

Antichrist: Fact or Fiction?

by Shane Idleman

The sermon discusses the concept of the Antichrist, the importance of understanding the end times, and the need for discernment and preparedness in the face of false teaching and false prophets.

Duration: 55:30

Scripture: Matthew 24:15

Topics: "Eschatology", "Vigilance Against False Prophets"

Description

Shane Idleman explores the complex topic of the Antichrist and the rapture, emphasizing the differing theological views within Christianity regarding eschatology. He discusses the urgency of being prepared for potential tribulation and the importance of understanding biblical hermeneutics in interpreting prophetic scripture. Idleman highlights the need for believers to remain vigilant against false prophets and to seek a genuine relationship with God, especially in light of the signs of the times. He encourages the congregation to prepare their hearts and minds for the future, whether it involves tribulation or the return of Christ. Ultimately, he calls for a deep, personal commitment to faith and prayer as the church navigates these challenging discussions.

Transcript

Matthew 24, and I've been in Matthew quite a while. We've been talking about the Antichrist, the rapture, is it fact or is it fiction, for about three weeks now. And I wanted to, actually I'm not gonna talk too much about the rapture tonight, unless I get to that.

The reason is I had so much from last week carrying over, and I didn't wanna just remove it and delete it. And there's a lot of, I don't know if you're aware of this, but if you're not, I'll tell you up front, that there's a lot of dispute in this area. There's churches, such as the Presbyterian Church or the Reformed Church, that would be, have a much different theological view of this area than modern day, say, Calvary Chapel, the Vineyard Movement, and they call it eschatology, they call it the study of the end times.

And the reason it's challenging is because you can read a lot of the scriptures in Matthew 24, and you can see how those were possibly fulfilled in AD 70, when Titus conquered Jerusalem. And you can also, though, read a lot of the texts, and you can see that's where we're heading. So is that where we're heading, or did we already go through it? And so, in a lot of, it's called hermeneutics, is how that you interpret the Bible, with allegories or a literal interpretation, and one group is very literal.

This generation will no means pass away, means the generation in which Jesus was talking, where many other groups will look at it as the nation of Israel, the people group there, and we're gonna see these things. And it actually can get pretty ugly. I just talked to a friend of mine this week, who's spoken here a few times, Anton, you know Anton, if you've been here for a while, he speaks and fills in for me.

Good Bible teacher, I love listening to his CDs, and a lot you can glean from that. But he has friends that are what would be called pre-wrath, and he is pre-trib. There we go, I've heard that before, I'm not sure what that means, many of you know exactly what it means.

Pre-trib is short for pre-tribulation, and that's short for we're outta here before it gets tough. So as soon as the tribulation hits, we're already gone, the church is gone, they're raptured, and then there's a tribulation. But there's another group called pre-wrath, which means we will go through the tribulation of the Antichrist, but we will be raptured out before the wrath of God is poured out.

And if you look in Revelation, you see the bowl judgments, the trumpet judgments, where all hell breaks loose, literally. But there's one group, a large group actually, a segment of Christianity that believes all of that has already occurred. And we're not gonna go through that, and I actually like that view.

But there are some challenges with that view. And many people ask me, what I was trying to say is because he's my, Anton was pre-tribulation, and the other group is pre-wrath, that they have disowned him and not fellowship with him anymore, a term such as heretical. And I'm just, what? I mean, when great men of God are divided on this issue, we need to be careful, because you'll take, I can name off tons of names, Chuck Smith, Jack Kafer, John MacArthur, John Piper, Gary DeMar, Sam Storms.

You can Google all these people, well-versed in theology, and they're divided on it. And I spoke about that the last few weeks. If you get time, make sure you listen to those messages.

And people are often wondering kind of where I'm at. And I usually kind of sit back and read both sides, read the Bible, and then read the Bible again, then read Daniel, and read Matthew, and read Revelation, and try to do this. And a lot of the views that believe, the view that believes that a lot of this has happened have some strong points.

