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1 and 2 Thessalonians (Overview) - Part 2



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

Discover the powerful themes of love, work ethics, and the Christian perspective on death and grieving in the Epistles of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In these letters, written by the apostle Paul, he addresses issues such as sexual immorality, the importance of loving one another, the duty to work diligently, and the Christian's unique understanding of death. Paul also discusses the second coming of Jesus and the concept of the Antichrist, providing insights into eschatological beliefs of the time. Gain valuable insights into Christian values and beliefs from the teachings of Paul in these captivating epistles.

Transcript

Now we're going to get to really what is the fun part of the Thessalonian epistles, because especially the eschatological part, everyone's interested in that, unless you're just sick of it. I know I heard so much about it when I was young, I did get sick of it, but then I learned some new things, and it was more interesting again. But Thessalonians is very, very popular books to talk about when you're talking about eschatology.

But I mentioned there are three things, three concerns in the first book, and all three of them appear in the fourth chapter. And that's where we pick it up right now. Finally, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.

For you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God, that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

Therefore, he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us the Holy Spirit. So this is the first of the concerns. And that is to avoid, as it reads in his

translation, sexual immorality.

King James says fornication. The word fornication means sexual immorality. Maybe in modern times, the word fornication in English is used mostly for premarital sex.

But in the Bible, the word pornea, the Greek word, actually is used to refer to any kind of sex that's not within the bounds of legitimate marriage. And therefore, for example, in the book of Jude, the word pornea is referred to the homosexual sex of the people in Sodom. In 1 Corinthians 5, verse one, pornea is used to speak about incest between a man and probably his stepmother.

In the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew text, pornea is used to speak of the adultery that Israel commits when they worship other gods. It's a metaphor for cheating on God, but he says they committed fornication. He's referring to breaking marriage vows So, you know, yeah, premarital sex is also fornication.

And also some people say in the context of Paul's writings that pornea mainly refers to prostitution, especially temple prostitution, since that was so common in those days. But there's no reason to think that Paul is restricting his idea of pornea to simply temple prostitution, especially when he goes on to say, don't defraud your brother in this matter. Obviously he's saying, don't sleep with your brother's wife.

You're not defrauding any brothers when you're sleeping with a temple prostitute, but any kind of sexual impurity is pornea. Now, by the way, you know, sex outside of marriage is a pretty light thing in our modern culture. Not only do every, almost every movie that has a man and a woman in it show them, you know, almost as soon as they meet each other, you know, going to bed together.

I mean, it makes it look so common and so normal and so ordinary. But more than that, even, you know, in the whole issue of same-sex marriage or even any kind of homosexual behavior, the real issue here is not that we are homophobes if we object to homosexual behavior. We are pro-marriage.

We're pro-biblical sex. And sex in the Bible is part of a sacred institution that God created, the very first human institution he created. He made man and said, it's not good for man to be alone.

So he made a wife and he told them to be fruitful and to multiply, which means he said, have sex. And he said, for this cause, a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two should become one flesh. In Matthew 19, when Jesus was asked by the Pharisees, can a man divorce his wife for any cause? He said, well, didn't you hear what marriage is? Didn't you read that when God made them male and female, he said a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they should be one flesh.

If God made them one flesh, God joined them together. Who is a man to break them apart? In other words, he sees, he tells us, Jesus tells us what marriage is. A man and a woman, a husband leaving his father and mother, cleaving to his wife, that's marriage.

That's the only place that God made people to become one flesh. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says that if a man sleeps with a harlot, he becomes one flesh with her. Obviously becoming one flesh is something that happens through sexual union.

The reason that any kind of sex outside of marriage is wrong is not because sex is dirty, but that sex is too sacred. There are things that were set apart for special purposes in the Old Testament. There were spoons and plates and bowls in the temple that could be used for nothing else, but for temple sacrifice uses.

If you took those home and did something else with them, that was sacrilege. That was a defiling of something that was really sacred. You're not allowed to take something sacred and treat it like something common.

Now, God made marriage as a sacred union. Sex is one of the defining features of marriage. It is a sacred thing in the eyes of God.

It is not a dirty thing, but it's much too clean, much too sacred to drag it into the gutter or to just spread it around. In Solomon's writing to his son in Proverbs 5, he says, listen, rejoice with the wife of your youth. Why should your fountains be dispersed abroad in the streets? He's talking about why should you release your sexual drive indiscriminately out there? You've got a wife for that, he said.

And the thing is that marriage is simply not believed in anymore. Ever since the 1960s, when our country made in every state no-fault divorce, suddenly marriage was no longer understood at all because marriage by definition is one that you cannot have a no-fault divorce. That's what Jesus said.

What God has joined together, man should not break it apart. Now there are things that couples can do. There's such a violation, like committing adultery, that it does break it apart.

And the spouse who's the victim of that can be free, Jesus suggested in his teaching on divorce. It is possible to be divorced, but only if your partner has trashed the covenant. If your partner has not done that and you get divorced, you're trashing the covenant.

You're tearing apart two things that God has joined together. They're not to be separated. Someone's always at fault when there's a divorce.

There's no such thing as a no-fault divorce. When our country adopted no-fault divorce, it trashed the very definition of marriage. And that was in the 60s.

It wasn't until the 21st century that we decided to go so far as to say it doesn't really matter what gender or sex the person is that you marry, it can still be married. That trashed it even further. Our society doesn't even know what marriage is and doesn't honor it and doesn't respect it.

Christians are not of the world. We are a counterculture. We are an alternative society that follows Jesus.

And whatever the world does, whatever the world thinks about marriage, about sex is irrelevant to us. It's what God says that matters. And Paul said, God has called you to holiness.

This is the will of God for you. Your sanctification means being holy. Sanctification means to become holy.

He said that everyone should possess his vessel in sanctification and honor. Now the word vessel there, some translations translate it as wife. And over in 1 Peter 3, Peter says that a husband should honor his wife as the weaker vessel.

So some think, well, Paul's using the word vessel that way too, the wife. And so sometimes I should say every man should know how to take a wife in sanctification and honor. And there's certainly nothing wrong with that.

I'm not sure if that's how Paul meant it because Paul also talks about in 2 Corinthians 4, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, in our bodies. So our bodies are called vessels by Paul. Our wives are called vessels by Peter and either could fit here.

To be holy, to be sexually pure, you need to know how to take your wife in purity and sanctification and honor. Or you need to know how to maintain your body in sanctification and honor. In any case, you should have a very high view of sex and of marriage.

And this is something that was just basically not sacred in Greek culture. And Paul says, well, God calls it sacred. He wants you to be sanctified, holy in the use of your body.

And he says, make sure you don't defraud your brother in this matter. In other words, don't sleep with his wife because the Lord is the avenger of those who do that. Now you don't want to do something that God has promised that he will avenge the person that you victimized.

And if you sleep with another man's wife, if a woman sleeps with another woman's husband, they're making a victim of a brother in Christ or at least another human being. Doesn't matter even if they're not a brother in Christ, you're not allowed to do that. And God will avenge that.

And he says, if you reject that, you're not rejecting man, you're rejecting God. Wow. If you reject God, you're not a Christian.

If you despise that is lightly regarded what I've instructed here, you are rejecting God. God who gave us the Holy Spirit, which is a way of saying your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God gave you the Holy Spirit, you are defiling the temple of God.

Paul actually puts it in those very words in 1 Corinthians 6. He's talking about the same thing. He's talking about fornication. And he says, do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have of God? So that's in 1 Corinthians 6 on the same subject.

So this is, Paul makes these strong statements against fornication and he doesn't have to make them again. Apparently the church obeyed. Maybe they were obeying already.

He doesn't say that they weren't. He doesn't say I've heard that there's fornicators among you. It may be that he just knew this is a big problem for new Christians in a pagan world.

