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Is The Future Pretrib Rapture Taught in Scripture? (Part 2)



When Shall These Things Be? - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg analyzes the use of the word "tribulation" in the scripture and draws a distinction between general afflictions and the specific time of great tribulation, which is referred to only twice in the Bible. While discussing the book of Revelation, Gregg highlights that it is largely considered a prediction of the end times, though there are differing opinions about when it was written. Gregg argues that certain phrases in the text, such as "no flesh shall survive," suggest a global event, but he also notes that similar language referring to "the whole world" can sometimes be localized to a particular geography in the Bible. Additionally, he points out that there is no mention of a future world ruler or a cashless society in scripture, nor does the New Testament predict the rebuilding of the temple.

Transcript

Let's continue now looking at this information on the sheet that in your notes is titled Is There a Worldwide Tribulation Predicted in Scripture? In our last class we spent a lot of time talking about the way the word tribulation is used in scripture, found that the reference to a great tribulation, that is a specific time of tribulation as opposed to general affliction that might occur at any time, is restricted to two statements in the Bible. One is of Jesus in Matthew 24 and the other is in Revelation, in Revelation 7.14. In due time, I expect it will be in our next session, we'll talk about the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 in detail, so we'll hold off on that for the moment. But we also talked about the basis for believing in a seven year duration of the so-called tribulation.

We are also, I also question whether it is future. These are issues that we are considering. Is there a future seven year tribulation? Now as a matter of fact, we saw that the basis for attaching a time length of seven years to the tribulation is not very strongly substantiated in scripture.

You have principally Daniel chapter 9 and the prophecy of the 70 weeks, in which if the assumption is made that the 70th week, A, has yet to be fulfilled and B, is the tribulation period, if those assumptions are made, neither of which are stated in scripture or even implied, then we can say the tribulation is seven years long because it is synonymous

with the 70th week of Daniel, which clearly is a week of years, seven years. If that assumption is made, we can then import that assumption into Revelation, where we find many references to three and a half years. We can say, well, since the period is seven years according to Daniel, we can say that there must be two periods of three and a half years.

And though the book of Revelation doesn't say so, each time we look at three and a half years in Revelation, we can decide that that is either the first half or the second half of the whole period. But that is, of course, an idea imported from another place, and that place from which it's imported is Daniel 9, and that assumption is not very well established on biblical exegesis from Daniel 9. So I would just say this. I don't think the Bible teaches anywhere a future seven-year tribulation, but that still leaves open the question of whether there is a future tribulation, whether the great tribulation of which Jesus spoke in Revelation spoke is future or not.

And in the last class, at the very end of the last class, in a very brief five-minute summary, I pointed out that the book of Revelation, which we have very largely been taught to see as a prediction of things that would happen in the end times, times that are, in fact, still future from our point of view, maybe not too far in the future, maybe soon to materialize, but still future, that view is not really the most reasonable view. There are several other views of Revelation, and I don't take the time right now to go into them. It would be interesting, perhaps, but there will be a time, and you can always get my book if you want, Revelation Four Views, and you can see what the four views are and what they think about every particular passage in Revelation.

But suffice it to say that the book of Revelation makes some comments within its own pages as to the time of fulfillment, and that's very helpful, since when we read Revelation, we're wondering, when will these things be? When will the fulfillment of these things be? When is the great tribulation of which it speaks? And the book of Revelation answers the question this way. These are things which must shortly come to pass. The time is at hand.

Do not seal up the words of this book, because the time is near. These are the things that Revelation says about its own time of fulfillment, and suggests that when John wrote it, when it was sent to the seven churches, when they read it, they were told that they were reading about things that would happen soon after they read it. And a very high view of Scripture must lead us to the opinion that it was right, that the predictions were true, that not very long after it was written, its events were fulfilled.

Now, there are differences of opinion as to when the book of Revelation was written. The most popular view today is that it was written in the reign of Domitian, around 96 A.D. If that is true, then we would look for the fulfillment of its vision sometime after that. The more popular opinion in the last century among scholars in the 1800s was that

Revelation was written before 70 A.D., sometime during the reign of Nero, who died in 68 A.D. by suicide.

And therefore, if it was written during the reign of Nero, then it was written before 70 A.D., because Nero died two years before that. And so this would mean that the book of Revelation was written before 70 A.D. on that view, and might well be describing the crisis that did occur in 70 A.D., or particularly 68 through 70 A.D. in the Jewish war, which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem. There are many who believe, and I would have to put myself in their class, that the great tribulation that Jesus predicted, and which Revelation described, happened in 70 A.D., or in the Jewish war, which was three and a half years long, from 66 to 70 A.D. Now, I'm not going to say that this is the only intelligent view one can take, but I am going to say that it is my conclusion from very extensive study on the subject that it has the best biblical arguments in its favor of several options.

And each person I would encourage to look at the arguments and evidences for himself, and make his own decision as to which has the best arguments. But I will say this much, that if somebody is going to say there is a future tribulation because the book of Revelation talks about it, I am going to say, I don't think you're playing fair with the book of Revelation. You're not allowing the book of Revelation to speak for itself.

If we would say, but, I still think Revelation is about things still future, I would say, on what basis do you say so? Wouldn't that be a fair question to ask? Okay, if we are supposed to assume that Revelation is all still future, how do we know that? Why are we told to believe that? Certainly, if the comments within the book itself suggest that it would be fulfilled shortly after it was fulfilled, we have strong evidence for saying it wasn't. Do we have such strong evidence? Well, you know what, most Christians have never even asked themselves why they believe Revelation is still future. And because they've never asked themselves, they've never had to try to find an answer.

They just assume it's future, because they were told that. But if you actually ask, okay, let's look at the book, let's look at the statements in the book, and ask ourselves, what evidence is there in the book that it is talking about the end of the world as we know it, yet future? Well, I'll tell you what the answer is. The answer is simply this, that if the book of Revelation is taken literally, the events in it have not happened yet.

Because the book of Revelation talks about a time when every mountain and island is removed, and the stars fall out of the sky, and the moon and the sun are darkened, and every person on earth hides himself in caves and in dens of the earth, and calls out to the mountains, fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of him that sits on the throne and of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come. And there would be a literal 144,000 Jewish people sealed for protection for 42 months, literally 42 months. We would have to believe in hailstones, 100 pounds each, pelting the earth.

This has not, to our knowledge, ever happened, literally. We would have to believe in a time when a third of the sea itself turned to blood, and later on the whole sea turned to blood, and all the rivers turned to blood, and the sun scorching men supernaturally and so forth. There's a lot of things in the book of Revelation that if we take it literally, they haven't happened.

A bottomless pit being opened, and locusts that have fingers like scorpions, and faces like men, and hair like women, coming out in great numbers and tormenting people for five months. This hasn't literally happened. And therefore, on the assumption that the book of Revelation is written to be taken literally, we would have to say these things haven't happened, so they must be future.

On the other hand, if for some reason we decided that the book of Revelation was written symbolically, rather than to be taken literally, that would remove the whole argument. Because the only argument for the futurity of the fulfillment of Revelation is the fact that these things have not literally happened yet. But if they are symbolic, it is at least open to possibility that they might be symbolic references to things that really have happened.

We just would have to decide what things they are. If we see symbols, we have to decide what a symbol represents. If you look in the newspaper today, you'll probably, or you might well find a political cartoon depicting a donkey or an elephant in some particular action.

Or maybe a donkey and an elephant in the same cartoon. If you do so, and if it's on the editorial page of the newspaper, you'll immediately know that the donkey represents the Democratic Party, and the elephant represents the Republican Party. In another cartoon, you might see a great bear or an eagle, and you would know that the bear, if it was in a political cartoon, represents Russia.

