I don't think we need to say anything more about it than usual. In fact, less than usual. We've said enough about it on previous occasions, I think.

Verse 3, We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is a manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer, since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he comes in that day to be glorified in all his saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. All that is just two sentences.

Paul has some lengthy sentences, this one is certainly not as long as, but it was hard to find a stopping point after you start in verse 3, you really don't take a breath until the end of verse 8. He begins by saying we are bound to give thanks for you, which speaks obviously of some kind of an obligation to be thankful. In chapter 2 verse 13 he says the same thing. Chapter 2 verse 13 he says, but we are bound to give thanks to God always

for you.

Bound means duty bound, under obligation. And it's not as if Paul is grudgingly doing this, as though he really is not inclined to give thanks, but he must because he's got an obligation to do it. But he's emphasizing the fact that the things that God has done, he's showing his faithfulness and preserving the church in the midst of very harsh persecution.

Though the church was young and had had very little opportunity to really get on his feet before this persecution broke out, is something that is such goodness on the part of God. It really shows his faithfulness so much that one would be remiss, one would be negligent, one would be neglecting a duty to God if they did not give thanks. We have to realize that thankfulness to God is an obligation that we owe.

This is something that we often don't remember and it is something that probably causes a deficiency in our Christian victory when we don't remember this. We often only think to thank God when we're feeling thankful and even then we sometimes forget to thank God. We sometimes will be thankful to people or be thankful to whatever, our lucky stars or something, without really realizing that every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from above and is from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variability or shadow turning.

It says in Romans chapter 1 that one of the first defects of those that go down the tubes, and if you're familiar with Romans 1 you know what I mean by going down the tubes, he speaks of this downward spiral to getting down to the place of reprobation of people who have rejected the knowledge of God. One of the first steps down into a total reprobate status is the refusal to be thankful. It says in verse 21 of Romans 1, because although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, neither were they thankful.

But they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. And then it goes on, professing to be wise, they became fools and they changed to glory. And it goes on.

They knew God, but they refused to glorify him or to be thankful. Paul implies that it's only common decency if you know God and if you realize that he's the one from whom we receive every good thing, that you should be thankful. But their first choice was not to thank God, but to put God out of their minds.

When Jesus healed ten lepers, you might recall that only one, a Samaritan, came back to thanking for it. And Jesus didn't say, oh you know it's heartwarming to see you show this kind of thankfulness, I mean, I really want to commend you for that. No, Jesus said, where are the other nine? I thought I healed ten of them.

How come only one has come back to say thank you? As if the others were defaulting on

an obligation. You know, thankfulness is a spiritual therapeutic. And a person who is habitually thankful will never become bitter and will never cease to have victory in the life.

In fact, there's some indication, I think, that they will never cease to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In 1 Thessalonians 5, in verse 18, Paul says, In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Now, it is the will of God in Christ Jesus that you give thanks in everything.

Whenever you do not give thanks, you are in violation of the will of God. You are refusing to do the will of God when you do not give thanks. When something just seems to you not something that you can thank God for.

And yet the Bible is saying, as it does, that all things work together for good. To those who love God, who are called according to His purpose, means that we should be able, by faith, to give thanks for even adversity and afflictions because we know that they shall work together for our good, if we really believe that. And if we don't believe it, then of course we won't want to give thanks.

Giving thanks in everything, including adversity, is a mark of our faith that God's promises are true and that even these things which we would not naturally be thankful for can be embraced and we can be grateful for them. Because we know that nothing happens to us but that God has a purpose in it. I mentioned that there's some evidence that one will remain filled with the Spirit if they are continually thankful.

I get this idea from Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5, and verse 18-20, says, It says, And you may have heard, be filled, the Greek is an imperfect tense between be being filled or just continually be filled. It is not telling them to get filled with the Spirit. They already were Spirit-filled believers.

He has mentioned that earlier in chapter 1. He is urging them to remain filled, to maintain a fullness of the Spirit in their lives, which apparently is not inevitable. But how does one remain filled? How does one be being filled with the Spirit? Well, he gives some answers to that. Verse 19, Notice verse 20, Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So part of being being filled, part of being being filled with the Spirit is to be giving thanks in everything to God for everything. So thankfulness is an obligation. It is also something that keeps your spirit and your mind healthy.

You know, it is said that a healthy mind tends to forget negative experiences and to recall positive experiences. Whereas, one of the marks that a mind is not as healthy as it should be is when there is a very clear and deliberate retention of hurts and pains and negative experiences and a tendency to forget good things. And I am no psychologist, so

I really couldn't say for sure.

I haven't done clinical studies to find out if this is true. It certainly seems true in the cases I have known, limited as they are, that the people who are cantankerous and bitter do not seem to me to be at least spiritually healthy. And I suppose not emotionally or whatever healthy either.

They tend to be always forgetting the good things people have done for them, but never allowing themselves to forget the hurts and the wrongs that have been done to them. And it is a mark of spiritual healthiness that one chooses to retain in their memory those things that were positive. Those things that God has done for which we can be thankful.

It is a deliberate choice to thank God. And though there are times when we are very disappointed by a turn of events, our circumstances are the exact opposite of what we were hoping they would be, yet, because we see God as sovereign in all things, we can, by faith, thank him for the circumstance. And by the way, although this is more of a humanistic than a spiritual way to deal with this, sometimes it's helpful to remember that no matter how bad your circumstances are, there's always someone who's got it far worse than you do, and you've really got it better than you deserve.

You know the old saying, I complained that I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet. You know, there's really always someone that's worse off than you, and there's never any excuse whatsoever for being unthankful. If you can't be real thankful for your present circumstances, then thank God that you're not blind or deaf or crippled or paralyzed from the neck down, as many people are who are rejoicing in the Lord right at this moment.

If you can't rejoice in God, you are in very poor spiritual condition. If you cannot thank God for the things that you owe him thanks for, Paul said, we are bound to give thanks. Twice he says it here.

So, you know, I said that, and I would repeat, thankfulness is a spiritual therapeutic. Paul said that we remain filled with the Holy Spirit, partially at least, by giving thanks and everything. And we know from another passage in Timothy, what Paul wrote to Timothy, that the spirit that we have received is a spirit of, among other things, a sound mind.

We have not received the spirit of fear, but of love and of power and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy, I think, 1. Now, the spirit of God gives us a sound mind, but only if we're filled with the spirit. If you are thankful in all things, that will contribute to your being being filled with the Holy Spirit, and one of the results will be a sound mind.

A person who is bitter and cantankerous and unforgiving is going to have many emotional and mental and spiritual disorders, and will not have a sound mind, but one of the therapies, one of the remedies for that is to repent of unthankfulness and to begin to

give thanks in everything. And Paul has been thwarted, as he writes these epistles, he's been thwarted in his many attempts to go back to Thessalonica. He has wanted to go back.

He said so in chapter 2 of the previous epistle, all that, to them. And he said Satan has resisted him, Satan has prevented him, things have not changed sufficiently in that city to allow him to safely go back. This is a tremendous disappointment for him.

This is not what he would wish, but he nonetheless is bound to be thankful. Because he sees that even though what he would first and foremost desire with reference to the church, that is that he could visit it, cannot materialize at this time. Yet God is in control and God is faithfully taking care of the church.

And so he says I'm bound to give thanks to God always for you brethren for it is fitting. It's only right that I should. Because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.

Faith and love is on the increase in that church. We know from 1 Corinthians 13 that those are two of the three things that are most important. We are bound by these three, faith, hope and love.

The greatest is love. And we found back in 1 Thessalonians 1.3, 1 Thessalonians 1.3, Paul is talking about the state of that church. He said remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope.

Now faith, hope and love were in evidence in their church. In chapter 1 of 2 Thessalonians, our present passage in verse 3, he mentions again their love and their faith. He does not mention their hope in this place, but he does in the next, the patience of hope, which he mentioned in 1 Thessalonians.

He mentions in our next verse, verse 4 here. Although no mention of hope, he does mention their patience, which is a connection to their hope. So they are increasing in these things, despite or perhaps because of the persecution.

