

LSB 2 Thessalonians 2:1 - 4 Pt 3 THE antichrist

1 Now we ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken in your mind or be alarmed whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it has not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God.

The Queen is dead. Long live the King. Such were the traditional British headlines when the queen suddenly passed away last month after a phenomenal 70 year reign which began at her father, King George VI death on February 6th 1952.

She reigned in dignity all 70 years, the likes of which, according to Al Mohler and of course many others, we shall never see again. She was the longest reigning monarch in the 1000 years of uninterrupted monarchs on British thrones. She navigated that crown with humility and in 70 years her people never once doubted the sincerity of her 1947 radio address where she told the people she would devote her life in service to her people.

Why are we Americans so fascinated with all of this? What is it that God has built into us, even after the fall, that we long for a figurehead to lead us? Even here, when we rebelled against the British throne because of taxation without representation and successfully formed our republic, we purposely built into our presidency a stateliness that resembles the British monarchy.

The president is a kind of a king with limited powers but perhaps moreso than the crown in Britain, but with the tradeoff that your reign has a termination date. We built into the office of president, some of the monarchical dignity and statehood of being something like a King. But unlike a real monarchy, we can frenzy ourselves with selecting the new

king according to our tastes every 4 or perhaps 8 years if the one we have serves well.

For those interested in history the whole idea of kings began to dissolve in the modern era. Some violent, some World War related, some overthrown by empires like the British empire that later became republics free from ultimate British rule, like India. Elizabeth II saw much of the British empire so dissolved during her reign.

But even in modernity the idea of kings, of A king who rules over his people seems to be impossible to displace. It just seems to happen. So you can do it like Russia where whoever is the most powerful murderer murders his way to the top, or you can have it be colorful and dignified like Britain does. But one way or the other, the people will demand a king.

The world sort of has 5 kings that stand out in very different styles and ruthlessness. We could say we have 2 historic millennial long standing monarchies left on the earth. The Pope, and King Charles III. Then we have two despotic ruthless murderous kings, Vladimir Putin who is waving nuclear weapons in everyone's face, and Xi Jinping who we fear wields the most economic and sheer numbers power on earth as well as nuclear weapons, and of course, the United States, the grand experiment where we limit powers and personality but still wield a nuclear arsenal and technologies that can bring the entire world to destruction.

In a fallen world, we get Kings whether anyone likes it or not. And we who bow our knees to the King of kings take some comfort in knowing the truth that God is in ultimate Sovereign control of all earthly kings, good or bad. Queen Elizabeth II drew her final breath at the exact nanosecond that God ordained.

In John 19:10-11 Listen to Jesus words to Pilate who thinks he is sovereign over Jesus. Big mistake. Huge;
*Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You **not** speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Jesus*

answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

Listen to the words of Daniel chapter 4 where King Nebuchadnezzar lost his senses while seven years passed over him as he lived out of doors and ate grass like an animal and yet in all of it, when God was finished teaching him who is really king, his kingdom was returned to him intact;

*34 "But at the end of those days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes toward heaven, and my knowledge returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;
For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.
35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And among the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can strike against His hand
Or say to Him, 'What have You done?' 36 At that time my knowledge returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my high officials and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my kingdom, and extraordinary greatness was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."*

The King of kings in heaven reigns over every earthly king. His sovereignty has been and will be in utter control of every king who lives on this earth.

*35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And among the inhabitants of earth*

Exactly what Jesus told Pilate minutes before the soldiers made Him carry

His cross to golgotha. God is in charge of it all. Even His own murder by evil men was under His control. And so it goes.

I had to ask google when the coronation of Charles III will be. It is a religious ceremony overseen by the arch-bishop of Canterbury in which King Charles III will be installed not only as King but as spiritual head of the Church of England. According to Time inc.;

The event will be held in Westminster Abbey and will be conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the principle leader of the Church of England, of which King Charles III is now its spiritual head. Time Inc.

That's interesting because Charles has already made clear according to Forbes Magazine; *that Charles' coronation ceremony will likely be a shorter, smaller and less expensive affair than those of previous rulers, and Charles has also reportedly asked for the coronation to reflect the diversity of modern Britain and represent different communities and faiths that reside in the U.K.* Forbes.com

It's fascinating to me to watch history unfold before our eyes as Charles III will be crowned by coronation in June of next year. Part of what I find fascinating is that in 2023, if the Lord tarries, the solemn service of coronation done out of view in Westminster Abbey by the Archbishop of the Church of England replicates the coronation of King Solomon in 1 Kings 1 while the Abbey is filled with Handel's theme, Zadok the Priest.