An eagle might represent the United States. A lion might represent Great Britain. Why? Because these are symbols that our culture has come to associate with these ideas.

So that if you see in a cartoon a picture of some kind of interaction between a donkey and an elephant, you immediately realize that the message of this is not about a real donkey and a real elephant, but it's about something else that's real, and true, and literal. But it is being portrayed in a symbolic way. Many scholars have actually likened Revelation to a political cartoon in that respect, that it's making political and religious statements using images which the readers would recognize.

And they would recognize, in most cases, the images as representing certain things, rather than being the things themselves. And it would be just as absurd to interpret the animals in a political cartoon as literal animals as it would be to interpret the seven-headed beast with ten horns in Revelation as a literal animal. And by the way, nobody

I've ever heard of does.

No one takes that Revelation beast to be a literal animal. No one I know believes that Jesus is a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns. He is described as such in Revelation 5, Jesus is a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns.

But everybody I know, including myself, believes Jesus is a person, not an animal, and that he has two eyes like you and I do, not seven, and no horns. But that the image of a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns suggests something in the symbolic language that the early Christians and Jews would recognize. Namely, a lamb is a sacrifice victim.

Seven eyes and seven horns use the symbolic number seven, which means completeness or perfection. Eyes representing what he sees and knows, horns representing, it's a typical Old Testament image of power. And therefore, we have imagery in the book of Revelation, and truly it represents something that really, literally exists, but not in the form it's described in.

It is recognizable imagery. The devil is bound like a great dragon with a chain. The devil's not literally a dragon, he's not literally a serpent, and I don't think a literal chain would ever bind him.

We have here imagery. The book of Revelation is full of imagery, and everybody except dispensationalists know this. And by the way, not everyone is a dispensationalist.

There are many scholars who have made it a lifelong study to study apocalyptic literature, which they say Revelation is a very good sample of apocalyptic literature. There were dozens of other apocalyptic pieces of literature that we know of, written by the Jews around the same period of time, and they all use the same kind of imagery. The book of Revelation has many things in common with a whole genre of literature called apocalyptic, which has been studied thoroughly by scholars and analyzed, and it's pretty well known how such literature depicts things, and it is clear that it uses symbols.

Now, I argued a moment ago to say that Revelation was fulfilled shortly after it was written, by arguing for a literal interpretation of that word shortly, and so forth, and now I'm suggesting that some of the images in Revelation may not be literal. Am I just bouncing back and forth between literal and non-literal for convenience, to make a point that I want to believe? Well, everyone will have to decide that for themselves. It's very clear that even in a book that has symbols, there may be some statements, especially in the prologue and the epilogue, that are not part of that symbolic message.

The verses I referred to are in the prologue, in the first three verses of Revelation, and in the epilogue, in the last chapter of Revelation, where it tells us when to expect the fulfillment. These are not written with the same high degree of imagery that the bulk of Revelation is, but most of the material in the bulk of the book is written in symbolic

visions. I don't care to convince you, I simply want to present to you the challenge to check it for yourself and make your own decisions.

It seems to me that when the book of Revelation says these things are shortly going to happen, that the readers were expected to take that somewhat literally in the epilogue and the prologue, but when they were to see dragons and beasts and monsters and lambs and living creatures with four faces and four wings and so forth, and locusts with tails like scorpions and horses with flamethrower mouths and snake tails that bite people, that these were understood to be graphic visions representing something. Even the dispensationist breaks down in his literalism here and says the same thing. Well, the locusts might be helicopters, they might be UFOs, I mean, that's not literal.

You see, everybody knows that some of the visions in Revelation can't be taken really literally. And the question then becomes if they're not all literal, if it's not literal locusts we're looking for, then the question is what is it that we're looking for? If the dispensationist wants to say helicopters or UFOs, they can say that and they're entitled to the opinion, but they better recognize they're not taking it literally. Just the same if a non-dispensationist says, well, those locusts represent demonic hordes unleashed on Jerusalem during the time of the siege in 70 AD, that person is also not taking it literally.

But that person isn't claiming to take it literally. That person is saying, well, we recognize in Revelation symbols for actual events. Another non-dispensationist might say that the locusts represent the Mohammedan invasion of Eastern Europe in the time of the Ottoman Turks or whatever.

I mean, there are different views of what these represent, but the point that everyone must acknowledge is that it represents something. And if it represents something, that means that it may be wide open to decide what it is it represents. Not totally wide open.

We have to use the evidence within the book. If the book says these things must shortly take place, then we would look for fulfillment not long after the time of writing. If someone says, but these things didn't literally come to pass, so they must be future, let me remind you that even the person who looks for future fulfillment doesn't take them literally.

If you're looking for helicopters and UFOs in the future, that's not taking it literally. If we're not going to take it literally, we might as well look for fulfillment in the past, since that's when the book of Revelation tells us to look for its fulfillment. That's what I'm saying.

Now, that means that when we read things in the book of Revelation, we have to be aware of the genre and the environment of the passage we're reading, and be careful not to just come up with an off-the-cuff preferential interpretation based on what our presuppositions have been. Now, I have to avoid that, too. By the way, I'm largely, in my

view of Revelation, what we call a preterist.

I believe most of it was fulfilled during the Jewish war and the fall of Jerusalem. At the same time, there are people who are full-on preterists, and they believe that everything in Revelation was fulfilled then, even the second coming of Christ is past, as far as they're concerned. I don't go that far.

Why? Because I'm not a bandwagon kind of a guy. I want to take each passage and look at the merits of each passage, compare Scripture to Scripture, and reach my own conclusions. In doing so, I have been forced to the conclusion myself that much of it was fulfilled in 70 AD.

And I've also been, let's just say I have not been forced to the conclusion that all of it was. And therefore, I think even some of it might have future fulfillment, but I believe the vast majority of the book of Revelation, as John said, was fulfilled shortly after it was predicted. But let's look at some of the things here about the tribulation.

If the tribulation is future, how do we know that it's future? Well, remember in Matthew 24, Jesus said, then will be great tribulation, such as never has been since there was a nation or something, nor shall there ever be afterward. And he also said, if those days were not shortened, no flesh would survive. And therefore, from those two statements, it sounds like he's talking about something that is global, since no flesh would survive it if it were not shortened, and unique in history, because there was nothing like it before or after.

If these expressions are taken literally, then we must be probably looking for something that hasn't happened yet. But should they be taken in the sense that we most naturally understand them as English-speaking people? Look at the expression in Matthew 24 that I just referred to. This is Matthew 24, 22.

Speaking of the great tribulation, Jesus said, and unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened. Now, what is meant by no flesh shall be saved? The way you and I would usually think of that would mean, you know, no one on the whole planet.

But does the Bible use the term that way, and does Jesus use that way? Well, I would say, I'm going to give you a few examples, but I would like for you, as you read through your Bible this year, to just make a mental note of the places where the prophets and other peoples talk about no flesh and all flesh. These expressions are found frequently in Scripture, no flesh and all flesh. If you look at the passages where this is the case, you will find that invariably, when it speaks of no flesh experiencing something or all flesh experiencing something, it is always within a geographical framework.

It is never necessarily a reference to any global event. It is with reference to a defined

geographical framework. Let me give you a few examples of this.

In Jeremiah chapter 12, these will only be a few of many. You can look up the rest on your own, or just encounter them as you read through the Bible and make a mental note so that you can convince yourself of what the Bible means from looking at the Bible itself. Jeremiah 12 is talking about the Babylonian invasion of Judah, and it says in verse 12, Now Jesus said, if these days were not shortened, no flesh would survive.

Here it says, when the Babylonians conquered Judah, from one end of the land to the other end of the land, I mean, of Israel, no flesh will have peace. Now this doesn't mean no flesh in the whole planet. That means no flesh from one end of the land to the other end of the land.