So that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure. Now the church endures persecutions and tribulations. Persecution is specifically opposition received for the position that they take as Christians.

Hostile opposition from the enemies of the gospel. Tribulations is, well, a little more general term. Certainly persecution is a part of those tribulations, but tribulation is a general term for afflictions or, you know, just raw circumstances.

Biblically the Bible teaches that we can expect tribulations. Jesus said, in the world you will have tribulations, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world in John 16, 33.



In 1 Thessalonians, Paul indicated that it was part of his regular teaching to them when he first met them, that they should expect to endure afflictions and tribulations.

This he said in 1 Thessalonians 3, 3 and 4. Particularly in verse 4 where he says, For in fact we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation. Just as it happened, and you know, back in 1 Thessalonians 1, 6. 1 Thessalonians 1, 6 says, And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction. This word affliction is the same Greek word as is translated tribulation in these other passages.

For some reason the translators have preferred not to translate it as tribulation. It's the same Greek word. So he says, it could be rendered, You have received the word in much tribulation.

The same word tribulation is used by Jesus in Matthew 24, 21. Matthew 24, 21. Where Jesus said, then shall be great tribulation.

We know that many interpreters have taken Jesus' words to refer to a specific period of tribulation. As if it were a reference to, as if it was a technical term, the great tribulation. But Jesus simply said in Matthew 24, 21, Then shall be great tribulation.

Now I would think that there's not anything significantly different between the expression great tribulation in Jesus' statement there in Matthew 24, 21. And much tribulation, which is found in 1 Thessalonians 1, 6, where the Christians there received the word in much tribulation. Can anyone tell me the difference between much tribulation and great tribulation? To me they would seem to be synonymous.

And yet, some interpreters have felt that when Jesus spoke of great tribulation, he must be describing something that Christians should never be expected to have to endure. Christians certainly can't be expected to be here for great tribulation, or the great tribulation, as they say. And yet, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 1, 6, that they have received the word in much tribulation.

Seems to me rather equivalent to great tribulation. But anyway, just to put the word tribulation in perspective, it is never used in the Bible of a particular period of time. There's at least no place in the Bible that speaks of a tribulation of a given period of time, except in Revelation 2.10, where the church of Smyrna, which is a persecuted church, is told that the devil will throw some of them into prison, and it says, and you shall have tribulation ten days, which is almost certainly a symbolic statement, although it could be literal.

But Revelation 2.10 speaks of, you shall have tribulation ten days, the only period of tribulation ever designated as having a time length in the Bible. Although, as you know, some would associate the word tribulation with a seven year period. They would do this

by identifying it with the 70th week of Daniel, perhaps in Daniel 9, but I don't believe that's a valid thing to do.

Anyway, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1.4 that these Christians endure much persecution and tribulations. Then he says in verse 5, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God. Now, that doesn't seem to be such manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God.

When good people are suffering, is that an obvious... what he's saying is this is an obvious proof of God's justice, an obvious proof of God's righteousness. Most people see it just the opposite. While some people are willing to say God may be righteous in spite of the fact that good people suffer, but we don't know how God can be righteous in that because it seems strange to us that he would allow it to happen.

Paul sees the suffering of Christians as a proof of God's justice. Obviously, he sees things very differently than other people do, and probably it's because he knows, as he says in a number of places, including this epistle, that suffering is the path to glory. Suffering is the path to exaltation.

Suffering is the means into the kingdom of God. And nobody has gotten into glory without suffering, including Jesus. And the fact is you are righteous people, and the fact that God is allowing you to suffer means he's allowed you to walk the path to glory.

He's got glory ahead for you. And that your persecutors presently are prospering also should not be construed as a mark of God's favor, because prosperity in the world is not any indicator of whether a person is pleasing to God or not. Some godly people have prospered.

Some have been poor. Some wicked people have been poor. Many wicked people have prospered.

You cannot judge from a person's level of prosperity whether they are godly or not. But Paul is saying that God's righteous judgment is seen partly in that he has allowed you, who have taken a stand for him, the privilege of suffering for his namesake, and suffering as a part of your coming into the glory of Christ, which he speaks of a little later in chapter 2. He also indicates that the righteous judgment of God will be more evident in the final analysis when God rights all wrongs. And he gets into that in verse 6 in a moment.

We aren't there yet. But verse 5 says, "...which is a manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you suffer." The kingdom of God for which you suffer. Now, this could mean you are suffering because of your participation in the kingdom of God.

You are suffering on behalf of the kingdom of God. That is, there is a conflict and a war

between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. And your loyalty to the kingdom of God is putting you into the battle, and the battle is going in terms of physical victories on the side of the other side.

Of course, it is when the church is suffering most that she is beginning to exhibit the glory the most also. So that which looks like a loss from the worldly point of view is a gain from the spiritual point of view. But he says you are suffering.

It could mean on behalf of the kingdom of God. Or he could be saying you are suffering in order to enter the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God for which you suffer.

Because he said to the churches of his first missionary journey in Acts 14.22, he said, "...through much tribulation we enter the kingdom of God." Acts 14.22. So he could mean you are suffering in order to obtain or to enter the kingdom of God. That you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer. Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you.

This is sort of the eye for an eye, tooth for tooth. God's righteous judgment never is thwarted ultimately. Eventually he sets all the scales right.

At the moment the unrighteous seem to be prevailing but God will repay them with tribulation. Therefore not tribulation upon you as it were, verse 4 suggests. And the same tribulation will come out upon them when God turns the tables.

It's a righteous or just thing with God to repay with tribulation those who are troubling you now. And to give you who are troubled rest with us. "...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flame and fire and so forth." Now, I really don't like to get polemical unnecessarily with reference to the rapture and when it takes place.

Because it is so controversial among Christians these days. I don't really like to stir up arguments and it's not that important in my opinion. What a person understands to be the timing of the rapture.

But as you know I do not believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. And the reason I don't is because I don't believe the Bible teaches one anywhere. This passage in particular seems to preclude it.

Because he speaks of the time in which we will enter rest. Certainly whenever we leave this world and go into the presence of Jesus Christ will be the cessation of our toils. We will enter into rest at the time of the rapture.

The word rest there in the Greek actually literally used to be used in the Greek language for the loosening of a taut bow string. On a bow when you take the bow off, the string off, the string was under tension and then it's slack. It's at rest.

And so the word in the Greek means a release from or relief from tension or from stress. Certainly that relief from all stress and from all tension only happens when our job is done. Just like a man only takes the bow string off of his bow after the battle is over.

And our rest, our relief from tension takes place at the rapture. How can anyone imagine that tension continues in our lives after that point? And yet what is that? What is this rest? What is this? When does the rapture take place? It says he's going to give you who are troubled now rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God.

Now the question of whether the second coming of Christ is in two stages or one is really the issue when it comes to the question of is the rapture before or after some future tribulation. Because historically Christians have always believed as Paul said in 1st Thessalonians 4 that the rapture takes place at the parousia or at the second coming of Christ. But the dispensational view is that the rapture comes actually earlier than that, seven years earlier and that the second coming of Christ is therefore in two stages.

The first is called the rapture where the church is taken up and the second is called the revelation of Christ where Jesus comes down visibly to judge the world. Now here Paul seems to place the point at which the Christian enters into rest which has got to be the rapture. Certainly couldn't be any later than that.

He identifies it with the time when Jesus comes to earth visibly with his angels to destroy the world. What the dispensationalists would call the revelation. That is the ultimate visible coming of Christ.

Paul says that's when we look forward to being at rest. Now Paul nowhere directly addresses the question of a future seven year tribulation. Never even speaks of it in his writings.

Therefore we don't find him directly addressing the question of whether there is a rapture before a seven year tribulation. But his obvious theology and the presuppositions that he expected his readers also had was that our relief, our removal from the toils and the stress of this world happens when Jesus comes back to judge the world. In flaming fire, destroying the wicked with his mighty angels.