38 So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. 39 Zadok the priest then took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" 40 And all the people went up after him, and the people were playing on flutes and were glad with great gladness, so that the earth shook at their sound. 1 Kings 1

If you are a student of history, how interesting that the church was born in

great simplicity and humility of men like Peter and Paul. Jesus Himself having taught us *call no man your Father*. Jesus is the only King of true christians. But over time in our fallenness we can't help but want pomp and ceremony.

The papacy and all of the scarlet and pure white robes and all of the ceremony, patterned after some of the ceremonies of the jews. Low church, High church. And the Church of England was born as Henry VIII set about dis-obeying the Roman church, divorcing his wives in hopes of an heir to his throne.

The Church of England kept all of the ceremonious pomp of Roman Catholicism and in 2023, Charles will have oil annointed on him by the archbishop of Canterbury, like King Solomon did 3000 years ago. Amazing that in our ultra modern age we can't seem to let go of the idea of a king with authority annointed him by God.

Worship and the hope of a king who will lead us into wellbeing is built into our beings. God made us that way. In America we put ridiculous hope and longing in our election cycles towards a single man (or woman, or perhaps someone who isn't quite sure what they are) because we hope they will bring our lives thriving. We want a messiah. The whole world of fallen humans wants a messiah. A leader who has everything and who can bring well being and peace and thriving. We ache for such a person.

Will there ever be such a person who can unite the whole world and rule this world so that everyone thrives? The answer is both no, and yes, but first just a tiny bit more history.

God, in His plan of redemption, after the entire world fell into sin, chose a single people, a single bloodline, an ethnic group that stemmed from one man, Abraham, to be a people chosen out of all of the other ethnicities, for Himself. They would not only be the vehicle for inspired revelation, the very words of God, but that bloodline would produce the Messiah of Israel, Jesus Christ.

You can read about the children of Israel, the 12 tribes, their history as they were enslaved to kings in Egypt and how God raised up Moses to lead them out of Egypt, and how God revealed His laws for His chosen people, through Moses.

After Moses it was a time of the judges in Israel. Samuel and others. But listen to a page out of that time frame to set the stage, literally, for where we're at today, as we speak.

1 And it happened when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. 2 The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba. 3 But his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after greedy gain and took bribes and caused justice to turn aside. 4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; 5 and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." 6 But the thing was evil in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to Yahweh. 7 Then Yahweh said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. 8 Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. 9 So now, listen to their voice;

Yahweh was to be King over His people Israel, and they rejected Him as King and asked for a king like all the nations surrounding them had. And, like it says in Romans chapter 1, God gave them over. God allowed human kings, and the coronation next June in Westminster Abbey is in the long line of kings over whom Satan, the Ruler of this world holds sway.

This world aches for a messiah. It isn't going to be Charles. Or Xi. Or Vladimir, or Joe. A man is going to arrive on the scene who is going to be able to put humpty dumpty back together again. He's going to be able to

wield total control over the entire world, a literal one world ruler.

Jesus is the only rightful heir to one world rule and dominion in perfect prosperity and peace without sin, but before Jesus comes to rule, it's almost as if God says to sinners, you rejected me as king, you shall have a king who is going to magnify the depravity of your rejection.

God gave this world over to have kings in rejection of His kingship and the final king is going to be like a super magnified giving over into utter sin and depravity increased above any other wicked monster ruler ever yet known.

That's our introduction. Let me introduce you to that man this morning.

1 Now we ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken in your mind or be alarmed whether by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it has not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God.

We've been taking our time working our way through this paramount important section of scripture. We began 2 weeks ago and looked at prophetic prophecy that foretells the future, something only THE single book from the real God can supply. Then last week we looked at what Paul defines as the apostasy.

Paul's purpose wasn't so much to define prophetic events as it was to correct some false teaching that had troubled the christians at Thessalonica. Someone had told them they were already IN the day of the Lord. It was happening as we speak. It's here. No rapture. No meet up with Jesus in the air to go to our new home with Him before hell literally breaks loose here on earth.

And Paul tells them, that's impossible. For a couple of reasons. Prophecy is a straight line in time. It has a sequential aspect. Someone has told you, you're right here on the line, in the Day of the Lord. But that's not possible because 2 events must precede the Day of the Lord.

The apostasy, and the man of lawlessness, who we refer to as THE antichrist. We took last Sunday to have a good look at what Paul refers to as the Apostasy. The great demarcation. The separation of the true church from the false church. We believe that happens when Jesus returns for His true bride. Those christians who are spotless and clean because they bear a righteousness, not their own, they have the righteousness of Christ accounted unto them. The Holy Spirit lives in them.

He has removed their sins and paid the penalty of death they could never pay, on the cross. And He has given His righteousness to His own bride, those who by faith in His finished work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead have believed for the forgiveness of their sins, and who have bowed the knee to His Lordship. We belong to Him. Regenerated. Called out of this world and into His kingdom, His authority to reign.