So I better make sure I give them strong words about it, which he did. They may never have compromised in this area, but they apparently certainly didn't after he wrote this. Now, how about those who don't work? This comes up in verses nine through 12.

But concerning brotherly love, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. And indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia.

But we urge you brethren, that you increase more and more, that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside and that you may lack nothing. Now it's interesting. I said this paragraph has to do with working and not being lazy and so forth.

But it starts out by talking about loving your brother. You get through those verses, not intending to be worse than, where's the business about working? It is the basis of your requirement of working that you love your brother. Why? Because you do to others what you want done to you.

That's loving your neighbors, you love yourself. Now, ever since the fall, we might even say since the creation, but we don't read much about that, but before the fall. But since the fall, the Bible says that a man will eat bread by the sweat of his face.

He'll have to toil. After he's banished from the garden, he had to face thorns and thistles and difficulty in farming, but he's gonna have to work if he's gonna eat. In the garden, they didn't have to work very hard.

They could just pick the fruit and live off the fruit. That was easy. But now they had to go out and grow grain, grow crops.

They had to work, they had to fight against the elements, and you're gonna have to work for it. Now, the Bible makes it very clear that wealth, which was often in the form of food, is produced by labor. This is a huge difference between the biblical worldview and say, the socialist or the communist idea about wealth because they have the pie image.

All the welfare in the world is like a pie and you divide it as equally as possible among everyone. And if anyone gets a bigger piece than someone else, someone else is losing part of theirs. In other words, the idea is there's a set amount of wealth.

It's not gonna increase or decrease. It just has to be distributed fairly. And therefore, if anyone has more than someone else, they, by having more, are depriving someone else.

Now, the biblical view of wealth is not that way. The biblical view of wealth is, wealth is created by work. A man can work a lot and have more wealth than someone else.

That doesn't mean that someone else can't have enough if he works hard too. There's more than enough wealth in the creation to be grown. There's more than enough food to be grown.

There's more than enough minerals. There's more than enough people that are, oh, we've got too many people in the world. There's just too many people.

The world can't sustain it. Not true. You could take every human being on the planet right now and put them in the state of Texas and give them a sizable yard and house.

And the rest of the world could be cultivated outside the state of Texas, the whole world. That's how many, the world is not full. They can pass this idea on you because we live in cities and cities are crowded.

Cities are full. Cities are overpopulated. And if most people live in cities, so they can fall for this lie, oh, the world is overpopulated.

Well, it first seems like, look at the traffic here. My goodness. I guess the world is overpopulated.

We need fewer people out here. Yeah, but take a drive across the United States sometime and see how crowded it is. Get out of the city.

Even California, the most populous state in the United States, once you get north of Ventura, you start seeing there's a lot of empty space out here. There's enough farmland in California to support the whole nation and several other countries beside if they just let them get water instead of trying to support that minnow or whatever it is they're making. I'm not using the water to preserve the animal.

The point is there is no shortage of potential. Perhaps there could be a total number of people that would be overcrowd things, but we're very, very far from that. But the socialist idea is you don't create more wealth.

You just divide up what's already there. And the government will take more than their share. But that's because they're the good guys.

Everyone else can live on whatever they leave behind and divide that up equally. No, the Bible says you work, you produce. When you produce, food comes.

Now, for me to eat food requires that either I or somebody else has to work for that food to be produced. I can grow it in my own yard if I can do that. If I can't, someone else is gonna have to grow it in their field.

And I'll have to do something profitable to get the money to give to them to barter the food that they produce. I can barter with these pieces of paper or metal that someone thinks is of value for what I'm doing. So, I mean, I may not grow crops, but I'm supposed to be producing something that's worth the amount.

In a godly economy, there should be no transaction where one person comes out ahead of the other. The person who buys something should be buying something of the same value as what they're paying for it. If you cheat somebody, by the way, naturally people do that.

People won't pay more for something than they think it's worth. If you're charging too much, they'll find a competitor and they'll buy it from them. They won't pay more than it's worth unless they're deceived by the seller.

And that, of course, is being crooked. That's not allowed. The Christian should have this in mind.

Whatever I purchase from someone else, I want to be giving them, or barter, I want to give them something of equal value to them as what I'm receiving from them. I'm not here to take advantage of other people for my good. I'm here to love my neighbors, I love myself.

Now, if I eat food, somebody had to work to make that food happen. If I don't work, somebody else is gonna have to do not only their share of the work, but my share too. Because there's gotta be the same amount of work done to produce it.

And everyone who eats food that they did not contribute value for in their labor is making somebody else do more labor than they should have to do to cover your lazy butt. I know I sound like a politician of a certain stripe, but I'm not really talking about politics. I'm talking about morality.

I'm talking about ethics. I'm talking about what the Bible teaches about what's loving your neighbor. Paul begins by saying, love your brother, love your brother, work with your hands.

Why is that loving my brother? Because that way I'm not making him work with his hands to feed me when I'm doing nothing. I should be eager to do more work than the next person if I love my brothers more than myself. Look what Paul says in Ephesians chapter four.

Ephesians four, in verse 28, Paul says, let him who stole, that is before he was a Christian, he was a thief, let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands, what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need. Now, there's just two ways you can look at things about finances. You can labor, well, there's three ways.

You can labor to support yourself, or you can not labor at all, and then you're stealing from someone else, or you can labor enough to give to other people who can't provide for themselves. He says, go that last way. Don't steal and don't even just support yourself.

Do at least that, but try to work with your hands so you have something to give to others who have need to. That's the Christian's attitude, is not how much can I milk the system for, but how much can I actually sacrifice so others can have more of what they need. Now, this does become obviously political because of the whole, it's been politicized, the economy is politicized, and it has a lot to do with what taxes are used for and what taxes the government has the right to take and what the righteous use of the taxes are.

All I can say is this, if a person cannot work, then they should be supported. In my opinion, the first people who should support are their family. If their family can't or won't, then the church should, especially if these are Christians.

If a Christian is disabled and they can't work, the church should support them. If they're not Christians, then charitable organizations can support them, but the government should not support them because the government doesn't own anything. If the government's gonna give me money, it has to take it from someone else who would rather not.

I had a guy call my show and said he's into, you know, favorable toward the universal healthcare, this is back when Obama was president, and this Christian guy from Connecticut called me and said, I think we Christians should support this because there's people who can't afford to pay their bills. We shouldn't leave them, you know, sick. And I said, well, yes.

Do they have no families? Do they have, are there no charities? America's full of

charitable organizations that help people. There's even hospitals that are charities. Are there no, is there no church that they're a part of? I mean, he says, yeah, but, you know, it's nice if people give voluntarily, but not enough people do.

And so we have to tax people to give. And I said, so you think that people who are not willing to give should be extorted at gunpoint by the government to give to the people that you think should have more because the people who should support them are neglecting, is that what you're telling me? I said, what if you had a bunch of thugs running around in a small town where you lived and they're holding you up and saying, we've got some charities we want to give to, so give us your wallet. Would you think that was a good thing? Is that something Christians should support? He said, no.

I said, that's all it is. He says, well, more people should voluntarily give. I said, yes, and I hope they do.

But if they don't, you want to be extorted from them. You're not, this taxation for health care, it's not for the people who generously want to give, it's for the people who don't want to and the government has to make them do it. You don't have to tax me to help the poor.

I have my own charitable policies and I give a fair amount to the poor. Taxation for that purpose is not for people like me, it's for people who say, no, I don't want to, and I don't want to take their money. I don't want to take it from my favorite charities.

I certainly don't want to take it from them for the government's favorite charities. The government's favorite charities are themselves for the most part, and that's where most of the taxes go and the rest of it goes to charities that don't have Christian values in most cases. In fact, they'll withhold from Christian organizations.

