Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Coming Man of Sin, Part 1
Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5
Code: 53-7

We continue this morning in our study of 2 Thessalonians and I would invite you to open your Bible, if you will, to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. We're embarking upon a fascinating text of Scripture in this chapter, one that presents to us a man who is known by the title Antichrist. The most fiendish, the most wicked, the most powerfully destructive human ever to walk the earth is a man that the Bible calls Antichrist. He will be the culmination of all those who hate God and all those who hate Jesus Christ. He will be the combination, really, and the culmination of all Satanic false prophets, false teachers, false Christs. He will be all wrapped up in to one all the hypocritical liars who claim to be spokesmen for God but spoke under the energy of seducing spirits, the doctrines of demons. This Antichrist is the theme of Paul's writing.

In verse 3 he introduces him under the title "the man of lawlessness," and then calls him, "the son of destruction." And then down in verse 8 he calls him "that lawless one." And then in verse 9 he calls him, "the coming one in accord with the activity of Satan." The man of lawlessness or the man of sin, the son of destruction or the son of perdition, the lawless one, the coming one who functions in accord with Satan...all these are titles, if you will, of the one we know as Antichrist.

This is a person, a singular person. But the spirit of Antichrist, or the attitude is in the world even now. Every individual in this world who under the power and influence of Satan attempts to thwart the work of God, attempts to thwart the work of Christ, attempts to attack the work of Christ or God, attempts to oppose it or to counterfeit it, has the spirit of Antichrist.

Turn, if you will, to 1 John, here we find the term Antichrist is used. John in his first epistle second chapter and verse 18 says, "Children, it is the last hour," by that he means it is the Messianic era since the coming of Christ. "It is the last hour and just as you have heard that Antichrist is coming..." Now there is the individual Antichrist who is coming. "Even now many antichrists have arisen." So there is a culminating individual but until that individual there will be many who have the spirit of Antichrist.

Go down to verse 22, "Who is the liar, but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ, this is the Antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son." There he is saying that anyone who would deny the deity of Christ, anyone who would deny the connection between the Father and the Son is Antichrist. Chapter 4 verse 3, "Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God, this is the spirit of the Antichrist." The Antichrist is an individual, a Goddenying, Christdenying, counterfeit religious leader

who while hating Christ, while denying Christ, himself purports to be the Christ. But until he comes there are many like him who have his spirit.

In John's second epistle, 2 John verse 7, he says, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, this is the deceiver and the Antichrist." So you can see here that while there is one ultimate culminating man of sin, man of lawlessness, son of perdition, son of destruction, lawless one, one final culminating coming one in the power of Satan, the final Antichrist, there are many antichrists, many with the spirit of Antichrist throughout the history of the world. The one who comes in final form will be far worse than any other, worse than the worst of men...worse than the abominators, worse than Antiochus Epiphanes who slaughtered a pig in the Holy of Holies in the temple, his way of blaspheming God, worse than Adolph Hitler who mocked God, blasphemed God, operated with mediums and demons, spoke in a voice not even his own and attempted to rub out the Jews, worse than any combination of Antiochus and Hitler will be this final Antichrist. He makes Saddam Hussein pale in comparison.

The term "antichrist" in the Greek, antichristos is obviously a combination word. The word anti is familiar to us in English, we use it as anti, and that's what it means...he is antiChrist. He is against Christ. But it also has the idea of "in the place of...in the place of." He is against Christ and puts himself in the place of Christ. He is a usurper. He is a Satanic liar who coming against Christ replaces Christ. Three times Jesus calls him "pseudoChristos," false Christ.

Now as I just read you, John said you have heard that Antichrist is coming. That's interesting to me. John is writing to believers and he is saying you have heard this, they already knew Antichrist is coming. This apparently was common knowledge among Christians. Now go back to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and hear what Paul says in verse 5, "Do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these things." What things? These things about the lawless one, the son of perdition, the man of lawlessness. So he is saying to them what John said...you already know about this, you have already heard about this, this is already in your memory bank. They knew Antichrist was coming. And in the meantime, they had been confronted by his agents and his forerunners who proliferated all over the world with their blasphemous attacks against God and Christ and their attempt to substitute themselves for Him. They knew the Antichrist's spirit had been at work and they knew about the future Antichrist because Paul had taught them. So John says you know about it. Paul says you know about it.