But when I look overall, and you see the nation of Israel being reborn in 1948, you see the armies, talked about Ezekiel gathered around her, Magog, and is Syria, is modern-day Syria, Iran, you see these nations, you see earthquakes, are they decreasing, or are they increasing? You see the sign of the times, you see where this could possibly be a one-world leader coming up. You see where there could possibly be a one-world system. And you can see that a lot of these things are possibly coming to pass.

So I would, I'm in that position, I pray, I pray for the rapture, but I prepare for tribulation. And I think that's something you would wanna consider, is you wanna, especially if you have kids or grandkids, you want to prepare them for the future, that they might go through persecution. Because if you, and I've talked to people in China or India or in what we call the persecuted church, and sometimes I wish I could just get one of those speakers to come and tell you what it's like.

Air conditioning, comfortable seats. No, you're sitting on dirt, and there's 10 roofs, or you're in hiding, and you're just, this kind of equipment, we just take so much for granted. I remember a friend of mine, he's a pastor actually, he's my cousin, went and the bathroom is just this little room off to the side covered with tin, and watch out for scorpions, they'll tell you, watch out for, and it's just this, you're just living on the dirt,

and you're going through tribulation.

You could be killed, you could be martyred for your faith. And so you have to weigh all of what's going on in Christendom, in Christianity, in the whole world. And I quoted J. Vernon McGee, and I wanna quote him again.

He said something along the lines of the Bible, of course, the Bible was written for us, but not to us. And a lot of times when we read it, I'm gonna be careful here, I'm gonna come back to this. When we read it, we say, oh, this is exactly for me, this is in my time period, this is my historical context.

Now, the Bible is for us, but a lot of it was not written to us. This wasn't written to America, it was written to a lot of the, the Isaiah wrote to the nation of Israel, the Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel wrote to the nation of Israel in captivity, Judges was written showing the time period in Kings, but we can glean insight, we can glean principles, and when God is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. So the Bible, even though it wasn't written to me, per se, it was written for me.

So when you read Revelation, when you read Matthew 24, it's so easy for us to go, okay, 2,000 years, but they were not, many times, looking 2,000 years ahead, they were looking at their immediate context. Antichrist, John would say the Antichrist spirit is here. When John wrote the book of Revelation, if you look at chapter three, four, he's talking about the churches, and then he says something along the lines of, now, let me tell you what's coming next.

And we say, oh, that must be 2,000 years ago. But in that context, they took it as coming pretty soon. So that's why the church is divided, because of hermeneutics, how you translate the Bible.

Does let me tell you what's coming next, or coming soon, mean 2,000 years, or does it mean soon, meaning when that book was written, and what was to come? So let's start again, Matthew 24, verse 15. Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, whoever reads this, let them understand. Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Let him who is on the housetop not go down and take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back and get his clothes. So again, looking at the context, historical context, looking at hermeneutics, and how you study the Bible, there's urgency, right? I mean, if that doesn't speak of urgency, I don't know what does.

And what some group would say, and what I would agree with, is those who are in Judea, that area, Judea was pretty big. If you had a map of Israel, you could see it taking up a lot of that area. So the context could be local, localized, not necessarily applying to the whole world.

Let him who is on the housetop not go down and take anything out of his house. Well, that doesn't make sense. Well, if you understand their houses were flat and they had pat porches on their homes, you could almost get the picture of them running from roof to roof to get out of the town because destruction is coming.

He's saying, don't go back in your house. Well, what do I need to pack? We need this and we need to take this for a journey and grab some of this. And he's saying, no, no, no, get out of Dodge, get out of town.

And let him who is in the field do not go back and get his clothes. Go, leave. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days.

Why? Because it's hard to flee with little ones, especially if a nursing an infant. And so you have this imagery of a proper hermeneutics on studying the Bible is there's urgency. When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, apparently the Antichrist or whoever this person is is going to set up some type of abomination in the temple of God.

And when they do, get out of town is what he's saying. So if you tie that back to what I talked about last week, Titus came in a Roman emperor to Jerusalem and ransacked all of Jerusalem. A million people were killed.