Those who I have just described will rise to meet Jesus in the air when He comes to receive them to Himself, along with all who have fallen asleep in Jesus. All of the saints will meet Him in the air on that day.

But many who claim to be christians will be vomited out of His mouth. Those who do not have the indwelling Christ living inside them, but who claim they are in some sense christians, will be left behind. Vomited out. Lukewarm christians to whom Jesus will say; *I never knew you.* Mt. 7:23b

Paul mentions a form of godliness that denies the power in 1 Tim. 3:
1 But know this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, without gentleness, without love for

good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, but having denied its power. Keep away from such men as these.

A lot of so-called christianity today is hocus pocus nonsense. When Jesus returns for His own, these folks will remain and become apostates.

But I also believe that the revealing of the antichrist, the man of lawlessness will coincide with and be instrumental to this final apostasy. The rapture removes the true believers, the false messiah receives and deludes those who are lukewarm those who are vomited out of Jesus mouth.

What do we know about this man of lawlessness? Apparently the church at Thessalonica knew enough about who this is that Paul doesn't have to go into a whole theology of him. Paul simply argues, you can't be in the tribulation, because the antichrist hasn't been revealed. So, who is he?

John, the apostle, in his letters to the churches mentions antichrist. Lots of them. 1 John 2;

18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared. From this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they were of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be manifested that they all are not of us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

John speaks of defection from real christianity that was already taking place. Lots of antichrists. Leaving the real believers. Defecting.

In his 2nd epistle John says; *7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

John defines for us what an antichrist is. Someone who twists doctrine in

order to create a Jesus who isn't the real Jesus. Antichrists have an impotent Jesus who cannot forgive sins, cannot redeem sinners. And the error doesn't have to take the exact form John mentions here, not coming in the flesh, it can be anything that nullifies the effectual cleansing of the real Jesus. A non virgin born Jesus. A Jesus who did not rise from the dead. A Jesus who is only a man, but is not deity. A Jesus who is Satan's brother??

These antichrists, small a, are a picture on a smaller scale of what will happen on a massive scale when Jesus returns for His church.

The few, the remnant will go up to meet Him in the air. But the many will go with Antichrist. What was happening and has happened all through the ages of the church is small letter "a" antichrists that mimic the final antichrist who is THE Antichrist with a capital A.

When Jesus takes the real christians home, the whole world, including the millions of phony christians who don't know Jesus, are going to follow this final Antichrist like mice after the pied piper.

Let's meet this person, familiar to 1st century christians but a mystery to the modern church at large today, all the way back in Daniel chapter 9.

24 "Seventy weeks have been determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of Holies. 25 So you are to know and have insight that from the going out of a word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be restored and rebuilt, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are decreed. 27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will make sacrifice and grain offering cease; and on the wing of abominations

will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

There is so much here to consider, and this is not the first time we've looked at this passage together in Daniel.

I have dual concerns here. First is that there are folks who simply find the study of future things to be of no value and they may shrug and say, here we go again. The second concern is that some might do the opposite and consider the entire Bible secondary to prophetic prophecies about the future, and care only for prophecy at the expense of the rest of scripture. I see both errors.

We may see the rapture in our life times, so knowing future events and the stage, so to speak that will surround events after our departure is important. We may be called to live through some difficult things before Jesus calls us home to safety. We need to have some knowledge, enough to protect and encourage us if times of trouble come before Jesus calls us home.

In the passage in Daniel 9 that I just read, Daniel looks all the way to the end when the sin problem is finished. Erradication of the Genesis 3 fall into evil and rebellion against the Creator, the God of gods.

24 “Seventy weeks have been determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of Holies.

I'm going to go through this quickly so put your thinking caps on.

Seventy weeks. They are weeks of years. Easy math. 490 years to finish transgressions and rebellions against God.

The time period is for a particular people. See it there. *Seventy weeks have been determined for **your people** and for your holy city,*

490 years of **Jewish** history on a set clock to bring the history of rebellion against God to finality.

to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of Holies.

finish transgression. make an end of sin. make atonement, payment for iniquity. God is a righteous judge. He doesn't just let sin slide with no judgement. Atonement or everlasting destruction are the two single possibilities.

Prophecy and vision will be sealed up. Finalized. Completed forever. And then finally, the anointing of God as King. *and to anoint the Holy of Holies.*

Are you with me? Have you said, wow, if we know the begin date, we can know the end. Right? Daniel's going to get very specific about the begin date.

25 So you are to know and have insight that from the going out of a word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be restored and rebuilt, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

Ezra has 3 decrees about rebuilding the temple, but this is specific, this isn't the temple, this is the holy city, Jerusalem, and we have that decree in Nehemiah. March 5th 444 BC.

