

“The Parousia of God” Pt 2

2 Thessalonians 2

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Jeff: Our Father in heaven, we thank You. We turn to You now knowing that You will instruct us in Your word. Yet we pause briefly before You to remember. And Lord, we certainly do remember the passing of our brother and our father John Rodgers. Lord, thank You for the remembrance of him today. And Lord, we just pray that a man like John will stick in our memories, not only today after hearing a memorial tribute, but for the days to come. Lord, help us to follow him, as Paul invited others to follow himself. And Lord, as we follow the integrity and the virtue, certainly the Biblical fidelity of John Rodgers, we pray that we will certainly be following in the footsteps of Christ. And Lord, we ask that You will bless his family in the loss. We pray, Father, and give You thanks for his impact. And we pray that You'll help us to remember that impact for good.

Lord, we ask that You'll be with many who are struggling and suffering these days. We think in general about a good variety of folks. We think about those that are being impacted by our economy. We think about those who are being impacted by health concerns. And we think of our brother Kevin in that regard, and certainly Bruce and his wife. Lord, we ask that You will always set our faces like flint toward Jesus Christ, no matter what our condition or our situation. And we pray throughout this pilgrimage of life that we will move forward in our pursuit of Him, knowing that He has laid hold of us. And so, Father, as we turn to Your word, we ask that You'll bless us and that You'll increase our faith, that You'll increase our learning, and that in so doing that You'll increase our love and certainly our piety. Lord, we ask these things in Jesus' blessed name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well it has been a while since we've been together, and I want you to know that that's mostly Don's fault. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: It is?

Jeff: I want to tell you something, Don. You have to know that this is coming, right? You're in this position, and—

Don: That's right.

Jeff: And this is going to happen to you.

Don: Someone here told me two weeks ago that I was worse than Sig.

Jeff (Laughing): You were worse than Sig.

Ted Wood: Actually I was thinking that you're better than Sig.

Don: Well, anyway,-- *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Well I think we need to recap just a little bit. I thought about just starting where we left off. But maybe we should just take a brief tour of where we've been. I lost the signal apparently.

Ted: You have the signal.

Jeff: There we go. All right. So I don't know where we are; I'm not sure.

Don Maurer: 2 Thessalonians.

Jeff: We were on slide 37, but I don't know what point that was. Let me just do this. We'll catch ourselves, but we'll go pretty quickly through some of these things until we get to the slide we're on.

But this is 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. This is the chapter on the antichrist. And we were looking at the God who hears. Sorry; this is not the right slide. That's the right slide.

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What time is it? When will the man of lawlessness come? What is the rebellion? And who is the man of lawlessness?

And we looked at the *Parousia*. We saw that the prepositions in the text really help us to learn some really interesting things about the coming of the Lord. And then we learned that when we look at this text and we compare it with an Old Testament text like Isaiah 66, one of the things that we realize is that the prophecy of the coming of God is actually going to be fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, at least in that Second Coming sense. And so the coming in judgment in Isaiah 66 is Christ coming in judgment upon the world, rescuing His people and coming in judgment upon the world. So the Lord is coming in blazing fire.

And then we moved to what time is it? And we asked several questions about that. Preeminently we asked what are the last days? And you’ll remember that when I answered that question of what are the last days I said that there may be some controversy about that in how you hear that, or what you believe the last days to be. But I said to you that the last days started with the ascension of Jesus into heaven. And so Acts chapter 2 mentions that the prophecies about the last days had started at that point. And then they go on from the Ascension until the Second Coming. And so it’s in these last days that the Son spoke. He was made manifest in the last days; we’re living in the last days. And so the last days are from the First Coming and really the Ascension until the Second Coming of the Lord.

And then I introduced the idea of the millennium, and this endeared me to many. *(Laughter)* And so I talked to you about what the millennium was. And when I talked to you I said that there are different ways of viewing the millennium. There are actually different ways of viewing the book of Revelation. There are basically four different hermeneutical methods or four different interpretive approaches to the book. And there are at least three different ways of looking at the millennium. And I said to you that of course I believe the right one which is amillennialism, which has been distorted by saying that “a” means “no,” when in fact “a” doesn’t mean no millennium. Amillennialism simply means that we’re not talking about a literal thousand years. What we’re talking about is a symbolic reign, a symbolic millennium from the Ascension to the Second Coming; that’s the millennium.