Blood was spilled everywhere. And it was an abomination of desolation. They would say, this group would say.

And that's why I say that's a good point. But the point that I wouldn't agree with is, well, when your city is besieged and you're surrounded, you're not gonna be able to leave. You're not gonna be able to flee.

You're not gonna be able to not go grab things and leave. You're besieged. You are going to die.

So if we look to the future, we could see this cataclysmic event that is coming upon the earth and to flee, to get out of the area. But that's why people are divided because there's not real clear indication. For then, I'll pray that your flight may not be in winter or in the Sabbath.

For then there will be great tribulation such as not been since the beginning of the world until this time, nor ever shall there be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the elect's sake, those days were shortened.

So this would tell me, if you're just reading hermeneutics, you're looking at what this says, you look at the original language, that there will be great tribulation unlike anything that has ever happened. So that, again, in my opinion, wouldn't apply to AD 70 when Titus conquered Jerusalem. As horrific as that was, there's been things that have been worse.

Remember, we discussed the numbers. A million people died in 70 AD under Titus. But six million Jews died under Hitler in the concentration camps.

And we see this coming. So when Jesus says, and nothing again ever is going to take place, I can't just kind of scoot that out of the way to fit a certain system of theology because it sounds to me like all hell's gonna break loose much more than what was experienced in AD 70. Matthew 24, 23, then if anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ, or there, do not believe it, for false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

So I've mentioned that word twice now. Elect is a, I need a whole sermon for this topic too. But elect goes along with the word election.

You can read about in Ephesians that I clearly believe in election, but not necessarily how some people define it. You'll see that the word election is always used in reference to God's chosen people. Whether that's Israel or whether that's us, they are the elect of God.

They are elect, they're chosen. And that's why he says, if those days were not shortened, even the elect would have perished. And these false Christs and false prophets will rise up and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

So in my understanding, I can't see how these false Christs and false prophets came in AD 70 and did these miracles that we don't read about some miraculous things happening. So it points to possibly a future of where the world's gonna get so chaotic, the world's gonna be so desperate that false Christs and false prophets will come in and deceive many. What's a false prophet? We talked about that last week.

Telling you what you want to hear, not what you need to hear. I mean, we could go over seven signs of a false prophet, but that's in a nutshell. They take you away from this and to this.

Teachers telling you what you want to hear, building an audience, not what you need. That's a false prophet. A true spokesman for God will preach the Bible.

A false prophet will, and that's a big concern we're seeing in the church now. A lot of these guys on TV, they're not upsetting people. They're not ruffling those feathers.

They're not convicting. They are cheerleading and telling people what we want to hear. So you have to be careful there.

Would I label all of them a false prophet? No, of course not. If you weren't here last week, listen to that message. I talked a little bit about that.

But a false prophet is those who intentionally deceive with smooth words, basically saying peace, peace. Safety, don't worry about it. Church, don't worry about it.

And they'll come on the scene and they'll say, listen, the church in America, America's pleasing God. God is so pleased with us. Don't worry.

Don't worry about any of this. God loves us. We are his chosen people.

Is God happy with the direction of the nation or the church? Hello, Target? Let's get controversial, right? But let's be honest. There's a false sense of security. False Christ will be people claiming to be Jesus.

And you might say, well, Shane, that doesn't happen. Does it? Yeah, Google people claiming to be Jesus and you'll see, and they have followers. I mean, I told you about that guy who lives very nice in Florida, I think it is.

And he'll sit down with CNN or whoever. I am the Christ. I am the Messiah.

Yes, I'm the chosen one. And I just, oh. And people are like, really, he's here.

So, you know, it'll happen. And here's the thing. People sometimes are so hungry spiritually that they'll consume anything.

So, that's a nugget to Twitter or whatever that calls. You can be so hungry, you can be so hungry. I probably said something wrong.

I'm not gonna go back there and think about it. You can tweet it. But you can be so hungry spiritually that you'll consume anything.