So certainly Paul's view of the rapture is that it takes place at the same time as the visible coming of Christ to earth. Not at some point seven years previous. Now in the middle of verse seven where it says, When the Lord Jesus is revealed and it goes on, from that point to the end of verse ten, in the Greek is a very rhythmical passage.

And it is believed by many scholars that Paul is actually quoting an ancient hymn or a psalm or something. Because it's written almost with a poetic rhythm. And there are points in Paul's writings, particularly you find it in his epistles to Timothy, where he

quotes known hymns of the early church.

An example of that is 1 Timothy 3, verse 16. If you look there you'll notice that verse 16, at least most of it, is typeset into a verse form that is poetic form because it is recognized that this statement, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed in the world, received after glory. So Paul is certainly a quotation of a hymn sung by the early church.

There are other cases like that where Paul seems to quote from known hymns of the early church. And some feel that in the middle of verse seven here, in 2 Thessalonians 1, 7 through verse 10, that Paul is doing something like that. That he's quoting a hymn of the second coming that was perhaps sung or recited or chanted by the early church.

And he's just now incorporating it into his sentence to connect with something very familiar to the readers. One says, That doesn't sound to you like anybody who is not a Christian is going to survive the second coming. Doesn't sound like it to me.

There are some who believe that non-Christians will survive the second coming and go into a millennial reign of Christ. But here it indicates that when Jesus comes, it will be with devastating flames of fire, destroying those who are his enemies, those who have not believed the gospel. And probably those who know not God is particularly a reference to those who have chosen not to know God.

Although we can't be certain of that. In 2 Peter, we have another reference to this fiery coming of Jesus. 2 Peter 3, verse 10.

2 Peter 3, verse 10. The coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. So when Jesus comes back, the earth is going to be burned up.

He's going to come in flaming fire. This is very possibly one of the reasons why he's going to take us up to meet him in the air before he gets here. Because the earth and all who are on it are going to be incinerated at his coming.

And only those who have been caught up to meet him in the air will apparently escape that burning. This is likened by Jesus in Luke 17 to what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. Remember when Jesus said, as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man? In Luke 17.

Let me just grab this little segment here. Verse 28. Luke 17, 28.

Jesus says, Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot, they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

I've told you before that some have thought this is a reference to the church being raptured before a seven year tribulation. But it seems much more reasonable that if Lot represents the rapture at all, or the church is getting out of the way so that God can burn things. There's no reference here to a seven year tribulation, but simply fire from heaven.

It's like that. It's like what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. Did that last seven years? It was an instant toast.

And so this is the thing that the coming of Jesus is said to be like. Jesus said that's what it will be like in the day that the Son of Man is revealed. Like when Sodom got burned up.

And so Paul, no doubt, takes up his language partly from there when he says Jesus will be revealed with flaming fire. The idea of being revealed, the word revealed is right there in Jesus' own statement. When Jesus said in verse 29, Matthew 17, 29, On that day the Son of, well no, verse 30, Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

So also, Paul's statement in 2 Thessalonians is Jesus will be revealed from heaven with mighty angels in flaming fire. No doubt, borrowing his image, it would be partly from Jesus' statement, and partly perhaps from Isaiah 66, verse 15. Which says, Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

Now I don't know whether this is a reference or not to the second coming of Christ, because in the passage it could refer to something else, but certainly the idea of the Lord appearing with fire and rebuking and taking vengeance with fire is a biblical image from the Old Testament. We also find it in Malachi chapter 4. It says, in verse 1, For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do weakling will be stubbled. And the day which is coming will burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, and will leave them neither root nor branch.

But to you who fear my name, the Son of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings. Now the idea that the day is coming that will burn up the wicked, root and branch, certainly seems to be behind Paul's use of this imagery of Jesus coming in flame and fire, taking vengeance on those who don't know God and don't obey the Lord Jesus Christ, or don't obey the gospel. Now, verse 9, 2 Thessalonians, oh, before we go on from 2 Thessalonians 1.8, we should, I just cannot resist, should look a moment over at Revelation 20, the most controversial chapter in the Bible, as many commentators have said, and I think rightly so.

The only chapter in the Bible that speaks of a thousand year millennium, and the great controversy has always been, is this millennium, before Jesus comes back or after he comes back? And if it's before he comes back, is it a literal thousand years at the end of

the church age, or is it symbolic for the whole church age? Well, those questions we cannot answer finally right now, at least not all of them. I think we can answer one of them fairly quickly, and that is, in Revelation 20 in verse 9, it speaks of a little season at the end of this thousand year period, where Satan is loosed to take the gathered nations we see against the beloved city. It says, they went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints, which I think would be the church, and the beloved city.

And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And then it talks about the destruction of the devil, the destruction of the world, and the great resurrection and judgment. I am inclined to believe that Revelation 20 verse 9, when it speaks of fire from heaven coming down and devouring the enemies, it's the same thing as 2 Thessalonians 1.8, that when Jesus returns, he returns in fire.

That is to say, the return of Christ is figuratively described, I believe, in Revelation 20 verse 9, which would place it at the end, not the beginning of the thousand years. But we don't have time to get into that in detail now. But that's certainly worth a cross-reference.

Okay. 2 Thessalonians 1.9 Now, these, those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel, shall be punished with everlasting destruction. Now, this expression, everlasting destruction, has been held by some to speak of annihilation.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, the Seventh-day Adventists, and some evangelical Christians have held that there is no eternal hell. That rather, what the sinner can look forward to is annihilation. When Jesus comes, he'll just annihilate them.

They'll cease to exist. That is a punishment. They'll be burned up.

There's no doubt about it. No doubt it'll be a painful experience. But they will not continue to suffer, because it says they will experience eternal destruction, which, seeing one way, could sound like it means they'll just be destroyed, annihilated, and that state will be forever.

That is, they'll never be re-put together again. They'll never be brought to life again. One of the problems with this suggestion is it calls into question, you know, God's justice.

If a man like Adolf Hitler, for example, has nothing worse to look forward to than just annihilation, let's say he gets burned up, sure, it may be painful, but he got, I mean, hey, a lot of Christians have been burned up in this state, too. In other words, if there's no greater punishment for the unbeliever than to look forward to being burned up and annihilated, then the unbeliever's not going through anything worse than many Christian martyrs have gone through, because they've been burned up at the stake and even endured far worse things than that. The question comes, of course, with what is meant

by destruction.

And some commentators believe that it doesn't, well, it certainly doesn't mean annihilation, but it means ruin. That they will experience eternal ruin. And it is modified by Paul in saying, from the presence of the Lord.

That is, they are spending an eternity away from the presence of the Lord. Now, unbelievers might think, well, what's so bad about that? I've been trying to avoid God all my life. Well, the fact of the matter is that nobody in the world has ever yet been entirely away from the presence of the Lord.

David said in Psalm 137, is it 137? 139? Whether shall I flee to escape your presence? 139. You know, if I ascend into heaven, you're there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you're there.

And so forth. No one really has been able to fully get away from the presence of God. And it's lucky for them they haven't.

Because although many people spend their lives trying to resist and avoid and escape from God, yet if they could really get someplace where God isn't, they would find there's no life, there's no goodness. Every good thing, every good gift, every perfect gift comes down from above. It's a gift from God.

Even the rain and the sunshine that is enjoyed by the wicked and the unjust is a gift from God. Jesus said, God sends his rain on the just and the unjust. He sends his sunshine on the wicked and on the good.

There is no one, no matter how wicked or rebellious, who has been totally devoid of experiencing the gracious gifts of God. Even every life, every breath that we take is a gift from God. Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, you have praised the gods of silver and gold, but you have not praised the very God in whose hand your breath is.

God gives you every successive breath. And everything, there's no unbeliever in our life today who has not received many benefits from God. But if you take a person totally from the presence of God for all eternity, then none of those benefits would be no life, no warmth, no joy, no pleasure.

