

IX. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“Now, What About the Anti-Christ?”

II Thessalonians 1:5–2:12

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

March 22, 2015 – Evening Sermon

I'd like to start by looking at Daniel 12. Because we believe in the supremacy and sufficiency of God's Word we're taking on difficult texts and difficult themes. So we started in the study of eschatology, the end times, the study of the last things and we've been taking up a number of subjects. We started by looking at Daniel 9 and the seventy weeks where I gave multiple interpretations plus the four millennial views. In the next study on this series we will look at the Great Tribulation. So where are we on the seventy weeks? Basically there are two views that most have encountered. One is the dispensational view which says it begins with the restoration of Israel and the Babylonian captivity. Those seventy weeks go up to the time of Christ and then unbeknownst to the text there is actually a gap between the 69th and 70th week which is called the Church Age in the dispensational perspective. God now goes to plan B for the Gentiles and when that is through the 70th week comes back at the seven years of tribulation at the end.

While I know many of my Christian brothers and sisters hold to that view I do not believe it fits either the context of that text or overall context so I feel the reading that fits the seventy weeks and all its content are given to us in three sections but they are consecutive and they lead all the way up to the cross of Christ in which He is cut off. His cutting off makes the covenant firm and wins the victory over His enemies and then at the end of that generation comes the removal of the kingdom to Israel as the Kingdom of God that has come through Israel, the Gospel goes to all the nations and then comes back through Israel through those nations as we take the Gospel to the Jew first and then also to the Gentile.

Then we looked at Revelation 20 which is the thousand year millennium which brought out four views that we worked our way through. I led you to the realized millennial view which I feel is a more appropriate interpretation and that is that the thousand years is not a literal number, very much like all the rest of the numbers in the book of Revelation but it is symbolic – 10 times 10 times 10 – the number of completion which comes to a thousand. This refers to the time between the ascension of Jesus and the second coming of Christ, the Kingdom that is now but not yet in its fullness.

This time period is actually referred to with a number of symbolic figures in the book of Revelation. When it talks about the Kingdom of God expanding from His ascension from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and the utter most part of the world until His second coming that is what the thousand years is referring to. Also during that time is an assault upon the church of Jesus Christ by Satan and it has limited capacity because when Jesus came the first time He bound the strong man. He is bound but not paralyzed, restrained but not inactive, yet he is no longer allowed to deceive the nations as the Gospel that came to Israel now goes to all the nations. Satan has some abilities that he does exercise against the church of Jesus Christ so therefore whenever that period of time

is referred to in the book of Revelation as the church on the march taking the Gospel to all the nations it's referring to the thousand years.

When it refers to the church being under assault there are three terms that are used. There is the 42 months, 1,260 days and times, times and half a time and all three of those come to the same measurement. Time is a year, times is two years and half a year is 3 and a half years or 42 months or 1,260 days. Why does the Bible label that in those terms while it speaks of the progress of the Kingdom with this 10 times 10 times 10, this one thousand years? It is because the one is telling you that the work of Christ is going to come to its fullness and its completion before Jesus comes again but the assault upon God's people in that same period of time are given in such figures to grasp to let us know that it is for a season. God will allow His people to endure for that season and it's in that season that they are enduring that the Kingdom is spreading but it is only for a season, thus He speaks of it in smaller numbers and smaller times yet speaking of it in the same way.

Then we looked at this matter of the loosening of Satan at the end of that millennium. We learned in the last study that he has three allies that are at work now but will come to a final presentation at the end when Satan is loosened. At this time it seems as though he will then be allowed to do that work of deception again for a 'short time' as it says in Revelation. The three allies are as follows. There is the first beast which is borrowing from the picture from the book of Daniel which is the beast that comes up out of the sea and is referring to the political kingdoms of this world and the state. It will then become an instrument in the hands of Satan to attack the church and erase Christianity if at all possible. That first beast is supported by a second beast which is referred to as the apostate church in Revelation 13. It looks like a lamb but speaks the doctrine of demons and it will give itself to support the state. The two beasts together will attempt to accomplish the work of Satan against Christ and His church. The third ally is found in Revelation 17 and is the prostitute of Babylon. That is the use of unfettered sexual immorality to occupy and preoccupy the people of the day and it will be supported by the first and second beast.