And that's the warning here. They're looking for Christ. They're looking for their Savior.

And they're so hungry to see him that they'll be led astray by false teachers and false prophets. But he says, see, I've told you beforehand. Therefore, if they say to you, look, he's in the desert.

Do not go. Or look, he's in an inner room. Do not believe it.

So, what's out in the desert? That's basically, oh, I know where he's at. He's out in some secret place. Let me go show you.

What's an inner room? An inner room is hard to get to. It's a secret place. Jesus is saying, it's not gonna be a secret if they say, oh, he's out in the desert.

Let's go see where he's hidden in this place. No, as lightning comes, that's how the Son of Man is going to come. Nobody will be able to fool you.

And why is he telling us this? To prepare us. Do not believe it. For as lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will gather also. Now, carcass, dead animal, you see that sometimes. You can see a lot of crows or vultures circling and they're looking.

And so Jesus is saying, where are you? It's gonna be clear that something is happening. Now, so that's one view, right? This view. He will not be hard to find.

He'll be very hard, very easy to find. You'll know when Jesus has returned. So that's what Jesus is trying to do, I believe, preparing.

Don't be deceived. Don't, false cries, false prophets. When I return, it will be crystal clear.

Now, this group, believe it or not, says this already happened. And one of the proponents, Gary DeMar, it's the anti-bodily coming view of Jesus, predicted coming in this passage that Jesus would come just as lightning comes from the east. That is quickly and without warning.

What the people saw was the manifestation of the Lord's coming back in AD 70, even though they did not actually see him. Was God physically present? He was not. Did he come? Most certainly he did.

So that's what they say that Jesus, it came, God came, but you couldn't see it. Almost like, and I was trying to figure it out, probably like when Jesus said, the kingdom of God is within you. I didn't see anything coming, but here it's within me.

But when I just look at this passage, false cries, false prophets are visible. As the lightning strikes, you will see it. When I read this hermeneutically, and you look at the hermeneutic laws, there's hermeneutic laws of biblical interpretation, it would tell me that this is going to be, Christ is going to come again, a sign you'll see in heaven.

It'll be clear that he is here. That's why he's paralleling it with a false prophet, false teacher. You'll know when I'm coming.

So again, to me, this is talking about a literal, physical return of Jesus Christ, and that's what we're looking for. So how do you tie in the great tribulation with the Antichrist? Couple things on this. I want to reiterate that I talked about last week.

You will not find the word Antichrist in Revelation. Antichrist is mentioned in 1 John, I believe 2 John, and John says, and the Antichrist is already here, talking about the Antichrist spirit. What is Antichrist? Anti, against, Christ.

Basically, it's anybody, any movement, any organization that denies both the Father and the Son, they are Antichrist. So I can name some cults for you right now that would be Antichrist, against Christ. They go knock on doors, that's why we're doing it tomorrow too.

We're bringing the true Christ, where Antichrist has been delivered before. So just keep that in mind. An Antichrist, it's a spirit in the church, or in the, wherever it's at, it's whoever rejects the Son, rejects the Father.

And when you have the Son, you have the Father. You can read 1 John. I'm not gonna tell you where, so you have to read the whole thing.

That's one of the things, again, with hermeneutics, study the Bible, homiletics is sermon preparation, but hermeneutics is studying the Bible, and it will tell you often to read the entire context, because chapters and verses were just put in about 500 years ago, and I'm glad they were. Back then, they didn't have chapter, that's why Jesus would say, it is written. It is written.

And it's funny, I'll quote a lot of scriptures, and people will email me, you didn't name the chapter and the verse. Well, neither did Jesus. It's good company, right? Just does it line up? It is written, have you not read? It's written, and that's, so it was added.

So read in context. Daniel, read that with Matthew 24, and it'll start to, the more you read it, the more you start to internalize, it will help. So keep that in mind with the Antichrist.