Only pain, only regrets, only unfulfilled desires. I don't know exactly what the nature of hell is, but Paul indicates that the main feature of it, the main thing that makes it so undesirable, is that it is eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. Of course, it could mean that the destruction issues from the presence of the Lord, but it seems to be saying that the person spends his eternity in the absence of God entirely, and from the glory of his power.

And every good thing that God has given on the earth is a manifestation of the glory of



his power. And so to be absent from that, pre-trinity, is to be in outer darkness, as other passages in the church have determined. Verse 10, when he comes in that day, to be glorified in his saints.

The glory of the Lord is going to be revealed in the church, in us. We've seen other passages like that in previous occasions. To be glorified in us, and to be admired among all those who believe.

Now, admired actually is a strange translation. The Greek word means wondered at or marveled at. Now does this mean that those who believe are going to do the wondering or the marveling? That is, when Jesus comes back, are we going to wonder and marvel at him? Maybe.

I certainly wouldn't be surprised if we did. But the way it's worded could mean that his presence and his glory among his people, among those that believe, will be something that the world marvels at, or wonders at. I'll tell you, it would certainly be a marvel if the church started behaving like Jesus.

The world would be probably faint, because they don't believe there's any goodness in the church. But Jesus prayed that the church might exhibit love and unity, so that the world might know that God has sent him. And there is some suggestion that the church has such a glorious future, that the world will be in awe, will be marveling at Jesus in us.

Now that doesn't mean that the second coming of Christ is just something that happens in us. I don't think that. I believe Jesus will appear from heaven, as Paul himself said in verse 7, that Jesus the Lord will be revealed from heaven.

But it's also the case that Peter said in 2 Peter 1:19, that we are awaiting the day star to arise, or the morning star to arise in our hearts. There's a dawning of the glory of God expected in the believers. And Paul himself speaks of it here, when Jesus comes in that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired, or wondered at, among all those who believe.

Because our testimony among you is believed. That because is kind of difficult. Some of you don't know what to do with it.

Some think that there is maybe a phrase that's dropped out of the manuscripts, and it should read something like this. Jesus to be admired among all those who believe, and therefore among you, because you also are those who believe. Because our testimony is believed by you.

Anyway, we don't know if that line is missing or what. Strange clause, because our testimony among you is believed. It's just hard to know exactly how that connects with the thought of the sentence.

Some think there's an ellipsis there, that there was a clause or a phrase that's dropped out of the manuscript somewhere. Therefore, we also pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of his calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you glorified in him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His prayer for them ultimately, is that God would, as he has called them, would count them worthy of his calling. That is, not make them worthy, but count them to be worthy. A little bit like justification means, not that we've been necessarily made entirely righteous, but that we are counted as righteous.

So he prays that God will treat them as if they were worthy of his calling, and fulfill the good pleasure of his goodness and his work of faith with power. These are good prayers to pray for yourself and for others, by the way. Sometimes, when we're praying for people, we know we should pray for so-and-so, but all we can think of is, God bless so-and-so, and bless so-and-so, and bless so-and-so.

If we try to be more specific, it's hard to think of specifically what to say about these people. You might have a long prayer list of, bless grandma, bless grandpa, and bless aunt Sue, and so forth. It's hard to think of specific petitions in some cases.

So I think that Paul's prayers are good examples to borrow from him. They certainly reflect the will of God for people, and Paul's inspired prayers here, I believe, are prayers in the will of God. So you can pray for people that God would count them worthy of his calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his will and the work of faith and power in their lives, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in them, and pray for yourselves too, and in you, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we need to get to chapter 2. Now this chapter, I don't suppose we'll get past verse 12 today in this, and we'll then take the other half of the book tomorrow if we can't. This chapter, a noted commentator, Leon Morris, said, this passage is probably the most obscure and difficult in the whole of the Pauline correspondence. It will be well to maintain some reserve in our interpretations, unquote.

I would agree with Leon Morris. It's shameful, in my opinion, the way some commentators charge forward in this passage, assigning dogmatic meanings to things which good scholars know are very obscure. And whereas the meanings that these people suggest may be suggestible, they may be worthy of consideration, but there are so many teachers who come through this chapter and assign meanings that are simply not justified.

They are simply speculation, and they will talk as if it's certain. Let me read the passage, and I'll tell you exactly what I'm talking about here. Now brethren concerning the coming

of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

Let no one deceive you by any means, for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way, and then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Now just those closing verses make it clear that God figures if somebody does not love the truth supremely, then they deserve whatever deception they end up with.

In Romans 1.18 we are informed of God's wrath toward those who suppress the truth in their unrighteousness. It says in Romans 1.18, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth or hold down the truth in unrighteousness. That is, they have access to truth but they suppress it, they don't want it.

Why? Because they prefer their sin, and the truth would condemn their sin, therefore they prefer to ignore the truth in order to pursue their sin with what they would maintain as the highest level of a clean conscience available to them, which is never really fully clean. But here also we see the same motivation, it says in verse 12, They did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. It is because of their love for their sin that they don't love the truth.

And he says because they didn't receive the love of the truth, verse 10. Verse 11 says, And for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie. There is a lie which is available to people to choose to believe instead of truth.

And God not only gives people the freedom of choice to choose the lie, but if they choose to reject truth, if they make a conscious choice to suppress truth that is available to them, to not walk in whatever lightening they've been given, then God chooses their fate for them. They choose not to love the truth, and God chooses their delusions. There's a passage in Isaiah where God says, They have chosen their way, near the end of verse 3,

right, Isaiah 66, near the end of verse 3 it says, Just as they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations, so I will choose their delusions, and bring their fears upon them.

Isn't that a great cross reference for the Thessalonian passage? Because Paul says, They had pleasure in their unrighteousness. Here it says, Their soul delights in their abominations. Same thought.

They've chosen to delight in their unrighteousness at the expense of truth. And therefore it says, I will choose their delusions, Thessalonians says, Therefore God will send them strong delusions. The idea being, that God doesn't just arbitrarily send delusion upon people, but if they choose the way of rejection of truth and loving their sin, then God says, Okay, you chose it, this is what you're going to get, I've chosen to give you this as a result.

God doesn't choose their way, they choose their own way, but he chooses their consequences. You can choose your path, but you can't choose where that path's going to end up. The path is already determined, and if you go on a particular path, you'll end up wherever it's going.

And that is, if you choose a path of pursuing sin at the expense of truth, then you will end up deceived, and in delusion, and guilty for it. Now let's go back to the earlier part of this chapter, 2 Thessalonians 2. Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to him, Now this expression, our gathering together to him, would seem to speak of the rapture of the church. Paul had spoken in 1 Thessalonians to the same audience, in chapter 4, in verse 17, it says, It sounds like our being gathered together unto Jesus.

There is a possible alternative, though I don't think it's very likely, and that is that our gathering together to him simply refers to our fellowship as Christians. In favor of this notion is that this same Greek word, our gathering together, is found in Hebrews 10, 25, when it says, which is the same Greek word, the gathering of ourselves together, which speaks of worship. Remember, there is that expression found in Genesis 49, 10.

The scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. And the gathering of the people unto Jesus is something that happens as Gentiles come into the church. And so it is not impossible that Paul would be meaning by our gathering together to him, simply the fact of our fellowship.

I beseech you on the basis of our hope of the second coming of Christ, and on the basis of our fellowship together in Jesus, our gathering together as believers in him, blah, blah, blah, I mean, so forth. Now, I prefer to see this as a reference to the rapture. Since he mentions the coming of our Lord in connection with our gathering together unto him, it seems more natural that the gathering together unto him is connected with the coming

of the Lord, and he's already connected the rapture with the coming of the Lord, the peresid, in 1 Thessalonians 4, and so I believe he's now about to talk to us about the coming of the Lord and the rapture.

Now, verse 3 says, Now, the King James says, Actually, that's not the best translation in this case. The expression in the Greek is used elsewhere in the New Testament to always mean, was present. So, it would seem better here also.

But how these people could be persuaded that the day of the Lord had already come, or was present, is very difficult for us to imagine. Their concept of the day of the Lord was obviously mistaken. We can't argue for any particular view of the day of the Lord on the basis that they thought this about it, because it's clear that Paul didn't think their views were adequate.