All of this will come to a short season that is called the battle of Armageddon when all the world is seemingly there to erase the church and rises up against the church with this power of the state, this deceptive power of false religion and this sensuality that has created appetites that cannot be satiated. It is at that time that Christ comes again and puts the final blow. Satan has already been defeated at the cross but he hasn't been destroyed. Sin has been defeated but has not been eradicated. Hell and the grave have been defeated but have not been removed. When He comes those whom He defeated at the first Advent, He will then cast into the lake of fire at that time. What will happen in that context of that time, when He comes to set up that judgment? On the other side of that judgment comes the new heavens and the new earth for His people and the lake of fire and eternal judgment for those who aren't His people.

In that short season of loosening where Satan and his allies are coming against the people of God, the Bible indicates that there will be a central leader called the anti-Christ. That period of time will be a time of tribulation that is built upon the tribulation that we now have. I will talk in great detail of the tribulation in the next study but in this study I want to tell you who is leading, doing the work of Satan with the three allies and that is

the anti-Christ. How can we understand him? First I want to read through two passages of Scripture starting with Daniel 12.

At the time of the end Daniel says this in Daniel 12:1-4, [1] *“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. [2] And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. [3] And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. [4] But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”* So this put in a book and is given to us to understand.

Now let's look at Revelation 20:1-3 which says [1] *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. [2] And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, [3] and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.*

Now Revelation 22:1-5 which says [1] *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb [2] through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. [3] No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. [4] They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. [5] And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.*

Here is this coming day of deliverance into a new heavens and a new earth but at the end there will be a loosening of Satan for a time of trouble as there has not been before, which tells you we are in the days of tribulation but there is coming something of significance at the end when Satan is loosed for this period of time. Who is it that will be doing Satan's work at that time? I believe the Bible teaches that it is an actual person, the anti-Christ. So how can we understand it?

I want to take you through five keys to understanding who the anti-Christ is. The first key is that he is the anti-Christ and if he is the anti-Christ that means he is against Christ so to understand the counterfeit of Christ you have to understand who Christ is. So here I want to speak of the Son of God who has come to save us. Who is the Christ? Here are eight things about Him.

The first thing is that the Messiah, the Christ is God's sent One. He is the One who has been sent from heaven to save His people from their sins and to win the victory over all of His and our enemies. Two, the Messiah is God Incarnate. Three, that Messiah has been prophesied and defined in the Word of God. Four, the Messiah came after a series of types that pointed to Him but remember a type points to that which is typifies yet it is not equal to that which is typifies. They are those whom the Lord has sent who are pointing to Christ. Examples are Adam with the second Adam coming. There is Moses and One greater than Moses is coming. There is Abraham and the seed of

Abraham is coming who is Christ the Redeemer, by whom all the nations shall be blessed. There is Elijah, David and Melchizedek who are all types in the Old Testament that are pointing to Christ and that prepare the way for us to understand Christ.

The fifth thing is that when Christ comes He will be affirmed by the true signs, wonders and miracles. In one of our recent studies we showed how Christ amassed five witnesses that He was the Messiah and one of the witnesses was to look at the signs, wonders, and miracles because they testify that I say who I say I Am. Six, is He marks out His people. Revelation 7:3 says [3] saying, *“Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”* Christ protects His people and places His mark upon them. All that belong to Him He will lose not one.

Number seven is the Messiah is revealed by God and reveals God. God the Father made an announcement saying “This is My Son in whom I am well pleased” but also know that as Jesus comes in the Second Person of the Trinity in human form, reveals God and that is God veiled in the flesh. That is why it says in Hebrews that He who came bears the exact image, the stamp, of His Father. So He brings in human existence the testimony. The Word became flesh and we beheld His glory, the glory from the only begotten, the Father, full of grace and truth. Number eight is that the Messiah rewards His people. He brings them rewards, not based upon their merits, but His merits that He has accomplished to them and for them.