That is the land of Israel. The geographical location determines the range of effect of this on all flesh or no flesh. If you look at Jeremiah 25, which is another chapter predicting the Babylonian exile and the Babylonians crushing not only Judah, but many other nations around, depicted in the form of Jeremiah taking a cup of wine to each of the kings that are going to be conquered by Babylon, and even to Babylon itself because it's going to be conquered by Persians, and making them drink of the wine of God's wrath.

It's all very symbolic vision and so forth, but it says in that context, in Jeremiah 25, 31, a noise will come to the ends of the earth, for the Lord has a controversy with the nations. He will plead his case with all flesh and will give those who are wicked to the sword, says the Lord. Now in the context, you can read the previous verses, all flesh means who? Well, we're talking about Edom, Moab, Ammon, verse 21.

Verse 22, the kings of Tyre and Sidon. Verse 23, Dedan, Tima, Buz. In verse 24, excuse me, all the kings of Arabia.

In verse 25, all the kings of Zimri, and the kings of Elam, and the kings of the Medes. Now this is all flesh that God is pleading with. Is he talking about some future global crisis? No, these nations don't exist anymore, most of them.

Most of them are actually as ethnic groups extinct and have been since before Jesus even came. The all flesh that God pled with and judged with the sword in this context are nations that don't exist anymore. It happened, but it was not all flesh on the planet, fortunately.

Not everyone on the planet was exterminated. Just judgment came on these nations. And that defines who he means by all flesh.

In Jeremiah 45, Jeremiah is a good source of information on this language because he used it a lot. In Jeremiah 45, there is a prophecy to Baruch, Jeremiah's friend, that he would be delivered because of his faithfulness and his friendship to Jeremiah. The context of Baruch being delivered was in the context of Jerusalem being overrun by

Babylon.

God would keep Baruch safe when other Jews were being massacred. In verse 5, he says, Do you seek great things for yourself? Addressed to Baruch. Do not seek them, for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh, says the Lord, but I will give your life to you as a prize in all places wherever you go.

Now God can bring adversity on all flesh, but Baruch will escape it. Well, what Baruch actually escaped was the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Babylonians, again. But it was all flesh, is all the people affected by the Babylonian invaders.

Baruch, however, was an exception. He escaped it. But clearly it's not talking about anything global, simply because the word all flesh is used, or no flesh, does not really mean in a global context.

Ezekiel does the same thing in Ezekiel 21.4. This is talking again about Babylon coming against nations, especially against Israel. And Judah, he says in verse 4, Because I will cut off both righteous and wicked from you, that is from Israel, therefore my sword shall go out of its sheath against all flesh from south to north. All flesh, again, this is only within the boundaries of Israel and Judah that it's talking about in this particular context.

How about Daniel 4? In Daniel 4, verse 12, speaking of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, compared to a great spreading tree before he got proud and was cut down. It says in verse 12, Its leaves were lovely, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

That is from the tree that represents Babylon or Nebuchadnezzar in this vision. All flesh were fed by him. Certainly the American Indians were not.

The aboriginals of Australia were not. The tribal peoples of Central Africa were not. All flesh means within the range of his jurisdiction, he benefited all the people who were under his reign.

Certainly all flesh, no flesh, these are terms that have to be defined within the framework of a geographical indicator. In Matthew 24, what is the geographical indicator? Matthew 24, if you look at the context, just before he says these things, he says in verse 15, Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, as I said before, you can compare the parallel to this in Luke 21, 20, it says when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that it is desolation. He says his disciples would see that, and they did, because the Romans came in their lifetime.

He says in verse 16, Then those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. And in verse 19 he says, But woe to those who are pregnant with nursing babies in those days. Where? In Judea.

Verse 20, And pray that your flight From where? From Judea. May not be in winter on the Sabbath, for there will be great tribulation. Where? In Judea.

And if those days were not shortened, no flesh Where? In Judea. Would survive. The reference to no flesh surviving except the days were shortened is not applied anywhere beyond Judea.

There is a crisis in Judea. And those who are in Judea should flee from that crisis. And they should pray that their flight from Judea would not be in winter time or on a Sabbath.

Because it can be hard if they don't get away. Because why? All flesh that is in Judea are going to be affected. And if the days were shortened, no flesh in Judea would survive.

Just like in the Old Testament, the term no flesh, all flesh is defined by context into a limited geography. So, what I'm saying to you is we cannot assume that the tribulation of which Jesus speaks is necessarily global based on these words. There is nothing in Matthew 24 that suggests a global tribulation.

There is, of course, reference to a great tribulation. But it is located in Judea. In fact, if you look at the parallel to it in Luke 21, you can follow verse by verse with Matthew 24 and see that this is the same discourse uttered on the same occasion and point by point follows it, although Luke has it reworded a little bit.

Luke sometimes clarifies the meaning of a Hebraism that Matthew has Jesus saying because Luke is writing to a Gentile who might not understand Hebraism. So, Luke sometimes paraphrases and tells us what is meant by the actual words of Jesus as well as what he said. And so, where Matthew has Jesus saying when you see the abomination of desolation, Luke, in Luke 21, 20, says when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.

Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, just like Matthew 24 said about those who see the abomination of desolation. You in Judea flee to the wilderness, to the mountains. It is the same statement, just paraphrased.

Let those who are in the midst of her depart. Now, verse 22, for these are the days of vengeance that all things that are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and those who are nursing babies in those days.

Sounds like Matthew 24 because it is the same sermon but instead of saying for then shall be great tribulation as Matthew has it, the parallel in Luke says for there will be great distress in verse 23, there will be great distress, that is the same thing as tribulation, in the land. What does that mean? In the land of Israel. And wrath upon who? This people, the Jews.

This is the parallel statement in Luke to that which is the tribulation statement in

Matthew 24. Luke tells us that Jesus is talking about the Roman armies coming against Jerusalem. That's the abomination of desolation according to Luke.

And he was a writer whom we trust. He says that the tribulation or the distress is in the land of Israel and it comes upon this people, Israel. It is not global.

It is not international. It is not multi-ethnic. It is a particular judgment on the nation of Israel which came when the armies came in 70 A.D. That's what Jesus predicted would happen.

That's what did happen. I don't know why we have to look for other fulfillments when in fact exactly what Jesus predicted happened already. I don't think we need to look for additional fulfillments of what has already been fulfilled.

But in Revelation 3.10 we have another place which is sometimes thought to teach a global nature to the tribulation. And that is Revelation 3.10. We look at it when we talk about the rapture. Jesus said to the church of Philadelphia, Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which will come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth.

Because it refers to an hour of temptation or trial that comes on the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. Many feel this proves there is a global tribulation predicted. As I pointed out when we covered this verse a few sessions back, the whole world in Scripture many times means the Roman Empire.

The earth is a word that can be translated the land. And for that reason we could have him just say this is an hour of trial that will come on the whole Roman world as it were as a particular test to those who live in the land of Israel. This again could have been fulfilled in the Jewish war.

It was a test of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire in fact almost collapsed because of Nero's suicide and the following power struggles between three emperors who killed each other and took, I mean it was a huge mess. Many historians say it's amazing that Rome survived it because Hitler, I was about to say Hitler, Nero's suicide created a power vacuum which was not easily filled.

It took about a year and a half or so before they finally replaced him with Vespasian and things mellowed out again. But there was a time of great trial and testing on the whole Roman world almost caused the empire to capsize. And at the same time there was the Jewish war which was testing those who dwelt in the land.

There's no reason why this prediction could not refer to that. Even if I would say I don't care if you believe that it means that or not I can say this there's no reason for it not to mean that and there's no reason therefore to say it must refer to a future actually global situation. Certainly the Bible uses words like the whole world and similar language when

it doesn't mean what we mean by that.