They needed to be corrected about these things. There were apparently either prophetic utterances, and or letters that purported to be from Paul, but were forgeries, that were saying things like this, that the day of the Lord had come. So, Paul wants them not to be dissuaded by a spirit, probably reference to a prophetic oracle in the church, or by a letter that seemed to be from us, because he says they're not from us, we're not saying these things, this is not true.

But apparently there were some prophetic oracles and or letters that purported to be from Paul, that were preaching wrong doctrines. I think it's interesting that already in the Apostles' lifetime there are already false epistles bearing their names. This is what made it so difficult for the people who, centuries later, sought to put together the legitimate epistles into the collection that we know as the New Testament canon, because they had to sort through spurious epistles as well as genuine ones, and it was a very difficult thing, and they didn't decide rapidly.

They had to weigh all kinds of evidence before they could be sure that a given epistle was truly written by Paul or John or Peter, because there were other spurious epistles that bore their names, that had to be rejected. And even in Paul's own lifetime, he seems to have been aware of some epistles that purported to be from him that were not genuine. As though the day of Christ had come.

I don't know really how they could have believed that the day of Christ had come, since Peter says when the day of Christ comes it will be with flaming fire, and burning up the heavens and the earth and so forth, which obviously could not have happened. But, since the people were mistaken on many points, they may have been mistaken as to what the day of Christ was all about, or what it would be like, or whatever. So Paul has to clarify here.

He says in verse 3, let no one deceive you by any means, for that day will not come. Now what day is he talking about? The day of Christ, in verse 2, which in many manuscripts

reads day of the Lord. By the way, dispensations believe there's a difference between the day of the Lord and the day of Christ.

They'd say the day of Christ is the rapture, and the day of the Lord is an extended period of time at the end. However, the manuscripts don't agree as to whether Paul is even talking about the day of Christ or the day of the Lord here. To anyone who's not a dispensationalist, that's no problem, because we know that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and therefore the day of Christ is the same as the day of the Lord.

There's not a different Lord other than Christ, and therefore there's no reason to make a difference between the day of Christ and the day of the Lord. Interestingly, the text of this receiptus reads the day of Christ here, whereas the critical text used by other translations other than King James says day of the Lord. It doesn't matter.

But he's talking about the coming of Christ, and he says, no, that day will not come. And by the way, in verse 1, as I pointed out, I think that he has included the rapture in that day. He says, by the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto him.

That day, that day of his coming, that day of the rapture of the church, will not come until two things happen. Now, let me tell you something. We are sometimes told that if we don't believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, and we believe that certain things must happen before the rapture, then we do not believe in the imminency of the coming of Christ.

We are therefore in danger of saying, my Lord delays his coming. We are not believing that Jesus could come at any moment. I remember a time in my life, in my theological perspective, where it would have scared me to death to meet someone who said, Jesus can't come today or won't come today.

I would have thought he was blaspheming. Because it was one of the things that was drilled into me from my youth. One of the main points of orthodoxy is that Jesus might come today, any second.

Now, is that biblical? Well, Paul said that day cannot come until such and such and such and such happen. In other words, he was saying it can't come today. Now, of course, in our minds we have to ask, have those things happened? Some would say yes, some would say no, depending on how they interpret the falling away and the man of sin.

But the interesting thing is that in Paul's day, he didn't teach a doctrine of imminency. He taught that they should not believe that the rapture and the second coming are happening immediately. There's a couple of things that at least have to happen first.

And if Paul taught that, then we might ask ourselves, at what point then did the biblical writers begin to teach the doctrine of imminency? That is, the doctrine of imminency is that you have to expect that Jesus might come at any moment. They say, well, didn't

Jesus say you've got to watch because at such and such an hour as you know not, the Son of Man is coming like a thief without warning and so forth, they're pretty better watch? Well, yes, he did. But he said that at the same time they told him to watch for certain other things to happen too.

At the very moment he told them to watch, they knew that there were some other things that had to happen before he was going to come. They had to watch in spite of the fact that what they were watching for was going to be after some other things. Because he talked about the gospel being preached to all the world first, and he talked about a number of other things.

When you see the abomination of desolation set up. And so he indicated that there are some things that are going to happen first before he comes back, even though he told them to watch for it. There is a possibility of watching for things that are not immediately expected.

Like a child watches for Christmas all year long, even though he knows it's not tomorrow. And the Christian has to be aware that God has certain purposes to fulfill, and he has declared in this passage as well as others, that some things are going to be done before he comes. Matthew 24, 14 is where Jesus said, this gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all the world as witnesses to all nations and then shall the end come.

Don't... Right. The words for that day will not come are not there. However, all translators agree that those words belong there.

Or at least that is the meaning of his statement. Try to read the statement without those words. Just read verse 3 without those italicized words.

For unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition who opposes, exalts and so forth, he never finishes the sentence. The implied meaning is the day of which he's been speaking won't come until the falling away comes first. At least I've never heard of a commentary of any theological viewpoint or a translator saying that those words don't belong there.

Again, it seems like an ellipsis where some words either have dropped out or Paul was talking so rapidly he didn't realize that he hadn't made a complete sentence. So the translator put in the parts that would make it a complete sentence. Because otherwise, the entire statement is nothing but a dependent clause and it's not a full sentence at all.

But when you put in the words that day will not come, then you make it a complete sentence and almost certainly supply the meaning that Paul had in mind in the context. Anyway, it'd be hard to know what to make of the verse without those words. Except we'd probably conclude the same thing about it as we conclude when we read the word, who man.

Now, the man of sin says, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Now, it's important for us to remember that one of the reasons this passage is obscure is because his readers knew more of the background of this than we do. He says in verse 5, don't you remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? So, he's not giving them new information, he's reminding them of something which they no doubt had a more comprehensive teaching directly from his lips about when he had been with them.

Sadly though, we weren't there when he was teaching them and all we have in the entirety of Paul's writings on this subject of the man of sin is right here. And since he's only alluding to something that he had spoken of more comprehensively on another occasion, there's missing parts to our knowledge. We just don't know.

Now, most people, well, let me just tell you what some of the questions are. What is the falling away mentioned in verse 3? King James lacks the definite article, but in the Greek it is there. The falling away.

It's a particular falling away that apparently he had spoken to them about before. Now, the word is apostasia in the Greek, which means apostasy. Now, we've heard some, notably Dispensations at the time, say that this word can be translated a departing.

And some would try to make it actually the rapture of the church itself, the departing of the church from earth. However, the word has never had that meaning in the Greek language. In classical Greek, this word apostasia meant a political or a military rebellion, a revolt.

A falling away from the ranks, from loyalty to the proper authorities. Classical Greek used this word to speak of a political or a military revolt or a rebellion. In the Septuagint of the Old Testament, for instance, in Joshua 22, 22, the same word is used in the Greek Old Testament of revolt against God, a rebellion against God.

There's only one other time in the New Testament that this word appears, as in Acts 21, 21, where it talks about falling away from the law of Moses. Acts 21, 21 says, but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses. The word forsake there is the same word, the apostasia, a falling away from Moses, a rebellion against Moses, essentially.

So to take this word in 2 Thessalonians 2, and on this occasion alone to make it refer to the rapture of the church, the departing of the church from the earth, when the word has in the Greek a classical meaning of rebellion, or forsaking God, or forsaking rightful authority and so forth, is arbitrary and it's an interpretation of convenience for dispossessions. The fact is, Paul would almost certainly be speaking of a time when Christians fall away from being Christians. He spoke later on in Timothy of a great



departing from the faith.

Many shall depart from the faith, he says in 1 Timothy 4, 1. So even if we did translate apostasia, a departing, yet what kind of a departing? It is a departing from the faith, which Paul anticipates in 1 Timothy 4, 1 also. So it's people falling away from the faith. Secondly, he speaks of the man of sin.