This spirit had been working for a long time. The effort to thwart the work of Christ didn't even start when Christ was born, it started long before He was born. For example, Satan's first rather massive effort to corrupt all of mankind and use his demons to create a demonhuman race, recorded in Genesis 6, was in order that there might be people produced who were unredeemable because they were demon/men the God/man would not be able to redeem them. Demons being unredeemable. And God had to drown that whole civilization.

This was followed later by an effort to destroy all of the male children in Israel way back in Exodus. And Satan was endeavoring to destroy all the male children so that he could destroy the Messianic line. Later on Satan in an Antichrist effort tried to break the royal line which would ultimately bring the Messiah and He had to be born in the royal line, he tried to break the royal line of Christ by using Jehoram to kill all his brothers, 2 Chronicles 21. The royal line got reduced to one person and the whole Messianic redemptive saving hope of the world hung with one fragile life. But fortunately that one individual had sons and then 2 Chronicles 22 says the Arabians came to the camp and massacred all the sons except one and again the line hung on one life, the youngest son, Ahaziah and he took the throne. He ruled only one year, being wickedly counselled by his vile mother whose name was Athaliah. He was wounded severely and his life hung in the balance and with his life all Messianic and saving hope, but he lived. He was later killed in a war with Jehu but not until 2 Chronicles 22 says he had had sons. All the sons were killed but one and that one life, that one life had to be hidden in the temple of God for six years so that his own mother wouldn't kill him. And God spared the Messianic line against the Antichrist's spirit operating through the venom and the hatred of these people.

And then there was the Antichrist action taken against the people of God in a foreign culture during the time of Ezra. Ezra tells how the people of Israel were saved by the fact that a pagan king couldn't sleep and because he couldn't sleep a plot to wipe out all the Jews was uncovered. And instead of destroying the line of Christ, the line was preserved. And then there was Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of Syria, who in the intertestimental period tried to wipe out the Jews and failed because of the Maccabean revolution. And then came Herod and Herod in an Antichrist activity tried to destroy all the baby boys in an attempt to kill the Messiah. And then came Satan who tried to thwart the whole effort of Christ by tempting Him. And then came the people of Nazareth who tried to shove Him off a cliff. And then, believe it or not, came Peter who tried to divert Him from the cross...and Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." And then came the Romans who tried to kill Him and then did kill Him and then tried to seal His tomb so He couldn't rise again. You see, the Antichrist's spirit has been operating for a long long time and you can just take all of that, sum it all up, put it in to one individual and that's Antichrist.

In the last days Antichrist will come...a man who is Satan's final AntiChrist. John said you know about him. Paul said you know about him. But I have some more to tell you. Why here? Why in a letter to this church? Why does he tell them this? This little epistle has three chapters. It deals with three issues. The first issue confronting the church at Thessalonica was persecution. When Paul wrote the first epistle, 1 Thessalonians, they were undergoing persecution then and he referred to it. Apparently in the intervening weeks, just a few months between the two letters, the persecution had escalated. And so they were under severe persecution. Chapter 1 is written to comfort them. It is a chapter of consolation. It tells them Jesus is coming, verse 7, to give relief. So chapter 1 is comfort for those in severe persecution.

They had another problem. They had a problem not only with persecution but insubordination. There were some people in the church who weren't being obedient Christians. Chapter 3 tells about them. Verse 6 says they were leading an unruly life. They weren't obeying the tradition received from the Apostles which means the Word of God. They were undisciplined. He says down in verse 11 they were not only undisciplined, they weren't doing any work, they were acting like busybodies, verse 14 they did not obey our instruction, they needed to be disciplined. And he notes that they were even Christian brothers. So you had some insubordination among Christians, disobedience, undisciplined, unruly living. Chapter 3 was written to correct that. Chapter 1 severe persecution. Chapter 3 severe insubordination. Chapter 1 comfort for the persecuted. Chapter 3 correction for the insubordinate. Then there's chapter 2, what was going on here? Severe confusion...severe confusion. What were they confused about? Eschatology, they were confused about the end times. What particularly was their confusion? They had been told by somebody that they were in the day of the Lord.