I pointed out to you before in Luke chapter 2 verse 1 a decree went out from Caesar Augustine that all the world should be taxed. Caesar did not intend to tax all the world as we know it. He intended to tax his subjects in the Roman Empire.

All the world means the Roman Empire. If you look at the book of Acts in chapter 2 Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost we have Jewish pilgrims having come to the worship of the day of Pentecost and finding God pours out his spirit there and many of them get saved. But in Acts 2 in describing the confluence of Jews from various nations it says this in verse 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.

Every nation under heaven. Were there some Jews there from the Navajo nation? Were there some from the Incas were there? Obviously not. And we're not supposed to believe that.

There were no Zambeses or Swahili peoples. I mean not every nation under heaven was in fact represented there. How are we to understand that? Well, Jews from every nation under heaven means obviously every nation where Jews lived.

Jews didn't live in every nation they didn't live in North and South America but they did live throughout the Roman Empire. And therefore we have to understand language like that to mean, you know, wherever the Jews lived, they migrated from there or didn't migrate, they made pilgrimages from there to Jerusalem for Pentecost. That's the only sensible way to understand the expression.

In Colossians chapter 1 Colossians chapter 1 verse 6 Paul says of the gospel that it has come to you as it has also in all the world and is bringing forth fruit as it is among you since the day you heard it and knew the grace of God in truth. Notice Paul says the gospel has come into all the world. Now Paul had, no one had preached the gospel this time outside the Roman Empire.

Did Paul not know about nations outside the Roman Empire? Of course he did. He knew about Spain and he knew that the gospel had not been preached there yet. He knew about England.

It had not been reached yet. He certainly knew about the barbarians who were outside the realm of Rome. They hadn't been reached all yet.

And he was even aware that there were people in India and China. He was an educated man. People knew that back then and in parts of Africa which had not been reached yet.

In others he uses what we would call a hyperbole. All the world is a hyperbole. For Paul to say that the gospel had reached all the world simply is using the term in a less than

precisely literal way.

But that's okay because that's understood. If a mother says to her son, I've told you a million times to wipe your feet before you come into the house. She is not, first of all, saying that she has literally said it a million times.

Secondly, she is not intending for her son to believe that she has literally said it a million times. She is neither telling the truth exactly nor is she deceiving. She is using what we call a hyperbole.

It's an exaggeration which is for the sake of emphasis, not for the sake of deception. If a man says, I went fishing. The fish I caught was this long but it got away.

That's an exaggeration it may be and that is for the sake of deception, lying. We have always been taught that exaggeration is lying but there is a form of exaggeration we use all the time that is not intended to deceive. It is a figure of speech called a hyperbole.

You exaggerate for the purpose of being understood to exaggerate. The very fact that you are exaggerating is intended to convey the notion that you mean this powerfully and you are saying it to make an emphasis. And when Paul says the gospel is coming to all the world, he knew there were parts of the world the gospel hadn't reached and he wasn't trying to fool anybody.

He just was using what we call a hyperbole. As he also was in Colossians 1 and verse 23, the same chapter but different verse. He says, If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven.

Wow. Jesus said go and preach the gospel to every creature. Paul said it has been he said this back in what 60 A.D. something like 62 A.D. He says the gospel has been preached to every creature under heaven.

This is a hyperbole. What he is saying is the gospel has been broadly preached to a vast majority of the peoples in the Roman Empire. In most of the cities have been evangelized and so forth.

He overstates it, but we have to allow Paul the right to use hyperbole because all people use hyperbole. And to insist on literalness here is to make Paul a liar because Paul would not be telling the truth if he said the gospel that he preached has been preached to every creature under heaven and in all the world if he meant that literally. Therefore, be careful when you read in Revelation that all the world worships the beast or that our child comes on all the world.

That that doesn't necessarily have to mean the whole world as we use the term because first of all people in biblical times didn't know about that use of the term. They didn't

know about the whole world. Furthermore, even if God knew about it, which he did of course, he did not intend for them to understand it the way we do.

He used the terms the way they would understand them. Therefore, we have to decide when we see things about all the world and all people and all flesh, every creature and so forth, we have to judge from context what the geographical range of the vision is considering. It is not to be jumped to as a conclusion that because it says all the world and every creature and all people and all flesh that it must mean the world over as we would use the term today because that's not how the Bible uses the term.

And of course we have many places like this in Revelation which seem to speak of the whole world or all people or whatever. In Revelation 6 and verse 4 it says in another horse fiery red went out and it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth. Well of course that could be translated peace from the land meaning Israel.

But even if it means peace from the earth in a larger sense it doesn't have to mean the whole planet earth. That's not how it would have been understood by the original readers nor is it necessarily the way that the Bible uses such language. In the same chapter verse 8 it says and I looked and behold a pale horse and the name of him who sat on it was death and Hades followed him and power was given over them to a fourth of the earth could be translated fourth of the land but it doesn't even have to be taken literally at that necessarily.

Chapter 6 also verse 15 says and the kings of the earth and the great men and the rich men and the commanders mighty men every slave every free man hid themselves in the caves in the rocks of the mountains and said the mountains from rocks fall on us. Every man every free man every slave every human. Well probably a hyperbole because even if we wanted to make it fairly literal we couldn't there aren't enough caves for 6 billion inhabitants of the planet earth to hide in right now.

Many would be hiding probably in other places bomb shelters and under bridges and things like that. I mean this is not literal not every human being hides in caves but we could say that as a matter of hyperbole that it's saying that this was the general reaction people in mass sought refuge in hiding places but we have to be careful about extending these things to necessarily mean the whole planet earth in the use of the word earth we could also see the translation equally valid the land which could limit it to Israel therefore we need to be careful if I say how do you know there's going to be a worldwide tribulation I don't think there's any verses that say so other than the ones we've just considered and they don't say so necessarily I mean that's not the necessary way to understand it what about this business of it being unique in history that it's like none ever before or after after all Jesus said that we do want to take Jesus seriously obviously we want it and everyone in the Bible we want all the Bible to be taken seriously what did Jesus mean though is the question when he said it what did he mean he said in verse 21

of Matthew 24 then will be great tribulation such as not been since the beginning of the world until this time no nor ever shall be sounds like never before and never after this is the worst of all time but we've already shown that he's talking about a tribulation that comes on Israel even if it does mean unique in history it would mean unique for them they have never experienced anything worse and they will never experience anything worse in the future either and since he identified this with the time of the Roman armies coming we could argue that what happened to the Jews in the Jewish war and the destruction of Jerusalem and that horrible holocaust is the worst thing that ever had happened to them or will happen to them we could be literal if we wanted to and still apply it to 70 AD but the fact is the term that are that seem to speak of uniqueness are not necessarily literal either I'll show you why if you look at Exodus chapter 10 and verse 14 we have a description of the plague of locusts Exodus 10 and verse 14 says and the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on the territory of Egypt they were very severe previously there had been no such locusts as they nor shall there be such after them this locust plague was the worst never before and never afterward will there ever be a locust plague like that and yet at a later date Joel wrote about a locust plague there's no question about that it's all there in Joel he talks about what the canker worm ate what was not eaten by one stage of the locust was eaten by the other and so forth I don't have time to get into the whole book but everyone who studies Joel knows very well Joel is about a locust plague that was the setting it says in verse 4 of chapter 1 of Joel what the chewing locust left the swarming locust has eaten what the swarming locust left the crawling locust has eaten what the crawling locust has left the consuming locust has eaten so we got locust locust locust galore and with reference to this plague of locusts this is seen as a judgment of God on Jerusalem or Judah and it says in Joel chapter 2 verses 1 and 2 blow the trumpet in Zion sound an alarm in my holy mountain let all the inhabitants of the land tremble for the day of the Lord is coming for it is at hand the day of judgment on the nation which was apparently in the form of these locusts it says a day of darkness and gloominess a day of clouds and thick darkness when locusts come swarming it does bring clouds of locusts and darkness over the land like a morning cloud spread over the mountains a people come great and strong the like of whom has never been nor will there ever be any such after them even for many successive generations now he says a people are coming he's talking about locusts how do we know that because he describes them in verse 5 with the noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble like a strong people set in battle these are locusts they're like people they're not people or you wouldn't call it you wouldn't say they're like a strong people if they were strong people he's got a locust plague in view it's obviously so it says in verse 7 of the same chapter they run like mighty men they're not mighty men they're locusts but they run like mighty men they climb the wall like men of war they're not men of war but they make locusts climb into your house like men of war intruding the point here is we have an extensive description of a locust plague and of those locusts which are figuratively spoken of like an army of men coming it says a people are coming great and strong the like of whom