This expression is not found anywhere else in the Bible. Some manuscripts have man of lawlessness, which is possibly a better reading. It's all right, sin is lawlessness according to 1 John 2, 6 I think it is, or 3, 6. Sin is lawlessness, so he's either a man of sin or a man of lawlessness.

Now, it should be understood that this is a Hebraism. That is, it's an idiom that the Jews frequently used, and we have many of them. Even in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Paul used quite a few Hebraisms.

A man of sin simply meant a sinful man. Or a man of lawlessness would mean a lawless man. By the way, there's a hidden Hebraism earlier in this book, I didn't bring it to your attention.

In verse 7 of chapter 1, it says, "...with his mighty angels," the last words in 2 Thessalonians 1, 7 are mighty angels. In the Greek, it's literally angels of his power. Angels of his power is a Hebraism, it would mean powerful angels.

Or mighty angels, as they say here. But it's a typical Hebraism to speak of a noun of an adjective. And simply, we would state it with the adjective defining the noun, a man of sin is simply a sinful man.

A man of lawlessness would be a lawless man. So there's a lawless man, a sinful man, that Paul anticipates. Now, he has already talked to them about this, but unfortunately he's never talked to any of his other readers about it, at least in his correspondence.

We have no other reference to a sinful man in Paul's correspondence. And we really don't have any reference to such a sinful man anywhere in the New Testament. Now, some would identify the man of sin with Antichrist, and would make this a future Antichrist in the end of time.

One of the serious problems with this identification is the word Antichrist is only used in 1 John and 2 John, in those two epistles. And even in those epistles, it never refers to an individual. Antichrist refers to anybody who's contrary to Christ.

Let me see if I can find one of those passages. Maybe you can find it before I can here. Chapter 2, 1 John 2, yeah, 1 John 2, 22, says, Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son.

Who is Antichrist? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. This is the only way that the term Antichrist is used in the New Testament. It is used of anybody who is anti-Jesus.

It is not ever used of a proper name or title for an individual. So, if you look also at 1 John 4, it says in verse 3, Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and is not of God, and this is the spirit of Antichrist. The spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming and now already is in the world.

So you've heard there's a spirit of Antichrist coming, and it's already here, he said. So Antichrist can't refer to someone who's going to appear in the end of the world, because John said the Antichrist is already in the world in his own day. Can't be a man.

It's a spirit of resistance to Christ. Yes, 2 John 7, yeah, 2 John 7 says the same thing essentially. For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.

This is a deceiver and an Antichrist. So a deceiver who doesn't confess that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh is called an Antichrist. That's the only way the word Antichrist is used in the Bible.

As a generic term for anyone who's a deceiver who denies the truth about Christ. So we don't have a reference to an individual named Antichrist in the Bible. We do of course have the man of sin, but it's the question of whether the man of sin is to be identified as some future Antichrist has yet to be considered, and we shall.

We have also referenced in Revelation 13 and some other chapters in Revelation to a beast, actually to two beasts, but one particular beast that comes out at sea is often thought to be the Antichrist, but the evidence in favor of this is very weak. Many would just take the word the beast, Antichrist, and man of sin as though they all talk about the same entity. But as we've seen Antichrist doesn't talk about an entity at all, except anyone who's a deceiver is an Antichrist it says.

The beast is apparently a system or a nation rather than an individual, because the beast in Revelation 13 is drawn up according to the pattern of Daniel chapter 7. There are four beasts in Daniel 7, and the beast of Revelation 13 is a conglomerate of the four. The beasts in Daniel 7 are nations or kingdoms, they are not individuals. Therefore the beast imagery borrowed by John, taken from Daniel 7, would more incline us to believe that the beast there is a nation or a kingdom or a system rather than an individual, and that's supported by the fact that later in Revelation 17 the beast has seven heads and ten horns, and we're told that the ten horns are ten kings, the seven heads are seven emperors or seven kings, and seven hills and so forth.

So an individual doesn't have ten kings and seven hills and so forth, that's a nation, a kingdom. So the beast of Revelation should not be thought to be an individual, though

often equated with a man of sin. Where does Paul get this idea of a man of sin? Almost certainly he gets it from Daniel, because there's really nothing else in the Bible that would contribute to this idea that there's got to come a sinful man, a troublemaker for the people of God, one who blasphemes God and sets himself above God and so forth.

And the only place that really speaks of such a being in the Old Testament would be Daniel chapter 7, which is the very chapter that we read of the four beasts that come out of the sea. They represent, as we're told, Babylon, Media Persian, Greece, and Rome. We'll study Daniel later and you'll be familiar with this if you're not already.

Four successive world empires in Daniel chapter 7, Babylon, Media Persian, Greece, and Rome. The fourth of these, the Roman Empire, is said to have ten horns, and from these ten horns there arises another one. And this other one, if you'll notice in Daniel 7 and 11, says, I watched then, because of the sound of the pompous words, well, let me see here.

Daniel 7, let me see, I'm trying to find out here. Verse 8, actually. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots.

And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words. More details are given about this little horn in verses 23 through 25. 23 through 25 says, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom on the earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it, and break it in pieces.

The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom, and another shall rise after them. He shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings. This is the little horn.

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, he shall persecute the saints of the Most High, he shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. Then it says, And the courts shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever.

Now notice, Paul's man of sin has some of these same characteristics. He positions himself as God and blasphemes God. So also we see this little horn in verse 25 speaking pompous words against the Most High.

This man of sin will be destroyed by the brightness of Jesus' coming, Paul says. So also the little horn in verse 26 of Daniel will be consumed and destroyed forever when dominion is taken away from him, which is the second coming of Christ, apparently. And the interesting thing is that this little horn grows up out of the fourth beast.

Now there's a lot of speculation about the beasts and so forth in Revelation and Daniel, but there's really very little question as to who the fourth beast is in Daniel 7. Virtually all

evangelicals, regardless of whether they're dispensational or otherwise, agree that the fourth beast is a reference to the Roman Empire. You really can't take the whole passage of Daniel 7 without coming to that conclusion. It's a reference to the Roman Empire, and all seem to agree on that.

The little horn, well notice, verse 23 here says, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom on the earth, which shall be different from the other kingdoms. Then says verse 24, The ten horns, or ten kings, which shall arise from this kingdom, and another shall rise after them. That is, this little horn will rise up after the fourth kingdom.

After the ten nations into which the fourth kingdom dissolves, there will be another that sort of displaces the position of the beast. Interestingly, the kingdoms before were four beasts. A lion, a bear, a leopard, and this ten-horned beast.

And what replaces them is like a man, a horn with eyes like a man, with a mouth like a man. So, whereas most of those kingdoms are designated as being like animals, this little horn is represented as being more like a man, and he replaces the fourth beast. He rises up out of the fourth beast, like a horn growing out of the head, but then he survives beyond it.

It continues, now, The Apostle Paul said that there was something hindering the rise of the man of sin. He never said what it was, and there have been many theories. The most popular theory among dispensationalists is that that which hinders is the Holy Spirit, or the church, with the Holy Spirit resident within.

And that when the church is raptured, then the Holy Spirit and the church, the restraining force of the church against evil, will be taken away, and then the man of sin can rise. The serious problem with that is that this makes the rapture of the church necessary before the rise of the man of sin. If the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church is hindering the rise of the man of sin, and the church has to be taken away before the man of sin can rise, then obviously the rapture of the church must be before the rise of the man of sin.

But Paul seems to present the order as the reverse. In the earlier verses where he says, Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that day cannot come unless a falling away comes first and the man of sin be revealed. Verses 1 and 3. He seems to put the order that the falling away and the man of sin must be revealed first before our gathering together unto Him.

So the rapture would come after, not before, the man of sin is revealed. Therefore, the secret hindrance that Paul does not describe cannot be the church, because the taking away of the church before the man of sin being revealed would contradict the chronology of the earlier verses of the chapter. Now, there have been other opinions.

Some have believed that that which hinders is a reference to Michael the archangel. This is based on Daniel, chapter 12. Verse 1 says, At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people, and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.