Now they knew enough about the day of the Lord to know the day of the Lord was a time of God's final judgment. But as they looked at all the persecution going on and all of the hostility against them, some of them concluded that they were actually in the day of the Lord and had missed the Rapture and got caught up in the day of the Lord. This seems almost unthinkable because in the first letter, just a few weeks before, Paul had explained to them about the Rapture, chapter 4 verses 13 to 18, some of them worried they miss the Rapture, they were worried that some had died and missed the Rapture so he says, "No, when the Rapture comes the dead in Christ rise first, you'll be caught up, so whether you're alive or whether you're dead you're going to go, you can't miss the Rapture." If you're a believer you're either going to go out of the grave or you're going to go from the earth up. So you won't miss the Rapture.

Furthermore, some of them were thinking they were in the day of the Lord so in chapter 5 he says you're not in the day of the Lord, you are not of the darkness, you are not of the night, you are children of the day, the day of the Lord isn't something you're involved in. That is darkness, that is night, that is judgment, not for you. So he already told them...you didn't miss the Rapture, and the Rapture is before the day of the Lord, you're not in the day of the Lord because it never was for you.

You say, "Well now wait a minute, how could they be confused about it a few weeks later if he was that clear?" I'll tell you how, look at verse 2, "That you may not be quickly shaken from your composure, or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you."

You know what had happened? The Antichrist's spirit had infected somebody who had come into that church and told those people they were in the day of the Lord. And in order to substantiate that false teaching, they pulled out a letter purported to have been written by Paul...a counterfeit. And in verse 2 he says, "Don't you be quickly shaken thinking you're in the day of the Lord because some spirit has

infected a messenger who has tried to support this message with a letter as if from us saying the day of the Lord has come." Somebody had come and lied to them and deceived them. Somebody who had something to gain from it. And his point is this, you can't be in the day of the Lord, I told you in the first letter you'd be raptured, I told you in the first letter that you're of the day and that's for the people of the night, you don't even belong in the day of the Lord. And now he says, "Let me give you another reason why you can't be in the day of the Lord, the Antichrist hasn't come." The Antichrist hasn't come. The day of the Lord, verse 3, will not come until the apostasy and the man of lawlessness and the son of destruction. You can't be in the day of the Lord. First, you're going to be raptured, you're not going to be there. Secondly, it isn't for you. Thirdly, if you're still stumbling on this issue, the Antichrist hasn't come and he is a precursor to the day of the Lord. So that's why, you see, he deals with the Antichrist here, he wants them to understand the career and the identity of the Antichrist so that they'll understand that that man has to come and do his thing before the day of the Lord starts. In fact, you're going to find out in this passage the Antichrist is really a very important person in actually triggering the day of the Lord.

So, this chapter is written then because there is severe confusion about the day of the Lord and he wants to give them proper instruction. So he teaches them about the Antichrist.

But I remind you of verse 5 again. "You'll remember while I was still with you I was telling you these things." He had already taught them about Antichrist. He's going to teach them more here. By the way, this chapter gives us more specifics about the Antichrist than any other chapter in the New Testament. The ones that come close are in Revelation and we'll look at those in our study of Revelation and we'll refer to them in this study and weeks to come. But he does say a lot here but he's building on what they already know.

Now the question is posed...then what did they already know? What is the background to this personality? Where did they get their information? And for that we have to go to the Old Testament. So as a lead in to this chapter I want you to turn to Daniel chapter 9...Daniel chapter 9...and here is the foundational text for teaching on the Antichrist. And we have to understand this great chapter, particularly looking at verses 24 to 27. Here is the foundation on which Paul taught about Antichrist. Here is surely the foundation on which John taught about Antichrist and any of the Christians would have had exposure to this great text of Daniel 9. You can't understand Antichrist unless you see it in the context of Daniel 9:24 to 27. This will lay the groundwork for our study of 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. We can assume that both Paul and John began their discussions or their teaching on Antichrist from this section.

Let's look at verse 24, Daniel 9. Now before I get in to this verse, just a brief setting. Children of Israel in Babylonian captivity, getting toward the end, Daniel is praying, starts praying in the first part of the chapter and he's asking God to fulfill his plan for Israel, bring them back from captivity, cleanse them and all of that. It's a long prayer running all the way down to verse 19 or so. And he's praying for God

to do His work with Israel. He's pleading for God, "Do Your plan, bring them back, restore them," and all of this. And then he waits for an answer. The answer comes because God sends Gabriel with the answer and God gives to Daniel the answer in the form of this prophecy and He says, "I'll tell you not only what I'm going to do now for Israel but I'm going to give you the whole history." And God gives through Gabriel to Daniel the whole history of His future plan for Israel in these four brief verses. It is monumental.