So I talked to you about what happens in the millennium. In the millennium Satan is bound. We looked at the Old Testament and how the nations seem to be deceived en masse. But with the coming of Christ, Christ sends out His disciples and says, “Go and disciple the nations.” And we looked at those key texts. In Psalm 2 He prays for the nations; in Daniel 7 He receives the nations—Christ, that is. And in Matthew 28 He sends out His disciples to the nations.

And so I asked, what about 1 Peter 5:8? You remember that 1 Peter 5:8 says that “Satan goes about like a roaring lion.” He’s prowling; he’s seeking to devour. And I said to you that we’re not talking about a total eclipse of Satan. We’re talking about a limitation on his work that’s basically broad and national in scope.; that doesn’t mean he’s not working.

When will the man of lawlessness come? That was the question that I think we are sort of focusing in on. And I said to you that he was working among them. But we have these indicators. The man of lawlessness won’t come until the rebellion. Or the question is, will the man of lawlessness come and then the rebellion comes? We’re really not told. But we do know that the presence of the man of lawlessness is already among us.

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How so? Well, his work is the work of deceit. And so the question is always asked. Could he already be among us? We’re kind of closing in on where we left off. And I said to you to think about the question of when 2 Thessalonians was written. It was written in the ‘50s. And for instance think about when the three epistles of John were written. They were written in the ‘90s. Both of those texts talk about a sense in which he’s among us, that is, there is a sense in which his spirit is among us. That shouldn’t surprise us, because his spirit is a spirit of deception, and that’s among us. And it feels very much like the work of antichrist is among us because he is among us. And so I said that whether it’s in the first century or the 21st century, the antichrist feels as if he is among us. It feels as if his time is about ready to emerge. So when will he come? That’s where we left off. So let me ask you. Are there any questions that you want to catch up on, or things that you just want to clarify before we get started? You know, it’s been probably a month. Yes?

Ted: So are you saying that the man of lawlessness was not present in the ‘50s A.D., and that he is present in the ‘90s?

Jeff: Well, what I’m saying is that in the ‘50s in 2 Thessalonians it basically talks about the work of deception among them as the key to his work. And then 1 John 2:18 and 4:3; just go back to those texts for a minute. Those are the texts that I had in view.

But in those texts, in 2:18 it says: *“Children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.”* So when you get to the ‘90s, what you find is, you find that many antichrists have come. In what sense? In the sense that many have come in the spirit of deception who are like the antichrist, who in fact could be called antichrists, who may not be the antichrist. Does that make sense? Okay.

I want you to know; I just want to pause really quickly; I was going to say this earlier. Ted said that Bishop would take notes, little notes. He was just jotting down what he needed to correct me on later. *(Laughter)* And I fully appreciated that. No, I’m just kidding.

Ted: No; actually he was very supportive of you.

Jeff: I know he was.

Jeff: I know he was.

Ted: The only problem he had with Presbyterianism was that he had a problem with their governance.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: Other than that, you and he were on the same page.

Jeff: He was a wonderful man. Don’t?

Don Maurer: Yes. I’ve heard people say that they believe that Nero was the antichrist.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: So you are saying that this is a future occurrence, a future man of sin.

Jeff: I think that Nero was an antichrist, but not the antichrist. Here’s what I think the concern is, okay? Just take a look at what this means. This means that before the end, before the actual Second Coming, this means there is a time of rebellion that will come. revelation 20 says that means that Satan will be loosed again for a very short time. That means that likely in this very short time that there is going to be not an antichrist, but the antichrist.

Now what that means is this. That basically means that there is unfulfilled prophecy. And I think what happens is that people get uncomfortable with that. They want to make sure that everything is sewn up. And so what they do is, they say that the man of

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lawlessness, the antichrist, that happened all the way back here in the ‘60s, and that was Nero. So that prophecy in 2 Thessalonians is all taken care of.

And the rebellion? That rebellion had more to do with the Jews than it does with anything regarding the Gentile church. That was all the way back here. The Jews were punished in 70 A.D. for their rebellion. All of that stuff in 2 Thessalonians is already fulfilled; we don’t need to worry about that.

And there’s a name for this kind of view, and it’s the *partial preterist* view. And this view is the view that R. C. Sproul migrated to. If you want a popularization of that view, read *The Last Days According to Jesus*.