And at that time your people shall be delivered. Some understand this to be a prediction of the tribulation, and they believe that the Antichrist or the man of sin will reign during the tribulation period, and therefore Michael standing up seems to allow for this time of trouble to come. Therefore, Paul says, That which hinders, when he is taken out of the way, the man of sin arrives, and they equate the hindering power with Michael the archangel from Daniel 12.1. Oh, come to think of it, there was an opinion held by all the early church fathers on this subject.

They believed, first of all, that whatever it was that was hindering, Paul had a reason for not mentioning it. I mean, why didn't he just come out and say what it was? Why did he have to be so obscure? That there would be a good reason on Paul's part for not mentioning, by name, this hindering power. And, you know, if he meant, for instance, the church in the world was hindering, there would be no reason to obscure that fact.

I mean, there's nothing dangerous about saying that outright. Nor even if he thought it was Michael. But the early church fathers all believed that Paul was talking about the Roman emperors.

That the presence of the system of Roman law prevented the man of lawlessness from coming to power. That as long as the Roman emperors existed as an institution, as long as there was a Roman empire, that the man of sin would not be able to rise. And that would seem to be supported from Daniel.

Because Daniel sees the man of sin rising up after the death of the fourth beast, the Roman empire. The fourth beast dies, its body is given to the burning fire. We didn't read the verse that says that, but it says that in Daniel 7. And it seems that the man of sin, or the little horn, arises up as a power after that, when the Roman empire is destroyed.

So that would be agreeable with the idea that the hindrance is the Roman empire. It has to get out of the way first before this guy can come to power. Furthermore, it would explain why Paul was so obscure.

You might recall that Paul was run out of Thessalonica for what? For claiming that there was another King, one Jesus. And this was interpreted as being subversive against Rome. Now if Paul came right out and said, when the Roman empire is taken out of the way, then the man of sin will be revealed, it might be construed as advocating the overthrow of Rome.

Or at least the prediction that the Roman empire would not last forever. And in view of

the fact that Paul already was falsely accused of being an enemy of Rome, if this letter fell into the wrong hands, and he was making outright statements about the doom or the fall of the Roman empire, this could have been not to the benefit of Paul or the church in that city. And so it would justify his obscurity in the matter.

It would also explain why, in verse 6, he speaks of what is restraining in the neuter. But in verse 7, he who restrains in the masculine. The Roman empire could be spoken of either as the neuter, the empire, or he being the emperor who is representative of the empire.

At any rate, this was the unanimous opinion of the early church fathers. Let me just name some of them who held this opinion. Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Cyril of Rome, Jerome, who translated the Latin Vulgate, Ambrose, Chrysostom, and all the other early church fathers taught that upon the fall of the Roman empire, the empire would be divided into ten nations, among whom would arise the man of sin as an eleventh kingdom.

Now, we don't know that church fathers were correct, but it seems to me they were a lot closer to the original than we are, and that they were unanimous in their opinion about this certainly must count for something. They may have been wrong, but if they were wrong, they were all wrong together. A church historian, a man named Eliot, said, We have the consenting testimony of the early fathers, from Irenaeus, the disciple of St. John, down to Chrysostom and Jerome, to the effect that the hindrance to the rise of Antichrist was understood to be the imperial power ruling and residing at Rome.

Another historian named Guinness said, The early writings of the fathers tell us with remarkable unanimity that this hindrance was the Roman empire as governed by the Caesars, and that on the fall of the Caesars, the man of sin would arise. Another historian named Tanner said, The Christian church in general, all over the world at that time, regarded the then existing Roman empire of the Caesars as the obstacle of which St. Paul had spoken as hindering the appearance of the Antichrist upon the scene of the world. Note that they're using the word Antichrist, which is synonymous with man of sin.

So, many church historians verified this, that this was the unanimous testimony of the church fathers, that that which hindered was actually the Roman empire. Now, some people have problems with this, because they say, Well, wait a minute, doesn't it say that when that which is hindering is taken out of the way, the man of sin would rise? But the Roman empire is gone, and the man of sin hasn't come yet, or has he? Well, of course, we can't be absolutely sure about our identification. Because Paul is obscure, we can't be dogmatic.

But the church fathers and the reformers, Luther, Hus, Gobbins, Knox, Tyndale, all the reformers, they all shared the same opinion. And, of course, the church fathers lived and died before the fall of the Roman empire, so they were not able to identify the man of

sin. However, the reformers who lived long after the fall of the Roman empire agreed with the church fathers that the hindrance had been the Roman empire, and they believed that the man of sin had in fact arisen at the fall of the Roman empire.

Now, again, I don't want to say they're correct, because I don't know that they are. But it is certainly worthy of more than a moment's notice that there is a unanimous testimony on this subject from all the church fathers and from all the reformers. And let me just say that, of course, since the little horn, the man of sin, grows out of the Roman empire, we would expect there to be a connection between the Roman empire and the man of sin, although the man of sin comes up after the Roman empire has fallen.

Well, it's simply a matter of history that when the Roman empire fell, it was replaced by another world power that was Roman in its roots, and that was the papacy. Now, I have not cared to Catholic bash. As a matter of fact, I don't have anything to say against modern Catholics, except, you know, insofar as the religion has some much to be desired, then I would say that it would be good if their views were more correct than what they were.

But that can be said of a lot of Protestants, too. What I have to say is not here to bash on Catholics, but simply to report to you what history shows and what all the reformers believe to be true. All the reformers, when they wrote on this passage in 2 Thessalonians, believed that the man of sin was the institution of the papacy.

Now, there is some favorable information about this. For one thing, Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2, that in verse 4 it says, he sits in the temple of God. Now, just as I should think this means the Jewish temple rebuilt in the last days.

However, when Paul uses the expression temple of God, he never, in his writings, ever means the Jewish temple. In two other places, Paul speaks and uses the same expression, the temple of God. One is in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 16.

1 Corinthians 3, verse 16, says, Do you not know that you, plural, the church, are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? You, the church, are the temple of God. Over in 2 Corinthians 6, in verse 16, Paul says, And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. Again, the other two times in Paul's writings where he uses the term temple of God, he makes it very clear.

The temple of God is the church. This agrees with what Peter says in 1 Peter 2, 5, and Hebrews says it also in Hebrews 3, 6 and some other places. So, the temple in the New Testament is seen as the church, and Paul himself has used this very expression, temple of God, twice before.

And says it's the church. So why would we arbitrarily, in 2 Thessalonians 2, have him make the temple of God on this occasion be a Jewish temple? He says the baptism will

rise up in the church. It will not be a movement, a political movement, out of Israel.

It will not be a political movement out of a common market in the last days. It will be a movement within the church that will arise in the ruins of the Roman Empire. That much we can deduce just from the passage.

We don't have to quote any commentators to come to that. That's just right there in the material. Now, obviously the power of the papacy, which has been more or less corrupt throughout history, because there have been better popes and worse popes, has nonetheless assumed the position of power in the world, or did during the Dark Ages.

That had formerly been the emperor's power. If you read the history of the Dark Ages, you'll find there were kings of nations who came and bowed. One king stood three days barefoot in the snow outside the Vatican so that the pope would forgive him for making a statement against the Catholic Church, because the king couldn't live without the pope's approval.

And this kind of stuff is not common. I don't have time to summarize the entire history, but let me just say this. Some people have thought, well, the things that are said about them really don't apply, do they, to the papacy? I mean, look at this, where it says here.

Well, not here, but in Daniel. In Daniel chapter 7, it talks about him wasting the saints and persecuting the Church of God. Well, has that happened? Let me tell you something.

During the Dark Ages, it is estimated that, and the Dark Ages are from about 500 to about 1500, about a thousand years, the Dark Ages, from 500 to 1500 AD. During the Dark Ages, it is estimated that 15 million Christians were tortured and killed by the Roman Catholic Church by the decree of the pope, and this was because they were non-conformists. They had home Bible studies and things like that, which was forbidden, and these were normally evangelical Christians who existed before the Reformation, and this is what the Spanish Inquisition and other inquisitions were about, the stamping out of these non-conformists, who we would call Christians.