So where does the Antichrist concept comes in? It comes in from Revelation, the book of Revelation, that there is a beast, this one world leader, they say, that comes up, and he's called the Antichrist. Now, there's nothing wrong with that term, because if anybody's Antichrist, it's this guy, unless you believe this guy has already come. So see, this group, again, will believe that the beast talked about in Revelation has already come in AD 70, where the other group is waiting on this one world leader to come.

So let's read that, Revelation 13, I'll explain it a little bit. Then I stood on the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and 10 horns. Does this beast have 10 horns? Probably not, it's imagery.

It's using imagery to show what is coming. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and 10 horns, and on his horns, 10 crowns, and on his head, yeah, there's heads. Let's get this picture here for a minute.

This beast is rising out of the sea, having seven heads and 10 horns, and on his horns, 10 crowns, like a king's crown, and on his head, a blasphemous name. Now the beast, which I saw, was like a leopard. His feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion.

So it's this one complete beast that has, he looks like a leopard, he has the feet of a bear, and a mouth like a lion. And the dragon gave him power, which could many interpret as Satan gave him his power, his throne, and his authority. And I saw one of the heads as it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed, and all of the world marveled and followed the beast.

So they worshiped the dragon, who gave authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him? So this group, again, that person is coming. This group says he already came. And you're saying, what is wrong with this group, right? That's what I thought 10 years ago.

I just couldn't believe. Like Hank Hanegraaff, you listen to him? Bible Answer Man. I remember when he switched over to this side.

I said, Hank, what are you doing? What's going on? I've been taught this side all my life, and I can't believe it, and it was a big deal. But when you start to read why they switched, it gave me a little bit more grace. And then, okay, I can see why there's differing views.

Let's talk about that for a minute. 10 crowns, had 10 crowns. Well, back in AD 70, the Roman Empire had 10 providences, and the governors of each one gave their authority over to Rome and also exercised authority on behalf of Rome.

So you see these 10 providences in Rome having this authority in the time that John is writing. This group says there will be a revised and renewed Roman Empire. That's what like probably Hal Lindsey, this group would say, and it's possible.

You might see, but right now we don't see that. But we also have to remember that the Roman Empire, sometimes people forget about the Eastern Block of the Roman Empire that included Syria. So you could see that future leader if they're coming.

I actually met with a person yesterday for two and a half hours, talking about a lot of this subject. And I said, so if you see a one world leader coming, you see this mark, you see one world system of currency, you see all these things, would you change your mind? He's like, no, not really, because I'm already in this, stuck in this, already have, I've already studied, and I believe in this view. And I said, so what's it gonna take to get you to this view? So sometimes people have already made up their mind what's gonna happen.

But if you see Rome and that Eastern Block there and a leader coming out of that area, but again, there's 10 horns and seven heads, and there's just so much there that that's why it gets complicated. But this group would believe that there are those 10 provenance of Rome that were given authority. And like a lion, like a lion, the apostle Paul was referring to his trial before Nero, testifying that he was rescued from the lion's den in 2 Timothy 4. So this group would believe that this beast, this person is Nero, Caesar Nero, who persecuted the church, who persecuted Christians.

He came and that fulfills this role. Now, we would look at this group over here, three successive kingdoms that Daniel prophesied of, the lion, the bear, and the leopard as one world power, one world system coming up. What about mortally wounded? This person is gonna be mortally wounded and be resurrected again for the whole world to see.

Well, that's kind of hard to fit that into this group, again, in my opinion, because the whole world is gonna see this person morally offended and reborn. However, Nero, who I talked about, committed suicide in June 16 AD. His death brought civil war and chaos and the empire almost collapsed.

Josephus said that every part of the habitable earth under the Romans was in an unsettling and tottering condition, but then it was rebuilt again. And just throw this in the mix. This is real interesting.

And you can look it up. I did today and earlier a few weeks ago. Nero, Caesar Nero spelled out those letters in the Hebrew as 666.

And depending on how his name is spelled, adding a letter in there could get 616. So just food for thought. So in other words, when people said, oh, I'm like, yeah, right, you've lost it.