In the very beginning, when he was here in Pittsburgh, he was an amillennialist. And he actually taught through the Scriptures from an idealist amillennialist perspective. Those tapes, as you might expect, are no longer sold by Ligonier. (*Laughter*) But he eventually migrated toward this view.

And I’ll tell you why he migrated toward this view. He read a book written by a man with the name of Russell, and it’s called *The Parousia*. And in that book Russell answers liberal critics.

What was the criticism that Russell was answering? It was a very simple one. Do you remember when Jesus says that “*there are some of you standing here who will not taste death before*” “all these things happen?” And so the liberals said that Jesus Himself must be a false prophet because that generation had passed. And where is the coming, and where are all the things accompanying it?

So Russell took that seriously and said well, how do we answer the liberal? And so what he did was that he came up with what was called *full preterism*. Full preterism meant that every prophecy that’s in the Scriptures is fulfilled; it’s already done. In other words, the Scriptures are basically telling us about something that already took place.

And a full preterist position is heretical, because the New Testament does not give us in the church today any hope of a Second Coming. What Russell says is that “*surely a God who is as gracious as the God we have will do something with us; we just don’t know what it is.*” You know, there’s hope for you, right? But full preterism is really a heretical position.

But partial preterism says that most everything was fulfilled by 70 A.D. But there is still the hope of the Second Coming.

Now if you were to ask Sproul, “Well, where do you find the hope of the Second Coming in the New Testament if not in some of these passages that we embrace as Second Coming passages?”, for instance 1 Thessalonians 4? Sproul would say that’s a 70 A.D. fulfillment. So where do we get our hope?

And Sproul would say that well, you get your hope from the book of Acts chapter 1. In the book of Acts chapter 1 notice what it says. The disciples are standing there; they are standing there gazing, looking up into heaven.

Don Bishop: Verse 11.

Jeff: Verse 11: “*And the two men said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.’*” So there’s your hope for the Second Coming. But it’s not in the passages that you might think. It’s not in the passages that you might have otherwise pointed to. Those passages are passages that talk about the climax of the age of Judaism and the judgment upon Judaism in 70 A.D. But what we have now are more nuanced, obscure passages. And that’s not an obscure passage, but it’s certainly not a passage that we would use to talk about the Second Coming.

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So anyway the point is that the idea I’m propagating is that there is still a man of lawlessness. There is still rebellion to come. And that was not fulfilled by 70 A.D.

Now there’s something you have to keep in mind. And that is, how can you still hold to an imminent Second Coming of Christ? Is that what you were—

Don Maurer: Yes.

Jeff: And I do. I hold to an imminent Second Coming of Christ. And the way that I would say that there is an imminent Second Coming of Christ is this. And I’m open to being pushed back on this. But let’s just take a look at this.

There’s the world, right? And let’s say this is the West. And right now in the West, when North America was inhabited early on you had revivals. And you saw religion and true Christianity on the rise. But now you see it in decline. And you see it on the rise in other parts of the world. So in China right now I just heard reports that the government is really concerned because they think there may be more Christians than there are Communists in China hidden under the surface, right?

So you see Christianity on the rise in some parts of the world where you don’t expect. For instance South Korea wants to send missionaries to North America, right? You get that kind of thing going on.

So to me that means that the manifestation of the rebellion of the man of lawlessness is going on in different parts of the world at different times. It’s not a blanket rebellion all at once; it’s going on in different parts of the world at different times, which means that there are various men of lawlessness that are manifesting themselves in different parts of the world. It’s just like John said: many antichrists have come.

So which antichrist is *the* antichrist? Well, my inclination is to say that we’ll know the antichrist when Christ comes and defeats him. That will be the antichrist who is the antichrist.

Now I realize that doesn’t put a whole bunch of power into the hands of the antichrist. But for instance I don’t think there was ever meant to be put into the hands of the antichrist a sort of God-like power. Remember, he’s a deceiver, and the manifestation of his power comes through deceit. So there have been emperors who have claimed to be deity. The highest ranking person in the world per se who has taken upon himself the title of deity has deceived many by that declaration. And that will be in any way, shape or form the manifestation of antichrist. I’m not one who believes that the antichrist is going to come and sort of have the whole world going to follow him. I think the antichrist is not so great as that. He is somebody who tries to put himself in the place of Christ but can never do it because he’s not, and he’s a deceiver.