Verse 24, "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city." That word "decreed" in the Hebrew can be translated "to cut off." God is saying if you looked at history in a continuum, I'm going to cut out seventy weeks and this is the period that I'm going to use to deal with your people, Israel, and your holy city, Jerusalem. And He just takes a cut and pulls out, as it were, a chunk of history and says this is what I'm going to expand into a vision so you can see what I have planned for Israel and Jerusalem. Seventy weeks is the time. These are not weeks of days, these are weeks of years. Seventy units of seven. If you multiply that, seventy times seven, you get 490 years. God says I have planned a 490 year piece of history and in that 490 years I'm going to deal with Israel and I'm going to deal with Jerusalem. I'm just cutting it right out of history.

Now there is a fascinating footnote to this that I need to share with you. Israel was in Babylonian captivity. They were captive in Babylon because they had violated sabbath for the land. Do you remember that every seven years they were required to let the land rest? Do you remember that? They would work it six years and let it rest the seventh, work it six and let it rest the seventh. In 2 Chronicles 36:21 the Bible says that the Jews were removed from the land that the land might rest for the sabbath years it was violated. Do you know why their captivity was seventy years long? Because they had violated how many sabbaths? Seventy. God says for every sabbath year you've violated, I'm going to put you in to captivity and I'm going to let that land rest those 70 years that you didn't allow it to rest.

Now think about this. If they violated 70 sabbath years, how many years span did it take them to do that? Fourhundred and ninety, 70 times seven. The point is this, you have violated Me for 490 years and now I'm going to take an equal period of time, 490 years, slice it out of human history and use it to deal with you. This is a precise prophecy, perhaps the most precise prophecy in Scripture. God says I'm going to work with you and I'm going to do six things...they're in verse 24...six things finish the transgression, that's number one. That is bring sin to its end...bring it under control and restrain it finally. And then He says, "make an end of sin." The idea there is probably judgment. The first point is saying I'm going to bring sin under control and then I'm going to judge it, that's a part of it. The end here is saying bringing sin to its logical end and we know what it is, the wages of sin is death. He's going to bring the final judgment. Then He says, "And to make atonement for iniquity."

All right, He says, I've got a 490year period of time, you stole 490 years from Me, you violated it, you're now paying a penalty for that. I'm going to take another 490 years and out of mercy and grace

I'm going to provide atonement for you. Isn't that gracious? You violated Me for 490 years, I'm going to take a 490year period and offer you gracious salvation. During that time I'm going to bring sin to its final culmination and take control over it, I'm going to judge and I'm going to provide reconciliation to God for iniquity...that's atonement. Now those three, in a sense, refer to getting rid of sin. I'm going to get rid of sin by controlling it, I'm going to get rid of sin by judging all the sinners, and I'm going to get rid of sin by providing atonement and forgiveness. All three of those things were accomplished in the first coming of Jesus Christ. He came to the cross and dealt sin its death blow. He came to the cross and in effect provided the work on the cross, the rejection of which causes sin to be judged eternally. He provided the work on the cross which gives atonement and reconciliation to God. And although sin still is present, it has been dealt its death blow on the cross, is that not true? He finished it. Didn't He say, "It is finished," He made an end of it. He brought transgression to its culmination and took charge over it and He did that act on the cross by which ultimately He gained the right to be the judge of all the sinners and He provided atonement.

Now there are three more things that He does. These three are associated with His Second Coming. First, to bring in everlasting righteousness. And when does everlasting righteousness begin to come in? At the millennial kingdom. It is a kingdom of righteousness. It is ruled in righteousness. Righteousness feels the earth as does wisdom. And so here in the kingdom when Jesus comes back after the judgment of the day of the Lord in which He effects the sentencing, as it were, that was done on the cross, you see the culmination of that in which He judges sin, wraps it up, takes charge. He did the initial work, you might say the verdict was made at the cross, the sentence is executed at the day of the Lord. Then He begins that bringing in of everlasting righteousness which begins in the millennial kingdom and goes on forever and ever in the eternal state. Literally the righteousness of the ages takes over permanently.