But if you look up, like this letter carries a value of 200, this letter carries a value of 50, this letter carries a value of 25, this letter carries a value of six. So when you add up his name, Nero, Caesar, you get 666. Interesting? Yeah, highly.

The number of man. And so you can, the thought goes like, and I'm really not trying to persuade you this side because I'm really caught more on this side, but I want to show you that these people haven't lost their mind. You can see how this could all fit together.

And the number of the beast is the number of a man. So if John is writing from the island of Patmos, and another argument is, did he write the letter? Did he write Revelation in 1895? If he did, then this side, their whole argument falls apart because it was written 25 years after this happened. Or was his letter in Revelation written before 70 AD? Well, the theologians are divided on that, so we're not gonna answer that question tonight, that's for sure, because nobody knows.

You might as well guess who wrote the book of Hebrews. Just something to think about. This term is gonna give you a headache when you get out of here, because it's gonna be like, wow, too much information.

Yes, yes, too much information, I agree. But John is writing on the island of Patmos. He's been barred, he's excommunicated.

So they would say that that's how he got the message to the people, to the church, to let them know 666. They knew exactly what the Hebraic letters and numbers represented, because it spelled it out. And that's how they got underneath that, they got that letter through to them without actually pointing out Nero.

Now, as this progresses, and I'm talking about now 2,000 years, as it keeps progressing, that the 666 is gonna be hard to identify, because is it a number of a man, or is it a name? Is it an actual tag that we're gonna have to have? There's some holes in this theory that I see as well. And I talked about Walid Shabbat talks about it as a terrorist on your hand and on your forehead. But it's not an actual mark, it's a way of thought.

You have to agree with a certain way of living. And you have to agree with the Antichrist, worship that person, and that's how you'll be able to buy and trade. So it might not necessarily be a number or something.

People are worried. I remember when credit cards, or little chips came out of different people, oh, okay, that's the number of the beast. You'll know it.

You will not, they will not catch you off guard. You're not gonna sign up for Visa and go, they got me. You know, people, I don't want computers, I don't want this.

No, you're gonna have to take a mark or make some profession and deny the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be crystal clear. They're not gonna pull a fast one on you.

You're gonna have to know what you're doing as if that is coming. And I believe, if you look at all the Scripture, what I try to do is I weigh everything I'm talking about, this side, I weigh everything on this side, and I would probably lean towards what a lot of this is coming. And a lot of you are going, oh, thank God.

Woo, I'm glad you don't, but I wanna show you that this side doesn't have, they haven't lost their mind. They're actually, technically, they're being more literal in their application of the Bible than this group, because Jesus said, this generation will not pass away until you see these signs. This person will, and they're taking this very literally.

Actually, it's more literal than this group would take it. The whole earth would worship him. What are you gonna do with that? The whole earth would worship him, and all who dwell on the earth will worship him.

Well, this is a whole nother interesting topic, because all doesn't have to be all, and whole doesn't have to mean whole, necessarily. When the Bible, in Luke, I believe it was Luke 2, when they said, and they sent out a census for all of the world. It wasn't all of the world.

It was just for that area. And we say this sometimes in our own language. I'm about to die here.

Are you about to die? No. Everybody, everybody in California's mad at me. Is everybody? No, it's emphasizing.

Now, just to make you feel better, I believe that all who dwell on the earth will worship him. It will be this encompassing all of us. But it could mean, this group would say, that all in the area of Judea, and where this was written, and this whole land of Israel, nation, tribe, and tongue, referring to Israel, will worship him, and this whole Roman Empire, and that's exactly what happened.

That's exactly what happened. Nero worship, it was terrible. Worshiping Nero involved offering sacrifices to his spirit in the public square, even after his death.

Rulers from other lands also had to worship him. One statue hailed him as savior, and another as almighty God. The whole earth may refer to the Roman Empire, or to Israel, is what this side would say.

And those of us who take the literal view that the whole earth would be under his control and forced to worship him, we take earth and the whole world to mean exactly what it is. For God so loved the, just a little small segment there, the whole world. But you can see, because sometimes all doesn't mean all.