So that’s how I think that the imminency can be upheld in the face of future unfulfilled aspects. I’m willing to push back. I often joke about being right on these things. But I realize that these things are kind of hard to pin down in some ways.

I don’t think some things are. I think “the last days” is really clear. But when you get a little more into talking about the particulars sometimes it’s a little more or less clear. Any more pushback or questions? No?

Ted: No pushback at all. In fact you referenced these things as being controversial. But I would say that in your standard evangelical church they don’t think about these things. They don’t think about end times things.

Brave Man: They do it sometimes.

Ted: I don’t think so, no. I think it’s because the evangelical gospel has become a gospel of personal fulfillment and satisfaction. They don’t look at the bigger issue.

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They’re looking at am I being fulfilled? Am I finding meaning? Am I going to be saved? They don’t look at the big cosmic issues.

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

Ted: I think that at one time we thought a lot about these things. But I don’t know if I’ve ever heard a sermon preached on this. Maybe I have, but it doesn’t stand out in my mind.

Jeff: Did you have one?

John Gratner: I was going to say that there isn’t a universal unifying evil.

Jeff: Yes, right.

John: There is the absolute unifying Most High God.

Jeff: Yes.

John: There is not an equivalent most high evil.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: And so by definition what that is, it’s arrogance. And arrogance doesn’t get along well with everybody else. (*Laughter*) And that’s very evil, too. You can see this, right?

Jeff: Yeah.

John: We’re warned about the spirit of the age.

Jeff: Right.

John: And that is a unifying defiance against the Most High. But how to get that done I think is where there is a lot of cosmic angst over, such that we all see our own antichrists everywhere.

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

John: And they all are, because they are all anti- the Most High God.

Jeff: Yes.

John: And so this explanation makes useful sense of this. What we see here is really different than what we see going on in Russia or whatever; you pick it. There is a unification that’s disjointed in that we just don’t like the real God.

Jeff: Yeah, right.

John: But beyond that they fight amongst themselves. And so picking our battles is different than do we even need to in that sense? Or shall we rather spend our time making sure that we are in allegiance with the Most High God?

Jeff: Yes; that’s very good.

Ted: That’s very good.

Gary Craig: I see the opportunity for a worldwide evil that would control not the whole world but most of the world through technology, because the way things are shaping up in the tech world, they’re looking for a technological salvation. And they have thrown away a lot of our Christian ideals.

Jeff: Yes, but you see that already happening, right? In many ways that already manifests itself. He who controls the buttons obviously controls the algorithms. And the algorithms control how people think. So there’s a lot of that already happening, you know.

Gary: I think the means for it are changing right now. They’re expecting artificial intelligence to take off. When artificial intelligence gets the design with all this it will take off exponentially and be the salvation of the world.

Jeff: You know, I just want to say this. This is just an aside, but doesn’t it kind of excite your blood a little bit to know that you’re your own man and your own thinker. And when things do start to unravel in the world you can just kind of walk through it and

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kind of have your head held high. You have the truth of the gospel. I mean, isn't there sort of a sense of satisfaction that as you walk in Christ and the world kind of crumbles you can walk through it? I just feel like—

Don Bishop: This is the pity of the evangelical church today, because people aren't into the word of God. They just want to hear sermons. And they don't have the knowledge to identify that that's wrong. And then they just go along with it.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: I have relatives like that.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely.

Mike Davis: There's a large movement, actually. It might sound really crazy, but there's a large movement that has been established. It's extinction advocates that are pushing to eliminate all humans in the world, and that AI is the salvation of the earth. We're destroying the earth as humans, and AI will be the salvation of the earth; therefore humans should become extinct. There is a large movement pushing that.

Jeff: You know, it's funny that you call that a movement, because I think about the movement that's trying to destroy cows because they have movements. *(Laughter)* I just kind of wonder if that movement is the same kind of thing. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: They have mooooovements. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know what? I want to tell you something. There's always the financial concern. But the one that really concerns me right now is the bit coin thing—FTM or FTX.

Mike: MTX.