The first seven weeks of years beginning at 444 BC, 49 years, more or less, is the period of Jerusalem's rebuilding after the captivity. Nehemiah tells the story of that. And then 62 weeks Messiah the prince will arrive.

Now there's a factor here if you're good at math. Hebrew years were 360

days. So the numbers don't add up at first. But if you figure 483, 360 day years you come up with 173,880 days.

And guess what, 173,880 days from Artaxerxes decree in March 5th 444 BC you land on March 30th 33 AD, the very day that Jesus said; Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem. The prophecy was fulfilled in exactness.

41 And as He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He cried over it, 42 saying, "If you knew in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. Lk. 19:41,2

They should have known the day. They had Daniels prophecy. Jesus holds them accountable for what they should have known. That's why I take a moment to impress upon you the importance of knowing what is available to us to know about these things. The jews should have known. They should have been waiting at the gate to welcome Him. Instead they crucified Him.

Back to Daniel's prophecy;

26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing,

Cut off means murdered. Jesus was cut off from the land. Murdered by death on a cross. A week after He arrived in Jerusalem. Exactly as Daniel prophesied. Now the prophecy quickly leaps into the future.

You say, why didn't it complete itself seven more years after Jesus murder? You'll recall the exactness of Daniel's words. "*Seventy weeks have been determined for your people*" When Jesus was murdered, Jewish history counted in these weeks of years, was put on hold.

At the resurrection of Jesus on the third day, the hebrew people are put on a shelf to be dealt with later, and a parenthesis of time, Paul calls it a mystery, this period of time that no one in the old testament knew would happen. The age of the church. The age of grace. Jewish time is stopped

during the church age. God deals with the church. Israel wanders and is punished wherever they go. We are in the church age.

When God removes the church, how much time is left on God's clock for Daniel's people, the jews? Jesus was murdered in the 483rd year. 490 years to complete. Seven years left on the clock of history of Daniels people, God's chosen people, the jews.

and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are decreed.

After Messiah is murdered, the city and the sanctuary will be destroyed. Did that happen? Yes, in 70 AD Rome came and literally dismantled the temple, stone by stone to recover the gold. Took it apart. And they leveled the city to the ground. The emporer in Rome ordered a destruction that would cause the memory of Jerusalem to be erased. He wanted it completely destroyed to ground level, and that's what happened.

Now we're working backwards from here. Back to the future. Who is the prince who is to come? That's our person of interest, but we have some 20-20 hindsight. We know he is a prince from the people who destroyed and leveled Jerusalem. Rome. Rome did that.

Daniel never heard of Rome when he penned the prophecy given to him. Rome as a great power was still in the future when Daniel penned that prophecy given to him by God. The antichrist is in some sense a prince with a connection with Rome. Now personally, I have room in my theology for this person to be anywhere in a revived Roman empire.

Some folks narrow it right down and say it has to be the pope. That may be too constrained. The people who are the people of the prince who is to come, were the Roman empire in 70 AD.

If you google maps of that area in the first century, that's actually a lot of

area surrounding the meditaranean sea. Even Briton was part of that area. And even portions of Persia, all included in the original Roman empire. Most of the modern arabic countries are included in that map. Russia is not. My personal favorite is the entire area where France now is, which is called Gallia. Us Galli's own that.

Now if you look at a map of the current European Union countries which everyone is declaring to be a 2nd Roman Empire but which is failing mostly to live up to the name, there's nothing along the southern countries of the Meditaranean sea.

Politically though, that's still a massive area which I believe this person can come from. And before he is revealed to the world, that map can change, drastically. When he is revealed we'll look at Daniel 9 and say, of course. Except, we won't be here, beloved.

At the moment the church is removed, that 7 years of history remaining for Daniel's people, God's chosen people, the Jews, that clock will re-start. There's been a 2000 year parenthesis but there's still 7 years of Jewish history to be played out to complete Daniel's amazing prophecy.

Next week, I expect to complete our study of this false messiah, this one world ruler that we call the antichrist. And on a grand scale, it's as if God, once and for all sort of says, you don't want me to be your King? I'll give you a king instead then.

And this final king, this final one world ruler sets the ultimate contrast of evil and horror in which the Righteous King comes to deliver and set up His authority to reign in goodness and beauty and holiness in contrast to the most massive evil the world has ever witnessed.

The world aches for a messiah. They rejected and murdered the real messiah. God's going to give them the most horrific messiah anyone could ever imagine. Here's your messiah, world that hates God, and His holiness.

The black night before the true day dawns. How glorious is it that we belong to the King of kings who will call us out of this world, to Himself, as His bride, before these horrific judgements begin. That's why Paul told the Thessalonians; 18 *Therefore comfort one another with these words.* 1T4