Because that's mixing church with state, they think. So in other words, anyone who thinks that a Christian should support a system where money is taken against somebody's will from them, money they earned, money they own, that's robbery. You take something that someone doesn't want to give you, you take it by force, that's robbery.

You give it to a charity, it's still robbery and it's not generous. For the government to take your money and give it to me when you didn't want to give me the money is for them to not, they're not being generous and neither are you. There's no generosity in this because you're not being generous because the money's taken, it's extorted from you, you didn't do it on purpose, so you're not being generous.

And the government's not being generous because they're not giving their money, they're giving your money. Anyone can give someone else's money away. That's not generosity.

These policies are not merciful and generous policies, they are extortion. Now you might say, but don't you care about the poor? You better know I do, I lived in poverty most of my adult life. And when I say poverty, I mean, I had no money much of the time.

But I never coveted another man's money. I would never take money at gunpoint from someone else. I wouldn't hire the government to do it either.

This is, a Christian should have conscience about this. I love my brother, that means I'm not gonna take from him what he doesn't wanna willingly give, even if I feel like I need it. That's my problem, not his.

I should go to God about that, that's not his problem. If you love your brother, you will not eat food if you have not done work or produced something of value commensurate to what you're eating. Let me just show you what he says in second Thessalonians about this since he's on the same subject as I mentioned, he gets a little stronger on it in second Thessalonians three, verse six.

But we command you brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us for we were not disorderly among you nor did we eat anyone's bread for free of charge but we worked with labor and toil night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you. Not because we don't have the authority but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

For even when we were with you, we commanded you this that if anyone will not work neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all but are busy bodies. Now, those who are such, we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

Now it's interesting, same thing he said in chapter four of the previous, he said, work in quietness, earn your own food but he's much stronger on it here. He uses the word I command several times here and he used the word disorderly several times. In the Greek, these two words are words from military context.

The word command he uses here is not the same as it's used in some other places in the Bible. This word is like a commanding officer giving commands to the troops. And the word disorderly, which he says like three times in this passage, it's a Greek word that is a military word that speaks of a soldier breaking ranks.

Someone who's out of step in the march, somebody who's not in line. And he's addressing them saying, I'm like a commander telling you that anyone who's not working is not in line, they're breaking ranks. Everyone's supposed to be carrying the same load

here.

If one guy steps out of line and lets others carry his share, that's not okay. He says, that person should not be allowed to eat. He does say, don't keep company with someone who does that which means it's a pretty big deal.

And so it's one of the few things Paul mentions in the Bible that should be a matter of excommunication or disfellowshipping somebody. Now, as with other issues of disfellowshipping people in Paul's writings or Jesus's, you don't disfellowship someone the first time they do something wrong. If they're doing something wrong, you confront them about it.

If they're a believer, they'll want to correct themselves because that's what believers are. They're people who want to follow Jesus. And if it's been a blind spot, oh, I realized that I haven't been working as hard as somebody else, and here I'm eating your food, I feel terrible, I'm gonna go do more work.

I'm gonna support myself and others if I can. But if they don't repent, you confront it again. And if they don't repent, then you make it a matter of church discipline.

So you confront it as if it was a fornication issue because Paul said you have to exercise church discipline against the fornicator in Corinth. Well, church discipline against this here too. So this is not a small matter, it's a huge matter.

Why? Because the people who have to support you if you don't work are often really hardworking people who don't have all that much to give anyway. A lot of people are struggling under, for example, heavy taxation, which taxation is allegedly gonna help you out if you're on welfare or if you're on medical assistance or whatever. Now, I'm not saying that if someone gives you something, you can't accept it, but you should be very concerned about whether you're receiving stolen goods or not.

And you should do all you can not to. And I didn't understand these things when I was younger. I didn't know anything about economics or politics or anything like that.

But as I grew up and learned what the Bible said, I realized that, wow, there's a lot that goes on in this country as far as distribution of wealth that is frankly ungodly, things that Paul would excommunicate people in church for. So we just need to be mindful of that. This is not a matter of legalism, it's a matter of love.

If you love your brother, you don't wanna put a bigger burden on him so you don't have to carry such a burden yourself. That's the opposite of love. And that's why Paul gets into it as he does there in 1 Thessalonians 4, he starts off, we talk about love your brother more and work with your own hands and support yourself.

Now, the last issue of course for us to discuss is the last one he brings up in 1

Thessalonians 4, which is of course, eschatology. Now this is a very well-known passage, but fairly misunderstood in some circles, I believe. 1 Thessalonians 4, 13, I do not want you to be ignorant brethren concerning those who have fallen asleep.

This is a euphemism for having died. So I'm falling asleep as those who've died. Lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

Now, Paul says we should not sorrow if our loved ones die the way people sorrow who have no hope. This is not forbidding you to grieve, but you certainly will not grieve if you understand Christian doctrine, you will not grieve the way people do who don't have any hope. Psychologists say that when you suffer a significant loss, you go through five stages of grieving.

The list, they all say that, but the list is not the same in every book you read. But worst of all, it's even in Christian psychology books. I remember reading a book called Happiness is a Choice by two Christians, one was a Christian psychologist and one was a Christian psychiatrist, Minnerith and Meyer, the book Happiness is a Choice.

And they said every normal person when suffering a significant loss, they go through five stages of grieving. And the first is denial. And then there's like anger turned outward.

Then there's anger turned inward. And then there's some people would put bargaining in there somewhere. And then someone say, and finally you've got resolution.

Weeping is I think the fourth one they gave and then resolution. Some of them stick some other things in there, different things. It's interesting that all people go through the five stages of grieving, but the experts don't remember what those five are.

At least they don't agree what they are. Though presumably they have the same data to work with. The truth is though, that I would say maybe psychologists have come to this conclusion because the people that they see are people who are grieving in a way that Christians don't grieve.

And therefore they have observed how people who have no hope grieve. But Paul says, we don't grieve as others have no hope. I had a wife who was killed in an accident back in 1980.

And God just gave me a lot of peace and a lot of grace in the situation. I grieved, of course, how do you not grieve? But God strengthened me, I managed it. And in fact, I managed it well enough that some people thought, oh, I think you're in the first stage of grieving, you're in denial.

You better be careful because when this stage passes, it's gonna hit you like a ton of bricks, you're gonna need some people around. But I'm not in denial, I'm in affirmation. When my wife died and I was told she was dead, I said, the Lord gives and the Lord takes

away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. That's not denial, that's affirmation. I'm affirming that God is sovereign here.

And that's what Christians believe. And therefore, we have a hope that others don't have. And it may be that someone with no hope will go through five stages of grieving.

I never did, I never went through two of them. Let's skip all the way to weeping. I never got to the anger turned outward or anger turned inward or whatever.

So I missed the first three steps. And that was 40 years ago. So I don't think it's gonna happen in my future.

I'm good, thank you. But you see, people don't realize that Christians, though we do grieve, we don't have to grieve the way unbelievers do. That's what Paul says.

And he said, I don't want you to sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. Those who sleep in Jesus, of course, are the dead.

Now, sleep is a euphemism. He's not saying they're literally asleep. Paul says elsewhere that he was eager to die so that he could depart and be with the Lord.

He said that in Philippians chapter one. In second Corinthians two, he said, as long as we're in this body, we're absent from the Lord, but we're eager to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. So Paul believed that when we are absent from the body as Christians, we are present with the Lord.

We're not unconscious. There are people who believe in a doctrine called soul sleep, and they base some of it, a lot of it on the fact that sleep is a euphemism for death, both in Jesus and Paul's writings. And the reason it is used as a metaphor for death is not because sleep is an unconscious state, and therefore we are supposed to understand death is an unconscious state.