has never been nor will there ever be such after them well wait a minute here hold it we're talking about a locust plague there's never anything like it never will be afterwards but that's what they said about the locust plague back in Egypt there was never one before like it or afterwards so you've got two separate locust plagues both are unlike anything before or after but how can this be how can this be you can't have two unique things two plagues uniquely the worst one has to be worse than the other obviously to say never been anything like it before never been anything like it afterwards is again a hyperbole it simply is a way of saying this is extraordinarily severe such as in living memory no one has ever seen anything like it and it'll be an awful long time before anyone sees another one although it's basically the literal statement would mean there never was one as bad before and there never will be one as bad after but you can't have two locust plagues of which that can be said or two of anything in 2nd Chronicles 112 2nd Chronicles 112 this is what God promised to Solomon wisdom and knowledge are granted to you and I will give you riches and wealth and honor such as none of the kings have had who have been before you nor shall any after you have the like Solomon will have wealth honor and wisdom more than anyone before or anyone after well literally Jesus has had more wisdom than Solomon Jesus said one greater than Solomon is here meaning himself he came after and there are kings no doubt and modern rich men who are wealthier than Solomon was by you know by as far as purchasing power goes we couldn't be sure because we don't know the exact wealth of Solomon but we know that much more gold has been discovered since the days of Solomon 3000 years ago than was available then and his wealth was mainly in the form of gold and there's much more gold out there now we now have billionaires and multi-billionaires Solomon may have been a billionaire I don't know but it's hard to be sure that God wants us to take this absolutely literally like the locust plague now all I'm saying is that words like there's never been the like nor shall there be might be not literal it might just be a hyperbole saying this is not entirely unique but it's extremely rare it's quite exceptional now if you want to insist on a literal interpretation of the phrase that's alright you can do that Jesus said the great tribulation that would come on Israel in 70 AD would be like none before or like none after possibly that might be literally true you could certainly read Josephus and get the strong impression that there could hardly be anything worse than what they went through but I will turn your attention to Ezekiel 5 8 and 9 before you settle the matter in your mind Ezekiel 5 Ezekiel is predicting the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians that occurred in his lifetime in the midst of his ministry Babylon destroyed Jerusalem he predicted it and in Ezekiel 5 where he's predicting that you can read the context to convince yourself that that's what he's talking about in verses 8 and 9 he says therefore thus says the Lord God indeed I even I am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations and I will do among you that is Jerusalem what I have never done and the like of which I will never do again because of all your abominations now the destruction of Jerusalem in Babylon by the Babylonians God says I've never done anything like this before and I'll never do anything like that again however the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome was extremely close very similar in

almost every detail we don't know which was a more intense time of suffering for the Jews frankly I think the Roman destruction of Jerusalem was probably more horrendous than the Babylonian but we don't have total details on either we have much more details on the Roman one from Josephus but arguably we don't know which is worse than the other but they were certainly very much like each other the things that happened with the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon were very similar to the later destruction of Jerusalem by Rome and yet God said with reference to the destruction by Babylon he's never going to do anything like it again but he did once again we have to understand God's not lying God is using a hyperbole it's ok it's ok for people to use hyperboles and it's ok for God to use hyperboles because to the original readers they understood the figure of speech we have to assume that God uses language that is understandable to the people he's writing to if we are culturally removed from these people by 3000 years or 2500 years or 2000 years well we can't impose our standard of understanding figures of speech upon them we have to ask what figures of speech did they use and understand and that's not hard to discover we just look at all the times these things are said and we say oh I get it I get it this is a figure of speech it's used again and again in a non literal way therefore when Jesus used it he was possibly using the same figure of speech and we would not even have to believe that what happened to Jerusalem in 70 AD was the worst thing that could ever happen to Jerusalem in order to take it as a fulfillment in 70 AD but we could it's just what I'm saying is the idea that the tribulation of which Jesus spoke and Revelation spoke is global in nature and unique in intensity is based on these considerations and they simply don't prove the point in other words if the tribulation were in fact localized to the Roman Empire and to the Jewish nation in particular it would satisfy the language okay I'm not saying that I've proven that it is that we'll have to go further into the Olivet Discourse to know whether that can be proven or not but without claiming to have proven any such thing let me just say this the language could be satisfied the language of prediction recognizing the figures of speech commonly used among the prophets that language can be satisfied even if the fulfillment is only the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the accompanying problems in the Roman Empire at the same time and if there is strong reason to believe that that is what Jesus was talking about and what Revelation is talking about then we don't have to look beyond that necessarily to find what the tribulation that Jesus spoke of is or was now let's look at a few of these other things people are looking for a world government, a casteist society Israel is the center of concern and a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and abomination of desolation and so forth let me say very quickly that all these features are nowhere found connected with the tribulation period for example in Matthew 24 we do not read of any world government we read only of a judgment on Jerusalem we read of nothing more in Matthew 24 we don't read of an antichrist we don't read of a casteist society we don't read of a seven year duration, we don't read of a temple in Jerusalem that was rebuilt in the last days, we read of the old temple being destroyed by the Romans but we don't read of a new temple we don't read of an antichrist putting an image of himself in the temple, none of these are found in Matthew 24 nor are they found in Revelation now

some people think they're found in Revelation but for example where do we get a world government in Revelation, well the first place that they think they find that, in fact probably the only place, is in chapter 13 of Revelation where you have two beasts, one comes out of the sea, one comes out of the land and from the first of these beasts, the whole world marvels at him and he makes them take his number and he executes those who won't take his number and so forth, and he doesn't let them buy or sell if they don't have the number all of this is thought to teach there will be a world ruler still future and he will rule over a world government that has a world currency, or no currency at all, rather a cashless electronic transfer type economy and of course since there are motions geopolitically today in that direction, this only encourages the view that this is probably what Revelation is talking about, on the assumption that Revelation is talking about future things and recognizing that some of those kinds of things are happening today many people feel this is the best way to interpret Revelation, but let me just say, just to put things in perspective before you go hog wild here the beast who rules over the world, remember the world could be the Roman Empire, certainly it could be because it is, in many parts of the Bible it could be there too, in Revelation 13 entirely possible in fact the beast is said to have seven heads, which are seven hills many people believe that refers to Rome, the city on seven hills so I mean be careful before you say that has to mean the whole world, and a world government certainly there is a government there certainly there is a reference to a political power but we don't have any assurance, we at least cannot dogmatically be assured that this is a world government such as we would think of that term today furthermore there is no reference to a cashless society, the closest thing you get in all the Bible to prove a cashless society is going to come along is the fact that at the end of Revelation 13 it says that the beast requires everyone to take a mark on the hand or the forehead, if they do not take this mark they cannot buy or sell this has been dovetailed nicely by many modern teachers with the whole trend in the economy in our times, there is credit people have numbers on their credit cards that identify their account it is possible for such numbers to be applied to the skin or under the skin with a computer chip this can be done furthermore if this were done extensively enough it would actually rule out the need for actual currency you could actually be rid of currency and you could just have credit numbers and just run the whole world on this credit or debit it could be a debit number as well as a credit number, but the point is that you wouldn't need cash, the only problem is the only people who could buy or sell anything would have to have the number because there is no cash transactions anymore and therefore one must have the number and if it is a bad thing to have this number then the people who are good people are out of luck because they can't buy or sell because they don't have the number, all of this dovetails reasonably well with what many people think is happening in the global economy today and maybe they are right but that is a different issue than does the bible say this is going to happen is there any other possible meaning when it says that if someone doesn't take the mark they can't buy or sell, does this mean there is no such thing as cash on the planet or are there other possible reasons they can't buy or sell I mean even if they did have no cash,