Jeff: FTX just collapsed, and the government is using that as a way of introducing cyber-regulation to banking. So what I've heard is that they can basically do what Canada did and eliminate bank accounts and things like that at a future time. I just find that to be almost unreal, to think about the fact that the government at the stroke of a key can remove your finances from you. But that's the kind of world we live in.

Gary Craig: One example of that is that there was a protest against the government in Canada with the truckers.

Jeff: Yeah. That's what I was talking about.

Gary: And what Canada did was that they broke the bank accounts of anybody that donated \$40 or more to that cause.

Jeff: Yeah. That's amazing; that's just amazing. Well, when will it come? Yes?

Ted: Really quick. When I read about it here in 2 Thessalonians 2 it says that *“the day will not come unless the rebellion comes first.”* But I'm a little confused. I'm not arguing; I'm just confused about what that means, because humanity ever since Adam and Eve has been in rebellion. And I don't know what that rebellion refers to.

Jeff: So when will the rebellion come?

Ted: What is it?

Don Maurer: Same sex marriage.

Ted: No, it's not. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Okay, what is the rebellion to come? I want to say this really quickly before I say that. I like the comment that there is not a unified evil.

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: That is powerful like God is powerful. It's something that we ought to take great comfort in.

Ted: Yes.

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Jeff: That’s why we can walk through this world and hold it loosely. So what is the rebellion to come? Well, verse 3 says that the rebellion comes first. But what is that rebellion? I’ve got to confess at this point that I’m going to struggle with you. I’m going to try to help you the best I can. But when you look at this text I’m not sure it’s super clear.

The question is, what is this rebellion? The word is the word from which we get our word *apostasy*. Now apostasy means to fall away. It’s what we use when we think about a religious walking away, a religious apostasy. When we say someone is an apostate we mean that he has walked away from the faith. It’s a word that has strong religious connotations to it. A lot of people will look at this and they’ll say that the rebellion here is a religious or at least a theological rebellion of some sort. It’s a rebellion against the true faith. And so there’s a walking away from the true faith.

Now the question is, is that right? Is it a religious or theological or ecclesiastical rebellion against the true church and the true faith, and so on, or is it political?

Now I know what you’re saying to me. You’re saying to me, “Oh man, he’s being influenced by what is going on in the news today.” That’s not really the case. In the inter-Testamental period, between the time that Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament was written and Matthew, the first book of the New Testament was written, (actually Mark being the first book), you have about a 400-year period which is called the Inter-Testamental period. And in that period you have a lot of movement. You have Alexander the Great dying. You have his kingdom being given up to at least five generals

Ted: Four. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: It’s really five. But four are prominent and five are really prominent for Judea. And the two that are really prominent for Judea are the Ptolemaic Empire and the Seleucid Empire, and also the Egyptians and the Babylonians.

Now why are they important for the Judeans? Because between them Judea changed hands five times during that inter-Testamental period. So there’s a lot of changing hands, a lot of battling back and forth.

Now in that period we always hear about Antiochus. And we know that Antiochus was bad, right? Antiochus III was actually pretty decent to the Judeans. He actually allowed them to be governed by Torah law. They were under his captivity, but he allowed them to self-govern under the law. But Antiochus IV comes along. And Antiochus IV is not very friendly toward the Jews. He does not allow them to govern according to Torah. And so in the Inter-Testamental works it’s actually said that the Jews apostatized against Antiochus IV. And so the point is that this is not a religious apostasy; this is a political apostasy; this is a political turning away.

I bring this up simply to say to you that within the inter-Testamental period that yes, the word can have religious or theological overtones. But it can also be applied to the political situation. So the question is, what are we dealing with here in our text? Are we dealing with a religious, a theological or an ecclesiastical apostasy? Or are we dealing with a political apostasy in some ways? That’s the question.

I’ve got my own ideas. I’ll tell you what they are as we unravel this thing. But let’s kind of pursue it a minute. What’s in the name? And what I mean is, what’s in the name antichrist? What does that tell us? Does that tell us anything about the nature of the rebellion itself, of the apostasy? And so is that another clue?

Well, think about it. The antichrist exalts himself or takes his seat in the temple. Now I want you to think about that for a minute. This seems to be an argument that says, oh,

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things are all tied up. It’s a religious apostasy; it’s a theological and ecclesiastical apostasy. It’s a turning aside from the true faith.