So if that is a brief description of the Christ, then now we’re ready to see about the anti-Christ. Before we get to a key passage in II Thessalonians I want to give you some things to think about. The Bible tells us that the anti-Christ is in fact Satan’s sent one. Secondly, he incarnates the purposes and work of Satan and he is even called the man of lawlessness, the evil one. He is prophesied and defined in the Word of God. Do you see how the anti-Christ is matching up with the Christ? It is not that it is of equality but that it is of a counterfeit representation. He is preceded by multiple types throughout the Bible. We’re also told and it will be verified in the Scripture that he will be affirmed by false signs, wonders and miracles and deceive with them as they are done with power. Revelation 13:6 says that he will mark his people and they will bear the mark of the first and second beast as he leads his three allies. The anti-Christ is revealed by Satan and he reveals the work of Satan. Lastly, he rewards his people just as the Messiah does. Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death so there’s your reward, physical, spiritual and eternal death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As we see these keys in front of us I want to give you three more before we go to our key text. The first one is there are and have been many anti-Christ. Some have asked me if I think the first beast or the first and second beasts together are the anti-Christ but I don’t think they are. The Bible clearly reveals from Daniel onward the power of the state as it rises up to assault the Kingdom of God and King of Kings and why hasn’t this nation go the way of the other nations as it rises up with blasphemy, power, sensuality and attempting to erase the people of God? It is because of God’s grace. It is not because America is something that everyone else isn’t. It is because of God’s grace that came through the first awakening and the second great awakening, through the church as it was holding to God’s Word in its imperfections but being salt and light. As the church loses its salt and its saltiness and no longer holds to the light but modifies it under the pressure of the culture, now this country begins to go the way of all other countries which

is to take the power of the state and right now it's quarantining Christianity but eventually it will erase it if at all possible.

It will go the way of all other countries unless God grants us what I pray for – a third Great Awakening. Every time I see these young people doing the work of God that is what I pray for because every great awakening since the Reformation on started with students. In fact, the Kingdom of God started with some students. Who were the first followers of Jesus? They were the students of John the Baptist. I am praying that God will do a great work in our sons and daughters so that we might yet see another great awakening but if we don't I can tell you where this country/state will go. It will go the way of all other countries, whether it's Rome, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Germany or the British Empire. It doesn't matter which country you name for it will go the way of all states because power corrupts as they rise up in rebellion against God and then the people who don't hear the Gospel and come to Christ as their Messiah attempt to make the state their messiah.

Look how close we are now. The state will give me my cell phone, my house, my healthcare and this and that. I have news for you; they don't give you anything. They take, just go read I Samuel 8. They take you. That is why our forefathers said they wanted a nation, not that we'll be God but that is under God. It will not enforce any church but it is clearly not an a-theist but a theistic nation that recognizes that rights and privileges have been given by the Lord and the state has one job; to protect the people that they might enjoy the rights given by God. When it begins to think it gives rights and that it is the messiah then it puts itself on the trajectory where God will bring it to the trash bin of history just like any other state. I don't care what the military technology is or what the economic GNP is. The fact is, is that it will go the way of all other states.

If that is the case then that means there have been anti-Christ. There may be and I believe there is one coming personal that has not yet been know but could be here or may be yet to come but that doesn't mean there haven't been many. While we haven't arrived at the final statement of the first and the second beast or the anti-Christ, we have had anti-Christ. The Bible tells us this. Let's look at I John 2.

In I John 2, John the author, the same author as the book of Revelation, begins to give warnings to us. I John 2:18 says *[18] Children, it is the last hour* (the last days/hours started the moment Jesus ascended), *and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come*. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. He seems to be saying that he didn't think the antichrist was here but that he was coming and that it is someone personal and not just the state or a false religion working together but a leader of the state and the false religion working together. He says that the reason you know is that you already have apostate religion and state persecution (the first and second beasts) and the prostitution of Babylon with its sensuality but you already have antichrists present. They have been present continually.

I want to give you the illustration of Moses and Pharaoh here. Moses is a type of Christ and Satan doesn't know whether this is the Messiah that is about to be born so the murderer strikes out to kill as many of the children as possible but he doesn't succeed. God not only protected the Messiah but He protected the type of Messiah known as Moses. Moses had one against him so this type of Christ had a type of the antichrist against him and it was Pharaoh. So it has been throughout all of the ages. The Old Testament types are all through there. Where is the first Old Testament type? The

antichrist is a deceiver and is disguised according to Scripture. The first antichrist was the serpent – disguised, deceptive, against the Word of God. He said God was a liar. He said God's Word is not true.