Fifthly, or second in the second three, He says to seal up vision and prophecy. To "seal up" in the Hebrew simply means to enclose something so that it is no longer used, it is hidden from view, its function is completed. It would be like taking something you've been using, put it in a box and shove it away somewhere. It is done. He is saying, "I'm going to bring visions, prophecies to an end." Why? Because there is coming a time when you don't need to learn anything. Paul described it in 1 Corinthians 13 with these words, "Then shall you know as you are known." There will be no reason to learn anything more, it will be the end of visions, it will be the end of prophecy, that speaks of the eternal state, I believe, which is the perfect thing where everyone knows as they are known. So at His Second Coming He brings in eternal righteousness. He brings an end to revelation and learning because you will know everything you need to know. And then finally He says, "To anoint the most holy place," or to anoint the Holy of Holies. What is this? I believe it is the holy city of Jerusalem, the jewel of eternity, the capital city of heaven, that city made out of jewels which refract the glorious light of God which dwells in it and scatters sparkling lights out of those jewels throughout all of the infinite universe...that holy holy place, the new Jerusalem.

So here is an unbelievable sweep of prophecy. Daniel is having a prayer time and the angel Gabriel delivers him something which is way beyond anything he might have even hoped for. God says I've got a 490year period and in that 490year period I'm going to do a work on your people Israel and a work on the city of Jerusalem that is going to involve the finishing of transgression, the judgment of sin, the redemption and atonement for reconciliation to God that is going to involve bringing in eternal righteousness, sealing up vision and prophecy, anointing the final heaven and the holy jewel of the new Jerusalem that occupies it as the very center piece. The first three at the first coming, and the second three at the Second Coming. And all of this is going to happen in 490 years.

You say, "Wait a minute, it's been 490 years. I haven't seen those last three. I haven't even seen the effectiveness of the accomplishment of the first three on the cross take place yet." That's right, but that becomes abundantly clear as you look back at the text, let's follow it. If we want to know when this deal is going to end we've got to know when it what? Starts, good. Verse 25, "So you are to know and discern," now you're supposed to get this, "you're to know and discern from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." That's when it starts. From the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem..

The book of Ezra indicates three decrees...one by Cyrus, one by Darius, one by Artaxerxes...Ezra 1, Ezra 6, Ezra 7. But all of those focused on the building of the temple, not the city. No authorization in those three is given for rebuilding the city. Only one decree fits rebuilding the city and that's the decree recorded in Nehemiah chapter 2. It came in the month, Nisan, on the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes. Nisan month, Artaxerxes' twentieth year. And he gives a decree that Nehemiah could go back and rebuild the city. The year, 444 B.C. Artaxerxes rose to power in the year 465. You say, "Isn't that 21 years?" No, because in ancient times the accession year or the year that the king took his throne was not counted as a full year of his reign and so though he took the throne in 465, that's his accession year, they don't start counting till 464...20 years from 464 is 444, it's in the month of Nisan, that's when it starts.

Now follow the text. "So from the decree in 444 to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and 62 weeks." You say, "Wait a minute, why split that up, we can add, that's 69? Why does he say there will be seven and sixty two?" Seven weeks would be how many years? Fortynine. Forty nine from 444 takes us to 396, we're going backwards in B.C. What happened in those 49? What happened was the city was rebuilt...the city was rebuilt. He says within the first 49 year period the city will be rebuilt, He says it in verse 25, it will be built again, plaza, moat, even in times of distress. And you can read the book of Nehemiah and read the whole story of all the trouble they had in rebuilding it.

So the first seven is the rebuilding. Takes us down to 396 which really marks the end of Malachi, which is the last book in the Old Testament, and it's the sealing up of Old Testament Scripture. So the

first seven of these seventy weeks were used for the rebuilding of the city. Now He says..."In addition there will be 62 more weeks for a total of 69 weeks." Seven times 69 makes 483. So He pulls out 69 weeks and says from the decree of Artaxerxes go 483 years...in the first 49 of those years the city will be rebuilt. Then go on to 483 years. And what do you have? He says to restore and rebuild until Messiah the Prince will be 69 weeks. It will be 483 years from the decree...444 B.C....to the Messiah the Prince. Now in ancient times they calculated their years as 360 days...360 days. So in order to find out how long this time period is we've got to multiply 483 times 360, that gives us 173,880 days. So from the decree to rebuild, given by Artaxerxes, to the arrival of Messiah the Prince has to be 173,880 days. Once we know the days then we could calculate it properly. And it's amazing...it's amazing.