Sleep is not an unconscious state. Most mornings when I wake up, I remember having dreams. I often don't remember all the contents, but I remember I was dreaming.

I wasn't unconscious. My mind was not blank. I was not aware of what's going on in the room around me while I was asleep, but I was in another world.

My mind was not dead. It was active. Sleep is not an unconscious state.

And therefore, it'd make a terrible metaphor for death if someone's trying to say death is an unconscious state. It's like sleep. Well, wait, sleep isn't.

Why would that be like death? Now, how is sleep like death? Why does Paul and Jesus speak of death as sleep? There's something similar. What is it? It's temporary. When people go to sleep, you know it's not the end.

They're gonna wake up. And a Christian knows that when a person dies, they're gonna get up from that too. It doesn't mean they're unconscious in the meantime, but it means that their body goes down like a person going to sleep.

It's gonna come up again from the grave like someone waking from sleep. And that's when the spirit comes back from God. Paul says, those who sleep in Jesus, he'll bring with him.

He'll bring with him when he comes. They are with him now. And we'll come back and he'll restore those souls to their bodies and we'll be glorified in the resurrection.

That's Paul's doctrine. And that's what he's suggesting here. He says, for this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. Now you notice that Paul said when Jesus comes back with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, two things will happen.

The dead will rise and the living will rise. The dead will rise first. Now he says the dead in Christ will rise first.

And there are many who believe that there's two resurrections. The first one is the dead in Christ when Jesus comes back. And the second one is the wicked dead who will rise for judgment at the end of the millennium.

This is the pre-millennial view. If you're pre-millennial, you believe there's two resurrections, the righteous, the church rises when Jesus returns. And a thousand years later at the end of the millennium, the unrighteous rise.

Why do they say that? Because there definitely is in Revelation 20, at the end of the millennium, there's a resurrection. And they say that's the unrighteous being resurrected. But see, they believe Jesus came back at the beginning of the millennium and raised the righteous dead.

So that's why they believe there's two resurrections. I don't see it that way. I'm not pre-

millennial.

I'm not gonna get into that. Jesus and Paul both elsewhere said that there's only one resurrection that includes both the righteous and the wicked. Jesus said that in John chapter five, verses 28 and 29.

He said, do not marvel at this. The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves, that's dead bodies, shall hear his voice and come forth. Those who've done good to the resurrection of life and those who've done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.

That's in one hour. The hour is coming in which they all come out. Some go one way, some go another way.

Jesus also said that of course in Matthew 25, verse 31, when the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all his holy angels with him, he'll sit on the throne of his glory and he'll gather all the nations before him. But the good ones or the bad ones? Well, the sheep and the goats are both there. The good ones that go to eternal life, into the kingdom, prepared for them from the beginning of the world, and those who go into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

That happens when the Son of Man comes and sits on his throne. That's one thing, one moment. Paul said the same thing in Acts chapter 24, verse 15.

When he's before, he's on trial and the Jews are there and they're his accusers. He says, hey, I'm on trial for believing in the resurrection. I believe the same thing they do.

He says, I accept the same thing they do, that there will be a resurrection from the dead, both of the just and the unjust. A resurrection. It'll include the just and the unjust.

Now, there's nothing in the Bible that says there's only, that there's any resurrection that's just the righteous. But this passage is sometimes thought to because he says the dead in Christ will rise first. As if he's saying, but the dead who are not in Christ won't rise then.

This is first, later, the dead who are not in Christ rise. But he's not contrasting the rising of Christians from the dead from non-Christians rising from the dead. He's contrasting the rising of Christians from the dead from the rising of living Christians.

The contrast is not between two groups of people who are rising, one is the righteous and one is the unrighteous. It's between two groups of Christians that are rising, the dead ones first, then the living ones afterward. The dead in Christ will rise first, then the living who are alive and ready will be caught up to meet Him in the air.

This is not confirming that there's a separate resurrection for the righteous. He's saying you people are Christians. You're wondering about your loved ones who've died.

They died in Christ. You don't have to worry because the dead in Christ are gonna rise. He doesn't say it, but elsewhere he says, and the non-Christians are gonna rise then too, but not to the same fate.

Our hope is not the same as theirs, but our hope is that our dead in Christ will rise and join Christ in the air and also the living will do so. This is what we call the rapture of the church. Now the word rapture is not in the English Bible, but it's the word that the English word rapture is based upon, the root of it is in the Latin Bible of this passage.

Once those will be caught up in the Latin, it says it's the word raptura or rapturous. I don't remember what form it's in, but it's a root of our English word rapture. So this is called the rapture.

When Jesus comes back, there's the resurrection and the rapture. That's on, Jesus said on the last day. In John six, Jesus said, I will raise them up, meaning his people on the last day.

He said it again and again. He who eats my flesh and drinks his blood has eternal life and I'll raise him up on the last day. No one comes to me unless the father draws him and I will raise him up on the last day.

You know, this is what he's saying. The Christians will be raised up on the last day, the dead and the living, and that's what Paul says. The dead first and the living, same day, same hour, Jesus said.

Now that being so, we have one of the clearest affirmations of the rapture in the Bible. The other one, the only other clear affirmation of the rapture is in first Corinthians 15. Now it's interesting, Paul here tells us that the living will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Paul talks about the rapture and the resurrection also in first Corinthians 15, starting around verse 51, I suppose. And he says, behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, meaning we won't all die, but we will all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.

The dead shall be raised incorruptible, that's the resurrection, and we shall be changed. Paul, no doubt speaking, hopefully, that since he was alive at that moment, maybe he would be with that, and he said, you know, those who are alive will be changed. And he said, this mortal must put on immortality, and this corruptible must put on incorruption.

Our bodies are gonna be glorified. Now it's interesting, when he talks about the rapture and the resurrection in first Corinthians, he doesn't mention going up in the air, he just mentions being changed, glorified. In first Thessalonians, he doesn't talk about being glorified, he just talks about being caught up in the air.

But together, they're talking about the same thing, so we get the whole picture from these two passages. The only two passages that clearly speak about the rapture of the kings. There are a few others that talk about the resurrection, but not the rapture.

Now, a caller called my show a day or two ago, and said, you know, I believe there's a pre-trib rapture, because it's right here. In first Thessalonians chapter four. And we read the passage, I don't see the tribulation here.

I don't see anything here about pre-trib, or mid-trib, or even post-trib. I just don't see anything about the trib at all. In fact, Paul never even mentions the tribulation, unless it was back in chapter three, verse four, where he says, I told you we're gonna go through tribulation.

He certainly never said we're not gonna go through tribulation, never said the rapture will come before we have to face such a thing. So, many times, they'll say to me, you don't believe in the rapture, right? Of course I believe in the rapture. The church has always believed in the rapture.

It's a Christian doctrine from earliest times. But they didn't believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. Many people have never heard of the rapture, except in a pre-tribulational sense.

To them, the rapture means escaping from the tribulation before it happens. That's what the word rapture means, then. We're looking for the rapture, meaning we're looking for it escaping from the coming bad times on the earth.

No, that's not what the rapture is. The rapture is the catching up of the living saints immediately after the catching up of the dead saints and the change and the glorification of our bodies. But it's not, the word rapture doesn't say anything about the tribulation.

There's two passages about the rapture. Neither passage mentions the tribulation any way at all. Therefore, you'll never find the word rapture, or the idea of the rapture, found in the same passage with any reference to the tribulation.

Therefore, any ideas about pre-trib, mid-trib, post-trib, you're gonna have to come from other considerations, not from any passages that actually mention the rapture. And there is no place in the Bible that talks about a pre-trib rapture. Some people can deduce it, if they wish, from certain passages, which I think they're misunderstanding, but that's free to do it.