But is it? And the reason why I say that is this. For instance Antiochus IV marches into Jerusalem and basically sets himself up in the temple. He basically says, “You guys aren’t worshipping your God any longer. You have to be able to worship other gods, our gods.”

Now the Jews apostatized against him, and he set himself up in the temple. And here’s what’s usually said, and here’s what I have been known to say at different times. The antichrist will set himself up in the temple. The temple is figurative for the church in the New Testament; he must set himself up over the church. And therefore, as people believe him, there is a turning away from the true faith. The church turns to him as the antichrist and sees in him the authority, and so turns away from the faith.

Is that the case? One can easily see the example of Antiochus IV setting himself up in the temple and the Jews apostatizing against him. They are not apostatizing against the true faith, but against the one who sets himself up in the temple. So it doesn’t need to be or have to be a turning away from the true faith. In this case, in the example that I gave, it may be a turning away from the one who sets himself up as the true faith or as the true Christ, or sets himself up in place of Christ—not even in place of Christ as to say, “I am Christ.” But instead of in the place of, anti- can mean against. And so Antiochus sets himself over against Christ even as he sets himself up in the temple.

So in some ways I realize that this just adds complexity to it. But it’s just not all that easy; I wish it were. Sometimes you can pick up a book in town that will tell you how easy it is. But I just find it a little bit more nuanced and complex than this. Go ahead, Don.

Don Maurer: Yeah. And you can see that sproul would say that the temple no longer exists now. And so Nero or whoever it was sat in the temple back then until it was destroyed in 70 A.D. Or the dispensationalists would say that the temple has to be rebuilt and then the antichrist will come.

Jeff: Yes. Those are things that are certainly in sort of the periphery of my own mind as I think about those things, because I realize that I’m not bringing in sort of bringing in Hal Lindsay’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*, or whatever it is, or the famous end times series of twenty years ago by Tim LaHaye. But those things are always sort of there. In my mind those are things that are more popular and sort of less biblically attuned theologically.

Don: So how are we to understand the temple?

Jeff: Yes; a good question. Let’s kind of pursue this a little further. So we know that the temple can be used as a symbol for the church in the New Testament. I think that’s clear, and that’s the direction where I would go. That’s how I see the temple. He sets himself up in the church. Now the question is, does he set himself up in the temple as a Christ replacement, as if to say, “I am Christ?” Or does he set himself up in the temple as over against Christ? That is to say, “I rule you Christians and you’ll do what I say?” That’s part of what I said when I gave the example of Antiochus.

Now the question is what is in a name? He’s not just antichrist. In fact he’s not actually called antichrist in this text. We actually say that the man of lawlessness is the antichrist. But that’s not how he’s described in this text. How he’s described in this text is as the man of lawlessness. So we call him antichrist. But he’s actually anti-nomos in this text; he’s actually anti-law.

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So here he sets himself up in the temple as the man of lawlessness, as the man of anti-law, okay? I think the temple of God is the church. But the question that comes to us again is this: is this political or religious?

Now why do I say that? I say that because does anti-law mean anti- God’s law, or does it mean anti-law in general? In other words, is it anti-natural law? Is it anti-civil law? Is it all of those things? What is the view with anti-law?

Here’s just a for instance. Right now we have a government in place that says this. I don’t know if you remember this or not. They used to play this a couple of years ago during the political debates. When Clarence Thomas was being interviewed for review by the Congress for his seat on the Supreme Court, Joe Biden stands up and says, “Nobody believes in natural law anymore.” Right? So is that in one sense the anti-law aspect the Bible sees in view? That is to say, not just the anti-law or anti- God’s law, but sort of just the anti- God’s law of natural law? Is that what’s in view? Or is it both of those things?

You can see, for instance, how it could be one, the other, or both. In other words, you could see how it could be one or the other.

So I’m going to tell you how I see it.

Matt Garvic: I don’t know what you’ll say.

Jeff: That’s okay.

Matt: How did Paul view this? That’s what I’ve been trying to figure out. And what was his perspective on where did the law come from?—whatever law we’re talking about?

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

Matt: Well, where did any of it come from? I see from his perspective that there is only one potential source.

Jeff: Yep.

Matt: And everything is derivative of that. The only reason we have natural law is because there is a natural law Creator and Giver. And so we’re subject to that, because even the other powers that we’re talking about were created by the original and only Source.