The best evidence indicates by converting over the month of Nisan to our calendar back in Artaxerxes' times that the decree was on March 5, 444 B.C. That's converting it over to our calendar. The decree was made March 5, 444. If you go 173,880 days you will end up March 30, A.D.33...the day Jesus marched into the city of Jerusalem. The Messiah, the Prince came and He came exactly 173,880 days just as the prophecy had said. It was Nisan tenth, A.D. 33, the day of the triumphal entry of Jesus. In our calendar, March 30. It goes from March 5, 444 B.C. to March 30, and then He was crucified April 3. What startles me...a lot of things do about that...of course, the accuracy of it doesn't startle me because after all, this is God's Word, right, so we expect God to say it and then God to make history make it happen. What startles me is how the Jews could be waiting for all these 483 years, these Jews would wait 173,880 days for the Messiah to come and when He came...they killed Him. Absolutely inconceivable.

What did it mean when Jesus rode into Jerusalem? It meant that Daniel's prophecy had come to pass, the Messiah had arrived, Messiah the Prince had come. They threw palm branches in His feet, they hailed Him as the King. And so the sixtyninth week ended in a triumphal entry.

Now there's something loose dangling here, what is it? One more week and this is why...this is why the 490 hasn't been fulfilled yet, there's one loose week here. And so from the decree to the Messiah is 69 weeks. Look at verse 26 now. "Then after the sixtytwo weeks, added to the seven, so after the sixtyninth week is over, the Messiah will be...what?...cut off." What does that mean? Killed. It doesn't say at the end of the sixtyninth weeks but after...after. He's killed. The term "cut off" expresses the idea of an execution, putting someone's head on a block and cutting it off. After all that expectation He's executed like a common criminal. That's how deep the apostasy of their hearts was. It says He will be cut off and have nothing. Literally it says, "And there's nothing in it for Him." No honor, no respect...His portion, nothing. Even what He wore, what did they do with it? Took it and gambled for it. He got nothing out of it.

There's another spiritual twist on that, there was nothing in it for Him but there was sure a lot in it for everybody else...namely redemption. He was executed, had nothing. He was executed for nothing He

did. He was executed and lost even fellowship with God but His loss was our gain.

That event is followed by this amazing and accurate statement, "And the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary." What's this? Well, He'll come as Messiah the Prince at the end of the sixtyninth week, He did it March 30, 33 A.D., marched in to the city. After that they'll kill Him. And then the people...what people? The people of some prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Who did that? What people did that? Romans, 70 A.D., just decades after Jesus died on the cross the Romans came and destroyed the city and destroyed the temple, massacred over a million Jews. But now wait a minute...the people who came and destroyed the city are associated with somebody called the prince who is to come...that sounds like 2 Thessalonians 2...the coming one...the one who will come. Who is this prince who is to come? This is the Antichrist. And from what group of people, or what part of the world does he come? Who is he associated with? The Romans. If you go back in Daniel's prophecy you will see that the final form of world government will be a revived Roman Empire. And the great beast, the great ruler will rise out of that revived Roman Empire, out of the feet of mixed clay and iron. Daniel has spoken about him before in chapter 7. Daniel has spoken about him in chapter 8. Daniel will speak about him in chapter 11. I wish we had the time to go in to all of that. He is, if you look at chapter 7, he is described in detail from verse 21 and following. He wages war, he's overpowering, he devours the earth, he treads it down. He's a military genius, he has military power, military might. Verse 25, "He wears out the saints of the Most High with his persecution." He brings in a new religion with new morals and new viewpoints. He's a counterfeit of Christ. He deals with injustice and seizure and punishment. In chapter 8 he describes him, in verse 23, as insolent, skilled in his intrigue, he's a master of deception, he has mighty power. He even says he has a fierce face. He can destroy in an extraordinary degree, he is shrewd, he is deceitful, he is destructive, and he opposes the Prince of princes.