I'm simply pointing out what's there and what's not there. There's simply not, it's not there, okay? So, then he continues to talk about the second coming and ramifications, chapter five. But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes

as a thief in the night, for when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they shall not escape.

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness.

Therefore, let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night. Those who get drunk are drunk at night.

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Therefore, comfort one each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Now, a couple of things here. Verse nine is also sort of a proof text for the pre-trib rapture. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The argument goes like this. The great tribulation that's coming on the world is God's wrath on the world. And therefore, since God has not appointed us for wrath, he obviously doesn't want us to be here for that time because that's his wrath, and he didn't appoint us for that, so we'll be raptured before that happens.

Well, let me just say, first of all, there's not a reason in the world to think that when Paul says wrath, he's thinking of the tribulation. God's wrath is spoken of throughout the whole Bible, almost never referring to the tribulation, if ever. I think revelation alone might give us the key when we have the bowls of wrath poured out.

That's, I guess, where they get the idea that the tribulation's God's wrath, but there's lots of God's wrath throughout the whole Bible. God's wrath is his anger. God's wrath is his judgment on sin.

And that is, God has not appointed us to experience his wrath, but salvation. Notice he says salvation as opposed to wrath rather than rapture as opposed to wrath. He could have said, God has not appointed us to go through the wrath of tribulation, he's appointed us to go through the rapture.

No, he's talking about salvation. Salvation is the opposite of wrath. On the day of judgment, there's going to be many who face the wrath of God, not us, because we will have salvation, and salvation is instead of that.

Secondly, even if we wish to accommodate them and say, okay, let's say the wrath is the

tribulation, this doesn't say that we'll be raptured before that. To say God did not appoint us to wrath, suppose he is talking about the tribulation. I don't believe there's a reason in the world to think he is, but let's just go with that.

Suppose he's saying the tribulation is the wrath of God. Does that mean we can't be here for that? What's it look like? When you read Revelation, you read about plagues like those that came on Egypt, right? Blood, locusts, frogs, sores, the same plagues, a lot of the same plagues that were in Egypt. In Exodus, you see in Revelation, is that the wrath of God? Well, it certainly was the wrath of God on Egypt, but Israel was in Egypt when God poured out that wrath, and they were spared it because God did not appoint them for that.

The plagues were not appointed for Israel, nor Israel for them, but they were still there while the Egyptians were. God delivered from Egypt after the plagues were done. Israel remained in Egypt through the whole cycle of the 10 plagues and was not rescued until afterward, but God kept them through it.

So it's entirely possible for the church to be here, even if tribulation, even if God's wrath is being poured out on the world in tribulation, he hasn't appointed us for wrath. That doesn't mean we can't be here. God could spare us.

God knows how to hit his enemies and miss his friends. He's a sharpshooter. He's not using a shotgun here.

And so there's nothing at all in this verse that says that Paul ever believed in a preacher of rapture. But notice he says, about the times and the seasons, I shouldn't have to tell you this because we know very well that his coming is gonna be like a thief in the night. Now he's of course, quoting Jesus from Matthew 24, who said that you should be like, that his coming will be like a thief in the night.

And Jesus also said, it's not for you to know the times and the seasons. In Acts chapter one, verse seven, it's not for you to know the times of the seasons, which the father put his own authority. And he says about times and seasons, I shouldn't have to tell you, you're not gonna know.

It's not for you to know. You never know when the thief is gonna come. You just gotta be ready all the time.

Just be ready all the time. You should be doing today what you want to be found doing when Jesus comes back, because maybe he'll come today, you never know. Maybe he won't come in your lifetime.

Maybe instead of him coming in your lifetime, death will come in your lifetime. That might surprise you as much as his first coming. And it's all the same.

You should be doing the same thing every day that you hope to be found by God doing when you die. If you get hit by a truck when you're on your way home and you die tonight, you should say, well, I was ready for that. If Jesus comes back tonight, you should say, I was ready for that.

Why would I be doing anything that I wouldn't want to be caught doing either by death or rapture? It doesn't matter. The second coming of Christ is gonna have the same consequences on the righteous and the unrighteous as death will in terms of desirable or undesirable impact. Now, Paul says, it's like a thief.

They'll be saying peace and safety. Now, some people describe the tribulation as anything but a time of peace and safety. It makes it sound like the whole world is in chaos when Jesus comes back.

That's because they apply revelation and the olive discourse in ways that I think Jesus didn't intend it to be taken, but nonetheless, it's a very common view that the world's gonna have rivers flowing with flames of tar and blood all over the world. And a third of mankind's been wiped out and the seas turned to blood. All the ships are sunk and all the floating dead fish are there.

And it's gonna be plagues and horrible stuff, hailstones, a hundred pounds each. That doesn't sound like peace and safety to me. Paul said, he's gonna come when people aren't expecting it.

They're gonna be thinking peace and safety. Jesus said the same thing. He says, it's gonna be like the days of Noah.

They were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were getting married. All the things you do in peacetime, all the things you do when you're not worried about stuff. You get married, you buy stuff, you eat and drink, you enjoy life.

Now he didn't name any sins there. Certainly people sinned in the days of Noah, but Jesus didn't mention any of their sins, only their ordinary behavior that everyone does. The point he was making is not that it's gonna be like the days of Noah in that those were really wicked times and the last days will be really wicked times.

No, it's gonna be like the days of Noah in that they had no idea until the moment the flood came that they were even in danger because it's a peaceful circumstances. Eating, drinking, getting married, buying and selling. You don't do that if you're in a war zone.

You don't do that with plagues and carnivorous locusts with scorpion tails flying around tormenting everyone. You probably would put off your wedding plans a bit until things calmed down a little bit. The point is, they'll be saying peace and safety.

When Jesus comes, it'll be a time when people don't have any idea that anything's out of

the ordinary. And then boom, without warning it comes. Now, then he says, but you are not of the night that his coming should overtake you as a thief.

Now, many people say, see, we will know he's coming. We'll be reading the signs of the times. We'll know his coming is near because we're, yeah, he's gonna come like a thief, but only to the unbelievers, not to us.

The unbelievers won't be expecting him, but we'll be expecting him because he's not gonna overtake us like a thief. And therefore we'll know. Well, how will we know? By the signs of the times.

You mean the same signs of the times that for hundreds of years, every generation of Christians were reading and saying, he's coming now, he's coming now, he's coming now, coming now. The same signs of the times that Harold Campion was talking about when he predicted Jesus would come back in 2011, or previously when he said he'd come back in the 1990s. The same signs of the times that Hal Lindsey said would guarantee that the rapture would happen in 1981.

Those signs of the times? What signs of the times? I'll tell you what, if we're supposed to know when Jesus is coming, the signs of the times, no one has figured out what those signs of the times are yet. No one has been able to predict it yet. Christians in every generation have thought it was soon, and it wasn't.

It might be soon now. I'm not saying it isn't, but I'm not making any predictions because we can't predict. It's not for us to know.

So what does Paul mean when he says we're not of the night that his coming would overtake us as thieves? He goes on and says, we're people of the light. We're not getting drunk. People get drunk at night.

We're living soberly. We're living in a way that his coming will not be a threat to us. When a thief breaks into your house in the middle of the night and you're not ready for him, it's a terrifying thing.

It's a home invasion. I mean, it's really a scary thing to think there's somebody in the house here and we didn't invite them in. A thief is a very unwelcome kind of a guest.

Well, Jesus is gonna come unexpectedly to us like a thief too, and even said it in Matthew 24. He said to his disciples, watch, for at a time that you do not think, your master will come. He's gonna come like a thief in the sense that you never know when a thief might show up.

You also don't know when he's gonna come back. But it's not gonna be like a thief, really, for you. I mean, you won't expect him, but you'll be glad he's here.