Ever since then there have been antichrists that have been unfolded throughout all of the Scripture. There are many times in the Old Testament that we are warned about them. Daniel warns of them in Daniel 8:5. Ezekiel 33 through 37 there is this glorious picture of the work of the Kingdom and the millennium blessing of the Kingdom that is growing throughout the land. Then in Ezekiel 38 comes the evil empires striking back through an antichrist called Gog and Magog. I believe the Scriptures teach that Gog is a type of the antichrist and that Magog is the land or the people of Gog, the ruler. In Ezekiel 38 and 39 God says that he will bring them to an end of themselves and when He does that He will deliver His people into glory that He has prepared for them.

Let's look back at Revelation 20 that draws upon Ezekiel 39:6. Revelation 20:7-10 says [7] *And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison* [8] *and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.* [9] *And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,* [10] *and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* So Satan is loosed in that season and as the nations are gathered to encircle the church of Jesus Christ to erase and assault her, Jesus comes down and delivers her. Who is leading this confederation of nations? It is Gog and Magog. He is calling upon an Old Testament type of the antichrist. In other words, that confederation will have Gog, an antichrist, and it will be a people, Magog, united against the Kingdom of God in that day.

There have been types of the antichrist throughout history as well. Our Reformers looked at Pope Leo the X and said he was the antichrist. He wasn't the antichrist but he was an antichrist as he used false religion in the relationship of the Holy Roman Empire and what a tandem was in place between Charles the V and Pope Leo the X. We would look at Mao Tse-Tung and Hitler and various rulers who would rise up to be types of antichrists who brought to bear the sword against the church of Jesus Christ in an attempt to erase Christianity within their boundaries and if possible beyond their boundaries.

You are now watching the seventh attempt at a caliphate coming from the ISIS nation and it is directly targeted to erase Christianity and the imposition of Sharia Law in that name of Allah where people are either compelled, converted or brought by compulsion into that caliphate. If you don't then you die and the particular focus is on the believers and Christianity itself. That is why those 21 Egyptians, contrary to what was said by our leadership from Washington, they didn't die because they were Egyptian citizens. They died because they were Christians and refused to recant of their Christianity, even under the threat of the sword. This will continue up to the consummation of history and at the end it will look like they have the victory. Then the Lord shall appear and with one breath He shall slay them. It is that Word above all earthly power for He is the One that we abide in.

Four, this antichrist who is working on behalf of Satan who has been loosed for this little season, is the one who is at work during this period of time now. I believe the

Bible indicates during that small season that the Kingdom of God is going to spread and Jesus will not come back until two things have happened. One is that the Gospel has been preached to all the nations and two all the elect have been gathered in. I believe when that happens, before Christ comes back, He allows the loosening of Satan. The reason I believe the elect have already been saved by then is that the Bible indicates that during this little season there doesn't seem to be any conversions that will take place.

This short season is described in the book of Revelation as the seven bowls of wrath that are poured out by God. Revelation 15:1 says *[1] Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.* We're just going to look at two of these plagues which are found in Revelation 16. This is the fourth bowl of wrath. Revelation 16:8-9 says *[8] The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. [9] They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.* As this judgment falls you would think there would be repentance. No, on the contrary, there are no conversions, only rebellion and greater blasphemy against God.

Here is the fifth bowl. Revelation 16:10-11 says *[10] The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish [11] and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.* I believe by this time the elect have already been converted. This is a short season. There will be no conversions to end that season.

Key number five is that Christ will then deliver His people and usher in the judgment seat and therefore all of humanity will either spend eternity in Gehenna, the lake of fire or the new heavens and the new earth. For on the judgment seat He will throw the Devil into the lake of fire and the beast, the prostitute of Babylon and all who do not know Him under condemnation for all eternity but those written in the book of Life will be brought into the new heavens and the new earth.