Again, the context. And whoever this person is, was it Nero or is he coming? Verse five, he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. Did Nero do that? Absolutely.

Is this future leader going to do that? Absolutely. He was given authority to continue for 42 months. Now this is interesting.

Nero persecuted Christians throughout the Roman Empire in 64 AD. The persecution ended when Nero committed suicide in June 68 AD. Thus he made war on the saints for a period of 42 months.

So this side's got some ammunition. Now you can do what I did and just take anybody's, you research it, go to historical references, go to Josephus, read if any of this is fairy dust, pixie dust, or if it's real. And that's why a lot of men of God have gravitated towards this side.

However, is it possible that this person will speak blasphemies and he was given authority to continue for 42 months, it's coming? Yes, could it be joining parallels of these people? Sure, of course. Then he opened his mouth with blasphemy against God to blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. That's what he did.

There's no tabernacle in this view. But it's being rebuilt, supposedly. So see, there's a lot of things I'm waiting to see.

The tabernacles rebuilt, a one world system. I mean, you can kind of just watch and see what view, well, like I told the guy yesterday, or I was thinking, I don't know if I told him. But someday, we're both gonna know who's right.

Right, I mean, at some point, you're gonna know what side of this argument is correct. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, that happened in AD 70, or it's coming to happen. And authority was given to him over every tribe, every tongue, and every nation.

That's the concept of world domination. But they would say every tribe, tongue, and nation is often used of Israel. Every tribe, 12 tribes of Israel.

The tongue, the nations, all those gathered in the Roman Empire there. So they can try to, either group, it can make these work. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the book of the life of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.

People say, how do I know if my name is in there? Well, how do you know? Did you repent and did you believe? Did you repent of your sin and did you believe on the only name that saves? It's not a secret. You're not gonna, I wonder if I'm in that book. Are you or aren't you? If you're not, I would encourage you, get your name written in that book.

All who call upon my name will be saved, Jesus said. And in Revelation, God says, all who call upon my name will be saved. If anyone has ear, let him hear.

He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity. He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Any guess on what happened to Nero? Killed by the sword.

Why shouldn't he commit suicide? Right, but it fell, then he asked, I think his, one of his cupbearers or somebody there with him to kill him with the sword. Oh, God, this is just complicated. I like this side better.

You know, it's like, but there's different things. Nero persecuted the Christians, I already read that. And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies and authority to act for 42 months.

This arrogant person. *Qualis artifexos perio*, he said before he died. *Qualis artifexos perio*.

What a wonderful, what a wonderful artist the world loses in me. He was arrogant, pompous, very arrogant man. And he's speaking pompous, arrogant things.

A mouth speaking great things and blasphemies and authority to continue for 42 months. We will, this group says this is coming in the future. That this world leader, this beast, whoever it is, will speak blasphemous things and he will come in the future.

If you wanna keep reading, you can keep reading at Revelation 13, 11. Revelation 13, 11. Now this is where I was gonna talk a little bit about the rapture, but I don't wanna run through it too quickly, so bear with me.

I might have to pick this up next weekend, but what's next weekend? Mother's Day, should we talk about the rapture on Mother's Day? I think not. So interesting thing about the rapture. This group would say it has already happened.

And I don't have time to break that down, but maybe I will in a minute. But the thing we have to remember with the rapture or whatever happens, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. So how you are now, how I am now, we cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Flesh and blood, it's like filthy, it's like you just, I don't wanna give that example, but I was gonna say like you just washed your house and your dog did something on the living room floor and it doesn't work there. Flesh and blood can't inherit the kingdom of God, so something has to change. And really, the truth is dead men see God.

Dead men see God. Once you die and something, that old, that body goes back into the earth, it's dissolved, and the new man, the new heavens and new earth create, the new body that we are created in a different body. There's something different that's gonna happen.