You're more like servants waiting for their beloved master to come home, not people fearing a thief breaking in. His coming will be as unexpected as a thief's coming is, but you won't experience it like the wicked will because they will be totally unprepared. They're children of the night.

They're getting drunk. They're living like people who don't wanna face God. You're children of the day, so you don't do that.

So it's not gonna be like having a thief break into your home for you. It's gonna be welcome, not unwelcome. That's the point.

He's not saying that you'll know when he's coming more than the wicked do. There's nothing in the Bible that suggests that Christians will know before Jesus arrives that he's about to arrive. Now, one other passage we need to take, and this is in 2 Thessalonians.

We already saw 2 Thessalonians 3 when we were talking about working and not eating and so forth. The other thing we need to talk about is the eschatology in 2 Thessalonians. We've talked about the eschatology in 1 Thessalonians.

This one is very intriguing. It's about the man of lawlessness. If you were getting tired and thinking, maybe I'll slip out of here, I don't think you want to right now.

He's outside the door waiting for you. No, you wanna know what this is about. So let's look at it.

2 Thessalonians 2, verse one. 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 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 worshiped so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do not you 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, 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 and that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Now we're gonna stop reading there and we're gonna talk about this passage.

He begins by again, introducing the idea of the second coming of Christ. Now he mentions concern the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto him. Now this is the same people he wrote 1 Thessalonians 4 to probably a few weeks earlier, where he said, when Jesus comes, we're gonna meet him in the air.

That sounds like what he means by our gathering together unto him. Some people think he's talking about something else, but I really think given the context of the first epistle to the same people, he's talking about by the coming of Christ and our gathering to him, I think that's the rapture. Because Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4, it's when Jesus comes with a shout in the voice of the archangel and the trump of God that the dead in Christ rise and the living in Christ.

It happens at the coming of the Lord. So here he mentions the coming of Christ and the rapture. And he says, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled either by spirit or word or by letter as if it was from us.

Apparently there were fake letters as if they were from Paul floating around. Don't believe him, he said. If they're saying that the day of Christ had come.

Now you might say, how could they think the day of Christ had come? Well, when Jesus comes, isn't that the end of the world? Isn't that gonna, isn't the earth gonna burn up with the flames or something like that? Well, yes, but they didn't know that. Remember, they'd only had a few weeks with Paul. They didn't have a complete eschatological picture.

Paul told them Jesus is gonna come back. Maybe he hadn't told them all that's gonna accompany that. Remember, he had to tell them about the resurrection and the rapture in the first epistle.

They apparently didn't know that. He started that discussion where he said, I don't want you to be ignorant of this concerning those who died. So apparently when he was with them, he hadn't told them enough for them to have a real clear picture of what this means.

And apparently there are false teachers going and saying, yeah, the day of the Lord, that's come already. I don't know what they thought it was, but the people in Thessalonica weren't sure they were wrong. Well, maybe that is true.

Maybe after Paul left, Jesus, who knows? Maybe Jesus came back secret. Remember, Jesus warned people in the olive discourse. If they say to you, oh, he's here, he's over in the desert, he's in here in this secret compartment, don't believe it.

Because as lightning flashes from the east, the sun shall show the sun of man, be it his coming. So notice, he did say there would be people who claimed that he came back kind of quietly and secretly. And apparently some people were saying that, the very thing Jesus said, if they say that, don't believe it.

Paul says, if they say that, don't believe it. I didn't send that letter. That's not anything that's true.

He said, that day, let no one deceive you by means, that day will not come. What day? The day of the coming of the Lord and the rapture of the church are gathering together unto him, right? That day will not come unless the falling away comes first. Some translations say the rebellion comes first.

And the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. Now, the second coming and the rapture, he says, cannot come until there's first a falling away and the revelation of the man of sin, or the man of lawlessness, it says in the modern, in the older manuscripts, man of sin, I think is in the older, the newer manuscripts. Anyway, the man of sin, now, generally speaking, people referred to the man of sin in popular teaching on eschatology as the antichrist.

There is no reference in the Bible that's a clear reference to an antichrist. The word antichrist only occurs in two books of the Bible, and it's not in any of the eschatological books. It's not in Revelation, not in the Olivet Discourse, not in Thessalonians.

There's no mention of antichrist anywhere there. In 1 John and 2 John. In 1 John, John tells us, whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ, the same as antichrist.

He said, you have heard that antichrist is coming, but there's already many antichrists whereby we know it is the last hour. That's in 1 John chapter two. In 1 John chapter four, he says, whoever denies that Jesus Christ can profess the same, that's the spirit of antichrist.

And in 2 John, he says the same thing. These are people who deny that Jesus is the Christ, these are antichrists. Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ is antichrist.

He does not mention one person who is antichrist. And he said, there are many of them already. Writing in the first century, already there's many antichrists.

Therefore, we know there's nothing more to look for. We know where it's the final hour. If you're looking for the antichrist, there's many already, and that means we're in the final hour.

He did not believe there's an antichrist, at least not, he didn't use that term. He didn't use the term for it. That is gonna come in the end times.

It has not had not yet come in his own time. Now, by the way, the word antichrist is not found anywhere else, except in those passages in 1 and 2 John. But in Revelation 13, there's a description of a beast with seven heads and 10 horns.

In 2 Thessalonians, there's a talk about a man of lawlessness. In Daniel chapter seven, there's a little horn that grows out of the fourth beast. And in Daniel chapter 11, there's a willful king who is a very bad person.

Now, in popular eschatology, all these bad guys, the beast in Revelation, the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians, the little horn in Daniel seven, and there's another little horn, a different one in Daniel eight. They put them together. They say, that's the antichrist.

And so, Christians often just say, there's this coming person called the antichrist. And even though the Bible doesn't call him the antichrist, he is seen as the beast in Revelation. He's the man of sin in Thessalonians.

He's the little horn in Daniel seven and eight. And he's the willful king in Daniel 11. Suffice it to say, there's no reason in the world to believe that all those bad guys are the same bad guys.

I was listening to a very famous radio preacher, dispensationalist some years ago, and he's going through the Psalms. And there's a statement in the Psalms that something like, you know, the wicked will come to ruin, but the righteous will flourish or something like that. A very generic statement.

And this commentator said, the wicked there refers to the antichrist who's coming. And the righteous refers to the tribulation saints. There's nothing in that Psalm that has any allusion to eschatology, antichrist, tribulation.

It's just, there are certain kinds of people who whenever they find a bad person mentioned, that's him. Oh, that's him too. That's him too.

That's him too. They've made this composite picture called the antichrist, which the Bible doesn't call antichrist. Now let me say this.

I believe the little horn in Daniel seven, no doubt is the same as the man of sin in Thessalonians, but there's no reason to believe that's the same as the beast in Revelation 13. First of all, the beast in Revelation 13 is not an individual. It has seven heads that are seven kings.

It has 10 horns, they're 10 kings. One of the heads gets killed, but the beast lives on because it has six more heads. It's not a man.

It's a political empire, political system with lots of kings and so forth. It's not an individual man, any more than Daniel's beasts were. Daniel had four beasts come out of the sea.

The one in Revelation 13 is a composite of all four. And none of them were a man. The first one was Babylon.

The second was Medo-Persia. The third one was Greece. And the fourth one was Rome.

These are empires. The beasts in Daniel are empires. And so is the beast, no doubt in Revelation, who is a composite of all of them.

So there's no reason to think of the beast in Revelation as a man or an individual antichrist. What about the man of lawlessness though? What do we know about him? From this chapter, this is the only chapter in the Bible that mentions the man of lawlessness by that name. What do we know? I got you in your notes, the second page of your notes.

Oh, I've got everything you need to know right there. Most commentators agree that he is to be identified with the little horn of Daniel seven. I agree.