couldn't they buy or sell using gold or silver or bartering for food or things like that if they were farmers and had food, couldn't people buy or sell using something other than cash in a cashless society to say someone cannot buy or sell doesn't necessarily mean there is no cash around because even if there were no cash around they still might not be able to buy or sell they might be able to without cash they might use something else it is not synonymous to say on one hand people cannot buy or sell without a mark and on the other hand say therefore there is no cash it is a cashless society, that is only a guess and it may not be a correct one it may be they cannot buy or sell because no one will do business with them because they are not conforming they are not going along with the group they are not taking the mark, they are not doing what everyone else is doing and there may be an outright persecution on such people which is not because there is no cash in this society but simply because people who don't conform are boycotted they are persecuted, this has happened many times in history, Christians in many countries have been boycotted by the Roman Catholic Church, the popes themselves actually commanded that subjects under their dominion should not buy or sell with anyone who is not part of the Catholic Church, there have been decrees like that and there have been other times in other societies where that has happened for all we know, when it says people cannot buy or sell unless they have the mark it may mean nothing more than they will be persecuted and part of that persecution is people will not do business with them it may have nothing to do whatsoever with an electronic cash transfer debit and credit number society, I mean it may mean that but there is no reason to say it must therefore when people say yes the bible predicts the cashless society, I say no it doesn't it doesn't say that anywhere it may be that one of the passages in the bible could be applied to that but it doesn't say that and there is certainly not only one way that it could be understood it could mean something very different than that as far as a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem there is no reference in the bible to a rebuilt temple in the last days there are old testament references to God restoring his people to their land and then building their temple but all those were fulfilled they did rebuild their temple, the prophecies were made before they did so, they were in 70 years in Babylon and before they came back and rebuilt their temple many of the prophets predicted that they would and they did that's been fulfilled, in the new testament there are no predictions that a temple will be rebuilt someone says but isn't there a temple that the man of sin puts himself in yes, but it doesn't say that's a Jewish temple rebuilt in the last days there was after all a temple standing when Paul made the statement in Jerusalem, furthermore there is more than one way that Paul uses the term temple sometimes it means the church you cannot just assume that because the man of sin is said to stand in the temple that this is telling us the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt maybe it will, maybe it won't but that verse doesn't in any sense prove it doesn't revelation have a temple in it yes, there is a measuring of the temple in Revelation 11 but that temple was probably standing when it was written there is no reference to a temple being rebuilt in the last days not in the bible anyway and there is no reference to the man of sin putting an image of himself in the temple in fact the only place you read of an image of the beast

even is in Revelation 13 and it does say that the second beast makes an image of the first beast and requires people to worship that image or else die but in Revelation 13 if you go through, or the rest of Revelation for that matter, you'll never find a reference to the temple being the place where this image is placed there is no reference to this image of the beast ever being put in the temple now, what the dispensationist does he says, well the beast is the same as the man of sin and in 2 Thessalonians, the man of sin sets himself up in the temple and claims he's God yes, but that's different, it doesn't say an image of the man of sin, it says the man of sin sets himself up in the temple the image of the beast is never said to go into the temple the image of the beast is found only in Revelation 13 and there is no mention of the temple there the man of sin is mentioned only in 2 Thessalonians 2 and there's no mention of an image there and in fact, what he said there is different than that an image of him will be put, it says he will set himself up there, so I mean, there's a lot of attempts to merge scriptures together that don't all belong together, and that brings me to the point I really want to talk about in the remainder of our class here today which is about approximately a half hour not enough time to do it justice, but enough to talk about it a little bit, and that is what about this idea of a future antichrist? Where does that come from? Does the Bible predict that there will be an antichrist that will arise in the last days and rule the world and so forth? Well, not by that name, anyway the word antichrist is not found in scripture except in the book of 1 John and the book of 2 John outside of these two small epistles the word antichrist is not in scripture and in those places let us find out what antichrist is when mentioned in scripture in 1 John 1 John chapter 2 and verse 18 John says little children, it is the last hour and as you've heard that the antichrist is coming even now many antichrists have come by which we know that it is the last hour okay, many antichrists have come the antichrist is coming and we know that he's come because it's the last hour, we know that because many antichrists have come apparently the coming of antichrist John felt was fulfilled in the coming of many antichrists furthermore, how does he define antichrist? Look at chapter 2 of 1 John and verse 22 1 John 2.22, he says who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ he is antichrist who denies the father and the son anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ, John says is antichrist in chapter 4 1 John 4 and verse 3 says every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God and this is the spirit of antichrist of the antichrist, which you have heard was coming and now is already in the world what is already in the world? The antichrist the spirit of the antichrist you've heard that he was coming and now he's here when did John write this? in the first century now, how did John define antichrist? he said the antichrist you've heard that he's coming and he's now in the world ok, so the antichrist is already in the world, when John wrote I hear many prophecies today, I am convinced that somewhere in the world today the antichrist lives he just remains to be fulfilled after the rapture of the church, to be revealed well, I don't think the antichrist lives today unless he lives a very long time, because he was alive when John was alive, he says you've heard that it should come and it's now here in the world whatever they had heard was coming with reference to antichrist, John said it's already come thereby

we know it's the final hour well, what did he define as antichrist? well, whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ is antichrist anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is coming to the flesh, that's antichrist, and he says the same thing over in 2 John in 2 John chapter well, there's only one chapter, but verse 7, he says for many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming to the flesh, this is a deceiver and an antichrist now, some might say but isn't there a difference between the antichrist and an antichrist, couldn't there be a lot of antichrists, but there's one particular antichrist well, yes, could be, in fact we do find him referring to the antichrist in 1 John 2.18, you have heard that the antichrist is coming but he says as we pointed out in chapter 4 verse 3 this is the spirit of the antichrist which you have heard was coming now, he already said in chapter 2.16, you've heard the antichrist is coming, you've heard the antichrist is coming, and he says and now he's already in the world so, either all antichrists combined are the antichrist, or else, all deceivers and deniers of Christ are antichrists but one particular antichrist is anticipated but he was already there when John was writing there may be one particular antichrist that stands out above all others, and if so, John says he was there, in the world already and so, I don't think and by the way, we've just looked at all the passages in the Bible that use the word antichrist, there are no others yes, ma'am yes, that's right there are some, in fact, there are some manuscripts, and they would be the Alexandrian manuscripts, as opposed to the text of Receptus, they leave out the word the, before antichrist, so it would just be you have heard that antichrist is coming and now many antichrists have come, and that fulfills it, likewise I think in chapter 4 where is it? yeah, well, there it seems like the antichrist would be in all the documents but the point is, the spirit of the antichrist he said, you've heard it's coming and it's here, it's already come so, John does not indicate that there is an additional antichrist to be anticipated after his own time unless all who deny Christ throughout the whole age of the church are the antichrist because he says, whoever denies that Jesus Christ is antichrist so, it's quite ambiguous one thing we don't have is a prediction of a future individual after John's time, who would be the antichrist now, where then do we get the notion that there will be a future antichrist? well, there are a few passages, not very many, which have certain bad guys mentioned in them whom dispensationalists equate with antichrists and by the way, church fathers did this too the church fathers felt like there were some particular bad guys called antichrists and maybe even one in particular to be concerned about there is, for example, in Daniel chapter 7 a reference to a little horn this is of course, a symbol, it's a little horn that grows up on the head of a beast that already had ten horns, but now another little horn comes up and plugs up three of the former ten etc. this is all symbolic, but this little horn is personified and in verses 24 and 25 it says of this little horn the ten horns are ten kings who shall rise from the kingdom and another shall rise after him, that's the little horn he shall be different from the first ones he shall subdue three kings and he shall speak pompous words against the most high he shall persecute the saints of the most high and shall intend to change times in law and the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time now, here is a little horn that persecutes Christians, blasphemes God and is a