So he describes him in 7, he describes him in 8, then he describes him also in chapter 11. He sees him there. We won't go into that but just look at verse 36, he does whatever he wants, he exalts himself, he magnifies himself, he is proud, he is sovereign, he puts himself above God, he speaks monstrous things, verse 36, against the God of gods, he is blasphemous and profane. He may well be a homosexual. He will show no regard for the Gods of his fathers, or for the desire of women. Some say that means he's a homosexual. Some say the desire of women reflects the Jewish desire for the mother of the Messiah to come and therefore every Jewish mother wanted to be the mother of the Messiah and the desire of women was for the Messiah, and it means he had no regard for Messiah. That's possible. Maybe both are possible. He is brilliant in war and he finances war in verse 38 with his gold, silver, costly stones and treasures. And it goes on and on to describe him. So he's called in Daniel the little horn and the willful king and all of that.

This character is here called the prince...the prince who is to come. And he belongs to a people who massacred Jerusalem, a people who desecrate and destroy the holy of holies and the holy place and the temple. He is...he is one of them and I believe he will rise out of the revived Roman Empire,

whether he is a political entity rising out of it, or whether he is a religious entity like the Pope, we can't be certain. But he's going to come out of that revived European center. We now see that happening and Europe is more and more becoming the power of the world. People used to ask me where America fits in in the prophecy, and that was when we were a creditor nation, and now that we're a debtor nation and seem to be on the slide morally with a dying culture that may cease to produce genius of much report, it may be that by the time this all happens Europe has become the focal point and power of the whole world. And out of that does he rise because he belongs in that Roman environment. And in the ancient times Rome occupied that part of the world.

And so, we see then that he will belong to a destructive people whose goal will be like the Romans of 70 A.D. to wipe out God and His city and His people. Now verse 27, "And he...who?...the prince, the Antichrist, the willful king, the little horn...he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week." Ah, we finally found the loose week. Here it is. Now the problem is, we don't know when this week starts. That's...we've got this undetermined time gap here between 69 and 70, isn't that the genius of God? He gives you a prophecy that is so exact you get it to the very day? And then gives you a prophecy that is so inexact no man knows the day or the hour? And He ties them together in the same place. It's not for you to know the times and the seasons the Father has put in His own power, even the Son of Man while on earth didn't know those. There's going to be a week and the Antichrist is going to come and he's going to make a firm covenant with Israel? Why? Let me tell you why, because Israel is going to be embattled all the way down to the end. You know, you watch, every time I hear about another summit where the Arabs and the Israelis are going to get together, I chuckle. It will never happen. It never happens. It can't happen. They are at each other's throat incessantly. They leave a summit meeting and go back and shoot each other. It is absolutely pointless. And Israel is going to reach the point where there's going to be a whole proliferation of Saddam Husseins trying to wipe them out and here comes this great European power and this great European leader and he's going to come over and he is going to make a pact with Israel to become their protector. Makes sense, doesn't it? U.S. is going to be out of the picture, in a sense. Once you have a unified Europe, the power of a unified Europe is strategic. You ask yourself why all of a sudden eastern Europe is free from Communism. Don't you think that if Antichrist is going to rule that part of the world it would have to be unified? You couldn't have a free market culture and a communist culture coexisting and have somebody rise to rule that. The death of communism spells the unification of Europe. The unification of Europe looks right down the prophetic tunnel to the coming of Antichrist, and they become the massive world power who can set themselves in unity to protect Israel. The Antichrist does it.

It isn't for economic reasons he does it, he does it for religious reasons. He's got his motives. Some of them may be economic but the heart motive is ultimately he wants to destroy the temple, destroy the worship of God and set himself up as God in Jerusalem. That's how...that's how defiant Satan is. He doesn't ...listen, Satan's ultimate goal is not to set up a false religion in L.A. Satan's ultimate goal is to set up a false religion in Jerusalem. That's God's city and that's the one he wants. And that's where

the Antichrist is going to go to do it and he's got to have a good relationship with Israel to get in there and do his blasphemy.

So the Antichrist makes a covenant with them for a week, in the middle of the week, three and a half years in, he puts a stop to sacrifice and grain offering. You know what that tells me? There's going to be a temple cranking up in Jerusalem and the Jews are going to be doing their thing, they're going to be doing their offerings and right in the middle of it they're going to have peace, their religion is restored, that means that the Arabs are going to have to give them a place to do their temple. It's going to be there, they're going to be back doing their offerings. And in the middle of the week when everything looks wonderful, the Antichrist comes in, he blasphemes, he commits what's called the abomination of desolation, he comes in on the wing of abominations, he comes and makes desolate. He comes and makes a complete destruction. And then a complete destruction is made on him until a complete destruction that is decreed is poured out on the one who makes desolate. He's going to come in, he's going to desecrate that place.