I think the little horn of Daniel seven is probably the same as the man of sin. However, the little horn of Daniel eight is not. The little horn of Daniel seven grows out of the fourth beast, which is the Roman empire.

The little horn of Daniel eight grows out of the ram, which is Alexander the Great's empire, the Greek empire. They're not even from the same nationality. So they're not the same person.

Likewise, the willful king in Daniel 11, I have no reason in the world to think that's either of the little horns. Okay, so there's just nothing in Daniel to identify them, nor elsewhere in scripture. So what I can say is the only, of all these bad guys who are recruited for Antichrist, the man of sin and the little horn in Daniel seven very probably are to be identified.

The church fathers believe that. Almost everybody believes that. Dispensationalists believe that.

I believe that. I mean, if people that diverse can believe it, it must have something in its favor. And that's because many of the same things are said about it, and it makes sense.

But let me just say this. What does Paul say the man of sin will do, the man of lawlessness? He says he'll cause or arise due to a great rebellion. There's gotta be a great rebellion first, then he'll rise.

Maybe he causes it, maybe he comes after it. Great rebellion comes, he rises to power. Secondly, he exalts himself above God.

There's been a lot of people in history who've done that, unfortunately. So that's not very specific, but that's something he'll do. He'll sit in the temple of God.

Now, from this, many people have deduced that a future Antichrist will sit in the Jewish temple that will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, a third temple. The Bible nowhere mentions a third temple being built in Jerusalem, but it is believed by many that there will be a third temple built in Jerusalem. The Antichrist will be very much a part of that.

He'll be encouraging that, and once it is built, he'll put an image of himself in that temple, and that will be what is called the abomination of desolation. Let me just say the abomination of desolation is identified in scripture, and it's not a reference to an image of an Antichrist in a temple. We'll not worry about that right now since Thessalonians doesn't use that term.

But Thessalonians doesn't even make reference to an image. It doesn't say the man of sin will put an image of himself in the temple, it says he will sit in the temple saying that he is God. Now, where do you get the image part? That comes from Revelation 13, the beast, the second beast makes an image of the first beast and makes everyone worship it.

There's no mention of it being in a temple, no mention of it being in Jerusalem. It's not located anywhere in particular in the vision. It is not at all associated with the Jewish temple.

It's just there's an image made, and people are supposed to worship it. The man of sin, on the other hand, doesn't have an image of himself made. He sits in the temple of God, and it's not the Jewish temple.

Now, it might seem like I'm being a little too sure myself about that, but I think that since Paul used the expression temple of God here and two other places, we can decide what he believed the temple of God is. In 1 Corinthians 3.16, 1 Corinthians 3.16, he said to the church, do you not know that you are the temple of God? Same phrase he uses here. In 2 Corinthians 6.16, speaking to the church, do you not know that you are the temple of God? Three times in Paul's writings, he uses the word temple of God.

Two of those times, he tells us what the temple of God is. It's the church. The third time, he doesn't mention what it is, but there's no reason to believe he's changed his mind at this point.

Therefore, it sounds like he's saying the man of sin will sit in the church, at least the visible church, the institutional church, and claim that he's God. Okay, what else will he do? Paul says he'll perform signs and lying wonders by Satan's power, 2 Thessalonians 2.9. So there'll be supernatural deception for those who do not love the truth. So God will send strong delusion by allowing this supernatural farce to take place, just like the magicians of Pharaoh were able to do supernatural things, apparently, to steer Pharaoh's eyes away from the miracles.

God let that happen. Now, it doesn't say so in Thessalonians, but when it talks about the little horn in Daniel 7, verses 24 through 25, it says he's gonna persecute the saints. And if this is the same character, I'm going to assume it is.

You don't have to assume it until you've looked it over. If you don't think it is, then I don't think there's anyone in the world who will agree with you that it isn't, because I don't know of any school that doesn't see them as the same, but you're still welcome to make up your own mind, as everyone should. But if it's the same person, then we know this.

He's going to exalt himself above God. He's gonna sit in the church. He's going to perform lion signs and wonders by the power of Satan.

And he's gonna persecute the true saints. Okay? That's the information given to us here. The only questionable thing about that is whether the temple of God means the church.

If you want that to be the Jewish temple, you're welcome to, but you've got no scripture in your support. If you want it to be the church, you've got Paul's own definition of the temple of God twice elsewhere to tell you what it is. So I'm gonna go with Paul.

Okay? So that's what we know about the man of sin. What restrains him? Paul said to the readers, you know what restrains him. But when that restrainer is taken out of the way, then he'll rise.

Now, the interesting thing here is that Paul has been a little bit vague. I don't know what restrains him. Paul doesn't tell us what restrains him.

He does say, remember when I was with you, I told you these things, but I'm not gonna tell you again now. You know what I'm talking about. You know what it is that's restraining him.

And when that's taken away, then watch out, he's coming. Now, whatever it is that's restraining him, it's gonna have to make sense. Is it something that could restrain him? Is it something that Paul would not want to speak openly about? The most popular view I know today, and it's the dispensational view, but it goes back.

There's people before dispensations held it, is the idea that it's the Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit in the church. The Holy Spirit resides in the church. As long as the church is in the world, the Holy Spirit's in the world, he will restrain the rise of the men of sin.

What this means, of course, is that the rapture of the church has to take place before the men of sin can rise because the presence of the church is preventing it. And when it is taken out of the way, Paul says, then he'll rise. So if the restrainer is the Holy Spirit in the church, which is the dispensational view, then the church has to be taken away before the men of sin rises.

Only problem with that is that three or four verses earlier, Paul said, the church, we cannot be gathered, Jesus can't come and gather to himself until the men of sin has already been revealed. So which is it? Does the men of sin have to be revealed first, then the rapture can happen? Or does the church have to be taken out first, then the men of sin can be revealed? Well, he's rather explicit in the opening verses. He's much more vague in these verses about you know what it is, but we know what it isn't.

It isn't the church because the church is gonna be here after he is visible. That's what Paul said. So the church's removal can't be a necessity before he rises.

So this whole idea simply doesn't fit the passage at all. I did say someone before the dispensation, back in 450 AD, Theodoret of Cyr thought that Paul's alluding to the Holy Spirit, but he didn't believe in the pre-trib rapture. He just believed the Holy Spirit's restraining the men of sin during the present time.

A second view is that it's just God's decree. He's been withheld by God's decree. This was the view, I'm sorry, that's the view of Theodoret of Cyr.

The Holy Spirit was thought, Severin of Gabala in 400 thought it was the Holy Spirit. So these two views existed in the fifth century. Severin of Gabala thought it was the Holy Spirit.

Theodoret of Cyr thought it was God's decree, and it could well be. It could be that God's just, his decree is saying you can't rise yet. When God removes that instruction, then he rises.

But there was a very commonly held view by most of the church fathers. I've listed some of them, Tertullian, Lactantius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome. These are pretty mainstream important church fathers.

And they start back in 155 AD, all the way up into year 400. All of these thought that what is preventing the men of sin from rising, and it has to be taken out of the way, is the Roman Empire. Now, why would they think that? Because they did equate the men of sin with the little horn of Daniel seven.

And the little horn grows out of the Roman Empire, the fourth beast. But in Daniel seven, it says, I watched as the fourth beast was killed, and its body was given to the burning flames. It's the fall of Rome, the destruction of the Roman Empire.

The fourth beast is the Roman Empire. So it was killed, and it was burned. That did happen to Rome in the fifth century.

That was after these church fathers lived, but they knew it was gonna happen, because they saw it in Daniel, and they believed that's what Paul was referring to. That Paul was saying the man of sin will rise, when the Roman Empire is taken over, when the Caesars

are gone. Why? Because they believed the man of sin would rise in Rome, the little horn grows out of the Roman Empire, and more or less replaces it.