Jeff: Yep.

Matt: And so then by definition I would say that our political situation won’t use that word because there is only one Sovereign. So rebelling against that is political, religious, natural; it’s all those things because all of those things are derivative of the only, real, original, self-existent Source who Paul seeks to direct them in Athens when he says, “You know he’s God. You don’t know anything about the One who is over all the gods.

Jeff: Yep.

Matthew: We can focus on other aspects of this. But we can’t be devoid of all of them because all of them are derivative of the real Source.

Jeff: That’s right. So here’s my view. My view is that God is over all. And you have two spheres. You have the church sphere, the ecclesiastical sphere. And you have the political sphere. God is over both.

Now the regulative principle that we’re given in Scripture for the political sphere is what? It’s pretty low; it’s a low bar. In other words, Nero is a true steward of God—Romans 13, right? The governments that exist are governments that God has established. And the magistrates that exist are servants of God.

What is their purpose? Their purpose is to reward the good and punish the bad; it’s very simple.

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The church has a regulative principle for the church, but it's much more involved. And what I mean by that is that God has many things that he says to the church and that he expects from us: how we worship, how we live, and so on and so forth. Those are things that are expected of us. But both of these are under the sovereign will of God.

Now I think you're right. How would Paul have viewed this? I don't think that Paul would have viewed this as one pastor rising up above the church and declaring himself to be the antichrist. I think Paul has Nero and Domitian and all these other emperors in mind. Domitian is a little after Paul. But you get the idea; he's not after John. But you get the idea. These emperors take this for themselves. Even Caesar Augustus before Paul takes to himself the idea of deity. And so there are political figures and they are deity; they are divine. And so I think the idea is that whenever a political figure rises to the level where he begins to assume to himself supreme power, and functions as if he were deity, and then begins to see himself not just over the state, so as to punish the evil and reward the good, but also sees himself over the church, so as to exercise power in her midst, then I think that what you have is the man of lawlessness, the antichrist.

Why? Because he's no longer serving in his very simple capacity. He has assumed for himself the very power of God and sees himself even over the church. So that, at least in my view, is what is happening.

So what's the rebellion? I think the rebellion is this rebellion against God's law manifest in both of these spheres. The man of lawlessness, likely a political figure, is the man who sets himself up as supreme over the church. And so what is the restrainer? We're going to eventually come to that. What is the restrainer? The restrainer is going to play into this. Yes?

Gary Dunbar: When you're talking about the text in 2 Thessalonians which says, *“For that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed,”* now I realize that saying is not exactly that verse.

Jeff: In the Greek the problem is that you can't tell which comes first. Does the man of lawlessness come and so the rebellion comes, or does the rebellion give birth or sort of manifest the man of lawlessness who stood behind the rebellion? It's just not all that clear.

Gary: Well Revelation would give an indication because it talks about the antichrist and the mark of the beast, and you have the false prophet.

Jeff: I'm going to bring that up.

Gary: Okay.

Jeff: I'm going to bring that into view. I'll tell you what we're going to do. Go ahead, Don.

Don Maurer: If the antichrist would set himself against the church and the state, would there not then have to be a kind of one-world government where he would take that—

Jeff: Well, not necessarily. Think about the Roman emperor. I mean, the Roman emperor would surely think of himself as sort of across the world. But there were parts of the world not under Roman rule, right? That's why the Romans were ever extending their rule, or at least seeking to. But we just think of it as such, which is why, for instance, as Rome rises and antichrist is present, as Rome declines other antichrists emerge about the world and through time. You see how many antichrists have come, and that sort of thing.

All right. Hold on to your outlines and we'll just finish these up the next time, and that way we'll save some paper. *(Laughter)*

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Why don't we pray? Father in heaven, thank You for this day and for the time You've given us. And Lord, thank You for blessing us as we work our way through a difficult text—Lord, one that applies to us today in ways that are both broad and in some ways very narrow. Lord, we ask that You'll help us to be discerning. But most of all as we live life we pray that You will help us to have hope, not to see the antichrist as a crushing power with God-like attributes, but as a deceiver. And Lord, keep our eyes fixed upon You, for You indeed are supreme above all the earth, and have revealed Yourself so graciously in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we are saved and protected and kept. And we pray these things in His name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)