You say, "Well why that place? That...Judaism is not the religion of God today." That place because that is still God's city, that is still where Jesus will return, is it not? That is still the place from which He will rule in His Kingdom. And that is the symbol to Antichrist of the rule of God and he wants to desecrate that place for that reason. And so he goes in there, I don't know what he's going to do but he's going to do similarly to what the Romans did, similarly to what Antiochus Epiphanes did, desecrate, abominate, blaspheme and mock God...right in the middle of it. And then he's going to get it because when he does that he pulls the trigger, as it were, on the day of the Lord. And all hell breaks loose and reigns down on him and everybody who is involved with him. And then the Lord brings the execution of the judgmentwon at the cross, and the beginning of the eternal righteousness that He promised.

So this is a formidable guy. And this is the Antichrist of which Paul spoke and John. And they knew already about him because they knew Daniel. There's something else they knew, one more text, Matthew 24. Matthew 24 verse 15, Jesus preaching a sermon on His own Second Coming, the end of verse 14 He talks about the end coming, the final end. He wants to tell His people how to kind of recognize it, how to know when the end is coming so in verse 15 He says, "When you see the abomination of desolations which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place." When the Antichrist, He says, when the prince of the people that shall come, when he goes in to the temple and does his abomination and makes it desolate and blasphemes God, my friends, let me tell you something, when that happens you better run. That will trigger what the Bible calls the Great Tribulation which culminates in the holocaust known as the day of the Lord. And He says you better hope if you're alive at that time you haven't got a baby to nurse and you better hope it isn't winter and hard to travel and you better hope it isn't the sabbath or some Jew is going to be screaming at you for moving cause they believe you shouldn't move on the sabbath cause you're going to get a Great Tribulation.

The Antichrist is going to create this. He's going to trigger it. What's Paul saying? Look, you people, the day of the Lord hasn't come because Antichrist isn't here yet. Don't be confused. Back in the first letter he said you're going to get raptured first. He said you don't even belong in the day of the Lord, you're not people of the night. And now he says it can't be the day of the Lord, the Antichrist hasn't come. So you use that strong theological indication to thwart that error.

Now this is why Paul is introducing this issue of Antichrist. But having introduced it he goes in to expanding it in such richness that it's going to take us a few weeks to get through 2 Thessalonians 2 and you just keep your hat on, we're going to have a great time doing just that. We're going to move fast and it will be a thrilling ride, believe me. Let's bow in prayer.

Your Word, Father, is so powerful and so accurate. We are...we are thrilled at its accuracy. Who can deny that this is the Word of God when its prophecies are precise? We look at the world as seen around us, it makes so much sense to see some powerful figure rise who can pull Europe together, who can pull all of the disintegrated pieces together, who can rule. It makes so much sense to see that rising Europe and that rising power and that great leader become the protector of Israel. And then to form the false religion in which he desecrates and abominates the holy place and in the place of You sets himself up as Revelation 13 says as the God of the world be worshiped by everyone. It's something that can be done, we see it on the horizon. We're not sure but we look at someone like the Pope and wonder if it couldn't be he that unifies the whole world and becomes the object of worship. Lord, these are fascinating days as we stand as it were on the brink of the end. Help us not to be confused and help us to know what Paul wanted to tell the Thessalonians most of all, even though I'm telling you about the career of Antichrist and about the day of the Lord, I want you to know you're not going to be there. You're going to be caught up in the clouds to meet Me in the air. You'll never know the day of the Lord, that's for sure. So we thank You, Father, for that hope that whatever happens in this world when the holocaust of Your divine judgment breaks loose from heaven we'll be with You and in that hope we live and rejoice. And, Father, we would pray for those who have no such hope, who need to be warned that they will go through the day of the Lord and it will be devastatingly eternally terrifying and terrible, frightening beyond description and leading to a permanent state of alienation, isolation from You and anything good, right, pure, holy and a time of eternal punishment. O Father, may there be no one here who will experience the day of the Lord because as the psalmist said they have hardened their hearts, they have erred and thus shall not enter into rest. For them will be no relief, but only retribution when the Lord Jesus comes from heaven in flaming fire with His mighty angels taking vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do Your work in every heart, for those who know You bring comfort, for those who don't bring conversion and we'll give You the praise in Christ's name. Amen.

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