serious problem, he grows up as it turns out, out of the fourth beast in Daniel chapter 7, the fourth beast is the Roman Empire, so this little horn grows up out of the Roman Empire by the way, the Roman Empire is no longer around and therefore the little horn must have appeared already, because it grows up out of the Roman Empire, in fact the indication is that he grows up and appears upon the fall of the Roman Empire, because if you look at the imagery it says in Daniel 7, 8, I was considering the horns and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them this is growing on the head of the fourth beast, which was the Roman Empire, and it says by whom the three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots and there in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking pompous words, now it says it says this happened when the beast was destroyed, in verse 11 I watched when the beast, I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking, and I watched until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame, as for the rest of the beast they had dominion, etc, etc, and I was watching, and later on he sees the little horn's activity more, but the little horn's rise comes in association with the destruction of the fourth beast's body and throughout history most interpreters meaning the church fathers and even the reformers believed the fourth beast is Rome and the death of the Roman Empire brought the little horn that the little horn rose up in the place of the Roman Empire and that this happened historically however dispensationists think the little horn is a future antichrist who will rise up in a future tribulation period, now how do they work that out? Because the little horn grows up out of the Roman Empire, how can that be that he's a future individual? Well they say there will be a revived Roman Empire in the last days where do they get this? Well they get this from their imagination because the Bible nowhere says that the Roman Empire will be revived in the last days, what they really get it from is Daniel chapter 2 where Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about an image, it was made of four metals and the fourth metal was legs of iron and these represent the Roman Empire but the feet of those legs were struck by a stone which was the kingdom of God which grew and filled the whole earth, now throughout history Christians believe that the Roman Empire was the original Roman Empire and the kingdom of God was established during the time of the Roman Empire when Jesus came dispensationists though don't believe that Jesus established the kingdom when he came therefore the stone has not yet hit the feet, yet the Roman Empire has fallen, therefore they have a convenient gap between the ankles and the feet, you've got the ankles and the legs of the statue are the ancient Roman Empire the feet however are a future Roman Empire with about 1500 years gap between the ankles and the feet of the image so that you have a last days revival of the Roman Empire, why? So that the stone can be future instead of past in the image the stone is the kingdom of God, dispensationists don't believe the kingdom of God was established with the first coming of Christ like he said it was, they believe he failed to do that, pulled it off, postponed it and he'll establish it when he comes back throughout history Christians have believed because the Bible says that Jesus established the kingdom of God at his first coming and therefore the stone struck the feet of that image which was the Roman Empire in the days of the

ancient Roman Empire there's no reason to import a 1500 year gap between the ankles and the feet and there's no reason to suggest a future revived Roman Empire in order to do so, it is just wild conjecture on the part of dispensationists to stick gaps here and there and everywhere 2000 year gaps here 1500 year gaps there, though there's not a clue, a hint of any kind in scripture that such gaps are to be found this is not, by the way literal interpretation, it is interpretation based on convenience and necessity for a postulate that is untenable needing to be proved by twisting and manipulating of scripture okay, so let me just say this the little horn who is thought by dispensationists to be a future antichrist is actually a figure that rose up out of the Roman Empire according to Daniel now let's look at another figure, this is the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 now the bible nowhere says that the man of sin is the same, it doesn't call him antichrist and does not identify him necessarily with the little horn though it does appear that Paul was thinking of the little horn when he talked about the man of sin because there are similar things, I mean we don't have to insist that he was talking about the little horn but there is sufficient reason to believe that he probably was, because when he talks about the man of sin he says in 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 3 let no one deceive you by any means, 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 and that is worshipped so that he sits as God in the temple of God showing himself that he is God now this is what we read of the man of sin he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God and he sits as God in the temple of God as if he is God and it says also of him a little later on in verse 9, the coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs and lying wonders, with all unrighteousness or unrighteous deception among those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth now he portrays himself to be God, sits in the temple of God has signs and wonders if this is the same figure as the little horn in Daniel, and I'm going to suggest it likely that it is, though it's not certain, then he also persecutes the saints now Paul does not say this man is going to arise in the end times he does say that this man of sin has to arise before the Lord comes back but he doesn't say that he'll arise just before the Lord comes back it is a dispensational assumption that the man of sin must have a career of only three and a half years because they equate the man of sin with the beast in Revelation who is said to have a career of three and a half years but the point here is that Paul does not make such an equation, all he tells us is that there will rise a man of perdition, a son of perdition who will position himself in the temple of God, now this is taken by the dispensationalists to be the Jewish temple in the last days, rebuilt but this is not likely in my opinion, first of all there's two better opinions, different from each other but both better than that one one is that he's talking about the temple that was standing when he was on earth, when Paul wrote this the temple in Jerusalem was still standing and when he says the temple of God, there's no reason why his readers would immediately convey this in their mind to some future rebuilt temple in the end times when in fact there was a temple of Jerusalem right now, if they were to think of a Jerusalem temple, why transport it to sometime centuries off why not think naturally

of the temple there now and there are many interpreters who are not dispensational who think that he was talking about the Jewish temple in Jerusalem that was standing at the time, this would be much more natural for Paul to mean and for his readers to understand him to mean, that he means the temple that's there now in Jerusalem when he wrote it than that he's talking about some future temple that would come after this temple is destroyed there's no hint of that in Paul now another view, and it's one that I personally favor, is that he's not talking about a temple in Jerusalem at all he says the man of Sinai positioned himself in the temple of God but the term temple of God is found elsewhere in Paul and he tells us what is the temple of God in his other writings, for example in 1 Corinthians 6 excuse me, 1 Corinthians 3 verse 16 and 17 1 Corinthians 3 16 and 17, Paul says, do you not know that you, the church are the temple of God, same expression and that the spirit of God dwells in you, if anyone defiles the temple of God God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are who is the temple of God in Paul's theology, the church is the temple of God, the body of Christ the Christians are if you look at 1 Corinthians 6 he uses only slightly different language but equivalent 1 Corinthians 6 19 says, do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own so the Christian's individual body is the temple of the Holy Spirit but the church is the temple of God now when Paul says of the man of sin, he will set himself up in the temple of God, Paul has already set a precedent for what he means by that, well he may not have, because he may not have written 1 Corinthians first, but we have it first we have Paul's understanding in 1 Corinthians of what the temple of God is, I might point out that nowhere in Paul's writings do we know of him ever referring to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem as the temple of God Jesus once referred to it as my father's house, but by the end of his ministry he called it your house he said to the Jews, my father's house is to be a house of prayer, later though he said, your house has left you desolate, it's not God's he's moved out, it's not the father's house, it's not God's temple it's yours, you Jewish priest who reject God and reject Christ, it's not God's house, he's not there, according to Paul and according to Jesus, the temple in Jerusalem is not God's house, the temple of God is the church therefore, if the man of sin postures himself in the church, the temple of God that tells us a lot, especially if he's the one who rises upon the fall of the Roman Empire because after the Roman Empire fell, there was an entity that arose up in Rome, in the church that blasphemed God claimed to be God, required worship, persecuted the saints mercilessly, and performed signs and wonders, this entity is called the Papacy and when the Roman Empire fell the Popes filled the and you know what the early church fathers all believed that when Paul said there's something restraining the rise of the man of sin the early church fathers did not live to see the Papacy come, the Papacy arose in the 6th century the church fathers I'm talking about were in the 2nd and 3rd centuries and 4th and they all believed that when Paul said something is restraining the man of sin, but when that something is taken away, then the man of sin will rise, they believed Paul was referring to the Roman Empire was restraining it and they said the reason that Paul was ambiguous about it is because Paul had earlier been kicked out of Thessalonica