So they believe, well, there can't be this religious power coming out of the Roman Empire to replace the Roman Empire, as long as it has to be removed. Well, that would explain very well why Paul didn't wanna talk about it. Paul's writing to the Thessalonians, and last time he was there, he got kicked out of town by people saying he's teaching things against Caesar.

He's teaching things that are subversive against Rome. Now, if you're over here, yeah, the Roman Empire, that's gotta go, you know? Things will start moving forward once that's taken out of the way. Well, if that letter had fallen in the wrong hands, it would only confirm the accusations.

He is advocating the fall of Rome. He is saying the Roman Empire has to go down. These people were right in accusing him.

So he just doesn't say it. He says, you know what I'm talking about. Now, therefore, all these church fathers that I named believed that when Rome would fall, and they didn't live to see Rome fall, but based on Daniel, and secondarily on 2 Thessalonians 2, they believed the man of sin of the little horn would rise to power when the Roman Empire is taken out of the way, when the fourth beast is killed and his body given to the burning flame, as Daniel said.

Now, these men who thought that didn't live to see the fall of Rome, so they never got to see if something happened like that. But there are people who lived after that, notably the reformers. And even before the reformers, many Roman Catholics held the view that the papacy is the man of sin.

Now, you don't have to believe that, but they did. And they said, he's going to sit in the temple of God, the church, he's going to say he's God. You don't have to read some of the many things that the popes have said through history to know they did say they are God.

They said they were in the place of God, they have more authority than Christ, they can change laws and seasons that Christ made, they claim to be deity. Did the popes exalt themselves with God? Yes. Did they arise after a great falling away? I would say so.

I think from the time of Constantine in the early 300s on, the church kind of began to fall away from its purity, become more mixed with Roman empire, more paganism in it. The falling away came and then rises the man of sin. That makes sense to me.

How about performing signs and lying wonders? Well, if you read Catholic history, you find that the papal institution puts its endorsement on all kinds of interesting supernatural acts. Apparitions of Mary being one of the best known. They actually claim

that people can be healed by having a splinter from the cross or a toenail clipping of Peter or something like that.

You know, I mean, it's magic stuff. Magic signs and wonders. People have gone to Lourdes, which is a place where Mary apparently appeared.

They get healed there. There's other healing sites. Supernatural healing is being done by people who are papists, who are following these traditions.

Actually, if you go through Catholic history, you find there's a lot more than that. They actually claim that images of saints have gotten down off their pedestals and lit their own candles. Their eyes have moved.

All kinds of supernatural stuff has been claimed through the history of the Catholic church. Lots of supernatural stuff. Not to mention the Eucharist, which they think magically or supernaturally becomes blood and body of a human being, Jesus, though it's only bread and wine.

That's, of course, that's not a sign because no one can see it. But the things they claim, healings at Lourdes, apparitions of Mary, you see the face of Mary in your coffee cup or whatever, you know, all kinds of supernatural goofy stuff has been claimed. Pardon me for saying goofy.

I don't mean to be irreverent, but it is, I believe, lying signs and wonders, as Paul said. And yeah, there's probably no institution in the world that has had more of these than the Roman Catholic church over the past, you know, 1500 years. Yeah, the Pentecostal churches today have signs and wonders too.

Some of them are probably fake, but there's some real ones too, I'm convinced of that. But even so, Pentecostal church has only been around for a couple hundred years. The Catholic church has been here for a lot longer than that.

And they've been making these claims all the time. So everything that Paul and Daniel says about the little horn of the man of sin has happened when Rome fell at the very time and place, the little horn grows out of the Roman empire. So did the Pope of Rome.

The Bishop of Rome is the Pope. Now I'm not a Catholic basher. It might sound like I am.

I'm just a Bible teacher. I'm only interested in knowing what the Bible says and means. I don't hate Catholics.

I don't even say that Catholics can't be saved. I believe lots of Catholics have been saved. But the church itself, the papacy, is a corrupt cultic organization.

People who are in corrupt organizations aren't all themselves corrupt, especially during the middle ages when there's no other game in town. If you're a Christian in Western

Europe, for a thousand years, there's no other church, just the Catholic church. Many people like St. Francis of Assisi in more modern times, I think even people like Mother Teresa, many Catholics have really loved God.

There have been some great Roman Catholics. Thomas the Cempest, who wrote of the imitation of Christ. Brother Lawrence, who wrote, perhaps, of the presence of God.

Savannah Rolla, who is a great revivalist in the Catholic church. There's been lots of Christians in the Catholic church, partly because there was nowhere else for Christians to be for several centuries. There are options now, but not everyone, not all Catholics are aware of what we're aware of in some cases.

So I don't hold it against individuals who may be mistaken or deceived, but the organization that deceives them. Jesus said it'd be better to have a millstone put around the neck and be thrown in the sea than to cause these little ones who believe to stumble. And the futurists, of course, please, the Antichrist is a future man of sin.

The preterists sometimes think it was someone back in 70 AD in Jerusalem who was a really wicked person, but the historicists, the reformers, for example, believed it was the papacy. Calvin, in Calvin's commentary in 2 Thessalonians, I'm not a Calvinist, but no one can deny he was a reformer. He's the founder of reformed theology.

In his commentaries, he said about this passage, Paul, however, does not speak about an individual, but a kingdom that Satan would take hold of so that he might set up a seat of abomination in the middle of God's temple, the church, which we see accomplished in popery, meaning in the papacy. You know, in the King James version, that was written by Protestants, and King James was an enemy of Roman Catholicism. And if you study that period of England history, there's a lot of conflicts between the Catholics and Protestants over a period of several successive kings.

You'd have a Catholic one, or a queen, and then a Protestant one, then a Catholic one, then a Protestant, and so forth. King James kind of was a Protestant. He put down the Roman Catholic Church, and under his endorsement, the King James version was translated.

The translators wrote at the beginning, if you have a King James version at home or you have one with you, at the very opening, it says, epistle dedicatory, which is the letter of dedication the translators made to King James, addressing him. And in that, in 1611, the King James translators wrote this to King James, and you'll find it in the beginning of your King James version of the Bible. They say, the policies of King James, they say, have given such a blow to that man of sin as will not be healed.

They mean the papacy. They called the papacy the man of sin. So did Calvin, and so did Wesley, and so did people who were not Calvinists.

Luther certainly did. Luther actually wrote, now I feel much better knowing that the Pope is the Antichrist. After all, since the Pope excommunicated him, it's nice to know that the one who excommunicated him is the Antichrist, not the Vicar of Christ.

But this is really, this view was held even before the Reformation. The Franciscan Order, which was before the Reformation, they believed the Pope was the Antichrist. This was widespread.

After the Reformation, it was called the Protestant view. It was the universal Protestant view well into the 19th century. After that, the dispensational view rose to take its place, and they began talking about the man of sin being an individual, but in the last days.

But the point is, I'm not saying they're right, because I don't know. Paul doesn't tell us what it is that's restraining. He doesn't say it outright.

He does not put a name or a label on the man of sin that certainly identifies him. There are different views about this. What I'm saying, though, is the most popular view that most Christians have heard these days is dispensationalism, that he's the future Antichrist and the church has to be raptured first.

That is far from stated or implied or even compatible with what is stated in the passage. What is compatible would be some other views, one of which would be the view that all, the whole church held for many centuries, and that is that the Roman Empire was restraining the rise of the man of sin, but when it would fall, he would rise. Those who lived before the fall of the Roman Empire predicted it.

Those who lived afterward said it happened, and they could make a pretty good case. Maybe they were wrong. Men are not infallible.

But to my mind, it is a position which many Christians have not heard argued and which certainly deserves as much consideration as any alternative theory that I've ever heard.

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