But some 50 million during that thousand-year period, are estimated to have been tortured and killed. They were beaten and mutilated, burned and crushed with weights, impaled and nailed to trees. Their heads were twisted off, their children were brutally killed before their eyes, and then their carcasses were thrown to hungry dogs.

Their women were raped and dismembered, and this continued for the greater part of a thousand years. You can read of this in Fawcett's Book of Markers or any other objective history of the period. Would you call that wasting the saints? A thousand years of unrelenting persecution where people who were holding out to be faithful to Jesus were treated that way? What about claiming to be God? Did the popes sit in the Temple of God, that is the Church, and declare themselves to be God? Well, let me quote to you



what some of the popes have said.

Pope Leo, in 1894, made this statement. We hold the place of Almighty God on Earth. Pope Pius XI, on April 30th, 1922, said this.

You know that I am the Holy Father, the representative of God on Earth, the Vicar of Christ, which means that I am God on the Earth. That was Pope Pius XI, stated on April 30th, 1922. Here's a statement made by Pope Nicholas, writing to the French bishops.

Listen to this one. He said, The Roman Pontiff judges all men but is judged by none. I have the authority of the King of Kings.

I am all in all and above all. Wherefore, if those things that I do be said not to be done of man but of God, what can you make of me but God? Wherefore, no marvel if it be in my power to change time and times, to alter and abrogate laws, to dispense with all things, even with the precepts of Christ. For where Christ bids Peter to put up his sword and admonishes his disciples not to use any outward force in revenging themselves, so do not I, Pope Nicholas, writing to the bishops of France, exhort them to draw out their material swords? Wherefore, I conclude, commanding, declaring, and pronouncing to stand upon necessity of salvation for every creature to be subject to me.

Well, not every pope has made those kind of claims, and there have been some. Some popes have definitely claimed to hold the position of God himself on the earth. And it is, even when popes have not said that very plainly, it has been the position of the Roman Catholicism of the medieval times that a person could not be saved without the approval of the pope and the blessing of the Catholic Church.

If the pope excommunicated a person and they couldn't take the sacrament, they were just going to hell, period. And the person had to keep the pope happy if they wanted to go to heaven. That was all there was to it.

So, there is a sense in which the popes did take the position of God in the church, in the temple of God. They did waste the saints. And by the way, there are said to be signs and lying wonders by the power of Satan working.

You might say, well, the popes aren't miracle workers. Well, let me ask you. The institution that they oversee has declared a great number of miracles to be done, even in recent times.

Let me read you a summary of some of them. The following miracles have been claimed by the Roman Catholic Church to have occurred. Crucifixes have spoken.

Images have come down and lit their own candles. Idols have sweat, turned their eyes, moved their hands, opened their mouths, healed sicknesses, raised the dead, mended broken bones. The stigmata has appeared on the hands and feet of some people.

Many have claimed to have had Mary appear to them and heal their sicknesses and so forth. Now, these are all claimed to have occurred in connection with the papal system. And therefore, even today you read over words.

Yugoslavia, that these appearances of Mary are happening. Where is it? Medjugorje. Medjugorje.

There's a couple other places too. Down in Mexico, I think. And there's a number of places where there have been many signs and wonders.

Now, either these are true signs from God or they're signs and lying wonders. Which is what the Manuscripts said to be. And you can always tell by the result.

Is it promoting Jesus Christ? Or is it promoting something else? You know, the signs from God will always promote Jesus Christ, period. Will exalt Him. The Holy Spirit doesn't have any interest in exalting human beings, including Mary, or saints, or anyone else.

He only wants to exalt Jesus Christ. And if they are not works of the Holy Spirit, then we must ask, what spirit then is doing them? It may seem like I've really kind of nailed the coffin on the Roman Catholic Church. And I don't mean, again, for this to reflect necessarily on the motives or the sincerity of modern Roman Catholics.

Most of the great abominations done by the Roman Catholic Church were done during the Dark Ages. I don't know, however, of any modern pope who has gotten up and repented on behalf of the Church for those things that were done. The fact that these things were done by the papacy and by the Vatican throughout history is a matter of objective history.

It's not Protestant propaganda. It is simply a matter of history. All histories declare it.

Even Roman Catholic historians acknowledge it. I don't know of any pope that ever got up and officially before the organization said, we repent of all those horrendous things we did. And therefore, although we don't see them doing them, we don't know that they would never do them again.

We hope they should not. But the final chapter of the papacy has not yet been written. In Paul's writings, if we go along with the reformers in identifying the papacy in this role, we would have to say that that papacy will continue to exert some power until the coming of Jesus.

Let me just say this. You might say, well, since all the reformers identified the man of sin with that institution, you might ask what the Roman Catholic Church's response was to this. Well, they were not idle.

They turned around and called Luther the man of sin. And they actually had in 1591, less

than a century after Luther's ministry, in 1591, a Spanish Jesuit priest named Francisco Rivera published a commentary on Last Times, a 500-page commentary. And he espoused the view that the man of sin is a future antichrist who will arise in the last few years of Cuban history before Christ returns.

This was the first writing in the church to suggest a future antichrist at the end of the age. It was a Roman Catholic response to the Protestants who were claiming that the man of sin was the Catholic Vatican and the papacy, so the Franciscan, or the Jesuit, Francisco Rivera, wrote this commentary where he espoused a novel idea that the man of sin is an individual who will appear at the end of time as a world ruler and antichrist. And this view was rejected for 200 years by all Protestants because they recognized it was a ploy on the part of the Vatican.

But in the year 1826 or 1827, a Protestant Anglican named Samuel Maitland, Samuel R. Maitland, M-A-I-T-L-A-N-D, who was the librarian to the Archbishop of Canterbury in England, he read and he approved of Francisco Rivera's work, and he wrote over 50 books himself. He was the first Protestant to embrace this view of a future antichrist, and he wrote over 50 books espousing this view, and of course within three years, John Nelson Darby picked it up in 1830, and he incorporated it into his dispensational system. And today, it's the only view you ever hear, it seems like.

That is to say, this view that was promoted by the Jesuits to counteract what the Protestants were saying, which view was rejected for 200 years by the Protestants, came to be brought into the Protestant circles by Samuel Maitland, and picked up, and very much popularized by John Nelson Darby, and today it's the only view you'll ever hear in most circles. Although there are books, there are books that document these things I'm saying, they are not the popular books. Christian bookstores don't carry them.

You have to order them, especially. So, this is at least some treatment of the historic interpretation of this passage. Now, I don't want to say that that settles the matter altogether.

As I said at the beginning of chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians, there's much obscurity there. We could be, I could have it all wrong, but I guess time will tell. But some would say time is already told.

Some would say that the very things Paul predicted happened, that it only takes an objective viewing of history of the church to see that exactly what Paul predicted did happen, exactly what Daniel predicted did happen. And, of course, it raises some questions about continuing affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church on the part of true Christians. I believe there are true Christians in the Catholic Church.

I believe there are Catholic people who are saved and who love the Lord and are going to Heaven and so forth, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's right for them to stay

affiliated with that. But, anyway, I'm not here to critique modern Catholics, as I said several times. I'm here only to say that if we look objectively at history and compare the passage in 2 Thessalonians and Daniel chapter 7 with what actually has happened, there would be a very strong case, it seems to me, to agree with the Reformers and the Church Fathers in their interpretation.

And the interesting thing is that the Church Fathers identified the hindrance as the Roman Empire, but they did not live to see its fulfillment. But the very thing that happened when the Roman Empire fell did, in so many ways, fulfill those prophecies. It argues very favorably for the correctness of the Church Fathers' understanding.

Anyway, certainly no one is obliged to hold this view, and there are many different views available, but I thought I should share the unknown view, which I think to be as rather more likely to be proved by my way of reckoning than most of the other options I've heard. Okay, we'll close with that. We've run quite a bit over time.

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