on the charges that he was speaking things against Rome, against the Roman Empire we read that of course in Acts chapter 17, he was run out of town on the charges of teaching things against Rome, now he writes to the church in that town, Thessalonica and says you know what's hindering the rise of the man of sin but when that is taken out of the way, he'll rise, now if that which hinders is the Roman Empire, as every one of the church fathers unanimously believed it was, then the taking away of the Roman Empire would speak of the fall of Rome, now Paul's already been accused of being against Rome he didn't want to be misunderstood and so he doesn't mention what it is the church there knows what he's talking about, you know what I'm talking about when that is taken away, then the man of sin will rise, where did he get that idea? well, how about from Daniel the beast, the Roman Empire dies the little horn rises up in its place therefore the Roman Empire would have to be taken away before the man of sin could rise this may not be the correct interpretation but if it is not, it certainly has had a lot of worthy proponents because I'll quote from some historians E.B. Eliot said we have the consenting testimony of the early fathers from Irenaeus to the disciple of St. John down to Chrysostom and Jerome, to the effect that the hindrance to the rise of the Antichrist was understood to be the imperial power ruling and residing at Rome, in other words the emperors the empire of Rome was that which hindered the rise of Antichrist, according to all the church fathers from Irenaeus, the disciple of John, down to Chrysostom and Jerome a couple centuries later another writer Ralph Woodrow says, based on the above texts, Justin Martyr Hippolytus, Tertullian Cyril of Rome, Jerome Ambrose, Chrysostom and all the other early fathers taught that upon the fall of the Roman Empire the empire would be divided into ten nations among whom would rise a man of sin as an eleventh kingdom that's what all the church fathers taught they didn't live to see the fall of Rome so they never identified the man of sin they just believed that when the Roman Empire would fall he'd rise, based on Daniel chapter 7 and based on Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2 all the church fathers that left any record about this, and there were a lot of them all believed the same thing they could have been wrong but if they were wrong, they were all wrong together there's no known case of anyone having a different opinion in the early church a guy named Tanner said, quote 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 Saint Paul had spoken as hindering the appearance of Antichrist upon the scene of the world another historian named Guinness wrote, quote 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 rise.

Now again we can't base everything we believe on what the church fathers taught, but it's interesting that they all taught exactly the same thing, they all thought that there were no dispensationalists among them who thought this was some future Antichrist in the tribulation period, they believed this was something that would rise when the Roman Empire would fall now, what did rise when the Roman Empire fell? well, the papacy did

and the reformers who lived after that looking back on it agreed with the church fathers, they agreed that the Roman Empire was what Paul was referring to and that Paul turned out to be right history proved him right, when the Roman Empire fell the man of sin rose and so the reformers like John Huss, Martin Luther Ulrich Zwingli John Calvin, John Knox Tyndale, and all the reformers believed that the Roman papacy, or the popes were the man of sin, or Antichrist now you might say, but that's more than one man so is the body of Christ more than one man but it's called a new man, God is made of the two Jew and Gentile, one new man, the body of Christ a corporate entity and the man of sin apparently, according to the reformers ended up being not a single man, but a class of man a type of man, the popes and that the popes were in fact, the little horn, supposedly now do they meet the criteria? Did the popes claim to be God? Well, Pope Leo the 8th, in 1897 said, we meaning the popes, hold the place of almighty God on earth Pope Pius the 11th on April 30th 1922 said, quote 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 this earth, unquote here's an extract of an actual papal claim made by Pope Nicholas Pope Nicholas said, quote the Roman pontiff, which means the pope, judges all men but is judged by no one I have the authority of the king of kings I am all and 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 me but God? Wherefore he continues no marvel if it be in my power to change time and times to alter and abrogate laws to dispense with all things yea, with the precepts of Christ for where Christ bideth 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, that every creature be subject to me, unquote did the popes make blasphemous claims? did they claim to be God? did they rise up in the temple of God the church and make claims of being God and demand worship? they absolutely did there's no question of it, it's documented these come from Catholic records not from Protestant records these are the claims the popes made it's interesting that that one, Pope Nicholas said I have the right to change times and laws if you read Daniel 7 carefully it says the little horn seeks to change times and laws, interestingly enough the pope inadvertently claimed to be that man of sin that little horn have miracles been performed? signs and lying wonders? the man of sin comes in the power of Satan in signs and lying wonders did the popes do that? well, 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, which are the marks of Christ's crucifixion, have appeared on the hands and feet of some people many have claimed that they have had Mary appear to them and heal their sicknesses etc. we all know about these things if you know anything about church history or even about the present there are modern claims of Mary appearing and healing people all of this is associated with the popes authority all of this is part of the papal

organization which is not the church it is simply the papal organization a man-made organization that is against Christ in its doctrines and in its historical practices what about persecuting Christians? the little horn persecutes the saints did the pope ever do that? well during what we call the middle ages, about a thousand years from about 500 to 1500 AD it is estimated that 50 million Christians were killed by Catholic forces not all of them by direct decree of the pope but by Catholic kings and so forth who were loyal to the pope as well because these people were anti-Catholic the Waldensys, the Albigensys, and many groups like that that are not well known today but opposed the popes because they were Christian were killed, were put to death in the Spanish Inquisition and so forth among other things they were beaten and mutilated they were 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 thrown to hungry dogs their women were raped and dismembered and this continued for the greater part of a thousand years when the Roman church was the only church available if you disagreed with them and wanted to read your Bible you faced torture on the rack or worse and this happened for about a thousand years, yes I dare say he wasted the saints this man of sin interestingly the Roman Catholic church when accused of being the man of sin didn't like the accusation being applied to it and so they came up with something else, in 1591 a Spanish Jesuit named Francisco Ribeiro wrote a 500 page commentary espousing the view that the Antichrist in Scripture refers to a singular future ruler who would arise in the last days, this view is called Futurism and the first person to ever come up with it was a Spanish Jesuit defending the Pope against the charge of being Antichrist in 1591 his name was Francisco Ribeiro, everyone knows this who studies the history no one disputes this, the first person to suggest that the Antichrist is one individual living in the last days who has not yet come was a Spanish Jesuit coming to the defense of the Pope who for hundreds of years had been identified as the Antichrist by Protestants and people who didn't believe in what the Pope said by the way this teaching of Francisco Ribeiro was rejected by all Protestants for over 200 years until Samuel Maitland, a librarian for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Church of England, became the first Protestant to accept Futurism this man wrote 50 books exercised strong influence over Protestant thinking, Futurism later was picked up by John Nelson Darby and became part of the dispensational system so that the belief in a future Antichrist came into Evangelical Christianity from a Jesuit to defend the Pope from the charge that all Christians who were not Catholics believed that the Pope was the man of sin as far as the beast in Revelation, that's someone else altogether, not the man of sin or the little horn, the beast is a system that can be demonstrated by exegesis unfortunately we can't do it right now we will have more to say on such things a little later. We're out of time now though and we need to look in detail at the Olivet Discourse which is what we will do in our next sessions.