I'd like to close by look at this text in II Thessalonians where Paul is talking about what John has been walking us through. It was clear Paul received a letter from Thessalonica about Jesus already had come back and Paul is answering them by telling them He has come back yet. II Thessalonians 1:5-12 says *[5] This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—[6] since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, [7] and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels [8] in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (In the first Advent Jesus came to bear our judgment and in the second Advent He will come to bring judgment against all who do not believe in Him.) [9] They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, [10] when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. [11] To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, [12] so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Thessalonica was the first church to suffer persecution after the ascension of Jesus and that is why I and II Thessalonians deal with that. It was not the persecution of Rome but the persecution of a local government yet it was a persecution unto death that was taking place. In this glorious picture you will be suffering persecution, God will deliver you, God will sustain you, you will endure and He will deliver you into eternal life and He will deliver those who stand against Him unto judgment. Now Paul wants to back up and give them an insight.

II Thessalonians 2:1-12 says *[1] Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, [2] not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. [3] Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion (that short season) comes first, and the man of lawlessness (Paul's term for the antichrist) is revealed, the son of destruction, [4] who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. [5] Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? [6] And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. [7] For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. [8] And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. [9] The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, [10] and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. [11] Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, [12] in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Then Paul will tell them to stand firm. I want to sum up this definitive text that kind of wraps up what I have laid out before you. At the end Satan's activity will be led by the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction. He will come not only with political power but religious power – first and second beast. He will not be obvious until a certain time. Then the Lord will reveal him and he will be deceptive up until that time. Remember, the second beast looked like a lamb but spoke the doctrine of demons.

Part of his deception will be our fascination with miracles. My heart breaks continually as God's people tune into programs and send their money all after this hawking of miracles. I know God does miracles but He does them on purpose to accomplish specific things at a specific time for a specific reason. Our fascination with miracles he then uses to take the professing church away from its love of the truth but the people of God will not be deceived. They will not be deceived because they are not fascinated with signs, wonders and miracles done with power even though false. They are fascinated with the love of the truth. That's why we gather God's people to sing the truth, confess the truth and read the truth and not focus on a religious spectacle. It is the love of the truth that will keep them in that day and that will mark out the elect of God. The love of the truth will keep them from being deceived in the way of the son of destruction and his lawlessness.

It is in that day that he will be revealed and when will you see him? Here is why I believe there are no conversions in that day. It is not only because of what I read in Revelation but we are told here that the one who restrains will be taken away. There is a

lot of discussion as to what is 'the one who restrains' and I believe it's the work of the Holy Spirit. I believe in that day He will remove the work of the Holy Spirit of redeeming grace and common grace and there will be no conversions. It will be quickly seen. The One who keeps all of us born in this world in total depravity from pursuing absolute depravity will be removed.

What about Hitler and the orphanage he went around? I'm not ready to give him sainthood but he could have taken that orphanage. Why didn't he? Was it because there was a little spark of goodness in him? No, that was the restraining grace of God. Why don't we have more people walking into schools and killing people? It is because of the restraining grace of God that keeps men in their depravity from pursuing absolute depravity, but in that day the One who restrains will be removed. So there will be no redeeming grace. There will be no need of it because the elect will have already been secured, I believe. There will be no common grace and you will see it unfold.

Oh the glorious truth that the Giver of grace in that day will come and with the breath of His mouth will slay him and will bring His people to glory. Who is that antichrist? I don't know and I'm hoping I'll be with Jesus and won't know but if I'm here I pray that God by His grace, through the Holy Spirit within me, though He has been removed from the world, will keep me fixed on Jesus. Until that day, I want to know the truth because that is how the Spirit of God will keep me fixed on Jesus. Love to hear the Word preached. Love to read it. Love to study it. Love to memorize it. Love to meditate upon it because in that truth is all the armor of Christ to keep you safe in Him and moving forward to take the nations for Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You, Father, for the privilege of walking through some of these challenging doctrinal issues and trying to gain clarity from Your Word. As we continue to take the tough themes and texts we thank You that it is the Word that brings its simplicity so help us to be those who know the truth and by the truth are set free, increasingly from our sin, gloriously from all the penalties of our sin and day by day enable to follow Jesus and make Jesus known. Lord, bless these mission teams as they go out but may they go out to do what all of us are already doing here, for Jesus' sake. Please Jesus do not abandon the work of Your hands here but send to us another great awakening with young men and women who love You by the power of the Spirit, with the truth of Your Word, for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.