The flesh and blood can't inherit. So with the rapture, something would have to happen as you're catching away and going up there. There has to be a, you can't just go like this, because God would say, no, no, no.

But what about Jesus? Yes, what about Jesus? But you can't, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, it's gotta be the spirit side of us. I'm not getting new agey, that's just true. You are body, soul, and spirit, whether you agree with it or not.

You have a body, you live in a body, but you are eternally going to live somewhere eternally and you have a soul, your emotions, your intellect, who you are. It's interesting, God said, let us make man in our image and in our likeness. You see the triune nature of God, you can see the triune nature of what man has.

I'm not gonna get that deep into theology in that area because it's a risky area to keep going in, but when God said, let us create man in our image and in our likeness, it's interesting you see that three concept, body, soul, and spirit. John 14, I'm going away to prepare a place for you and if I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself and where I am, that's where he's going to be. In his father's house, there you may be also.

So Jesus says, I'm going away before he died to prepare a place for you and if I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, that's where he's going to be. In his father's house, there you will be also. So we get this image of Jesus is coming back for us.

So it's not a concept that's out there. This people, this group would say, oh, that's not, well, the Bible's pretty clear that Jesus says, I'm gonna prepare a place, I'm coming back for you. To be, and again, I could read a whole bunch on the rapture, I'm probably going to skip that until we get to that section and talk a little bit more about it.

What is a rapture? Where does it come from in Thessalonians? What are we waiting on? What are we looking for? And there's a lot of views on this. There's a view of pre-tribulation, which I spoke of, where you'll go, you will go out of here before the tribulation or there's mid-tribulation where we go in the middle and then there's pre-wrath where you go out before God's wrath. And I would say that if that rapture type theology is true and we are going to be caught up that I don't see us going through God's wrath, that would make no sense.

God doesn't pour out his wrath on people. Now, the Antichrist will or the one world leader will if that is coming. So I'm in a state of expectancy.

I'll teach it, I believe it, I believe what the Bible says. I think we're gonna see these things as everything's starting to line up. But I don't wanna tell my kids, don't worry about it, you'll be out of here.

When they might have to die for their faith. Do you all realize that that is a reality that we might see someday? And if we don't see it, our kids will see it. Our grandkids could see it.

You'll have to actually die for your faith. That makes me want to teach them about solid theology and abiding in Christ and having him be their anchor and their foundation. Let me pick up verse 29 in Matthew 24.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days, don't worry, I'll come back to the rapture in a few weeks. That means you have to come back to church. All the first time visitors, you're gonna have to come back.

Mother's Day and then Saturday after that. So immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heaven will be shaken. That's when you say, see? This side, that has not happened yet.

That has not happened yet. However, let me tell you what they'll say in a little bit. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Very interesting thing. When you study New Testament theology or revelation or different things, you have to have the Old Testament as your backdrop, they work together because in Isaiah 19, one, God is speaking. He says, the burden of Egypt, behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.

Did God come riding swiftly on a cloud? No, it was imagery of his judgment upon the nation of Israel. There's no God riding a cloud like a man riding a horse. It's imagery, it's allegory saying he's coming swiftly.

You see those clouds approaching, blowing quickly. God is riding swiftly on a cloud to bring judgment to Egypt. So if we follow that line of reasoning, then you could read here that when the Son of Man comes again, they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Would Jesus really be straddling a cloud like a horse, you know, riding that cloud? Probably not, but will we see his manifest presence? Will he be coming again? Because I believe so because it says, then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. Something will appear, they'll see the Son of Man, the tribes will mourn, what did you say? The sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, the stars will

fall from heaven. This cataclysmic event where the Son of Man, the Son of God returns will be something that is very visible, very life altering, that has never been seen before.

And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they will gather together his elect from the four winds and from the end of heaven, one end to another. So that's that Matthew 24 all the way through verse 31. You see this, if we can remember back that Jesus is preparing them, be ready, all these signs are coming, these signs are coming, here's what's gonna happen, you watch out for this, don't be mistaken, don't be deceived, and then he ends with this, that God's going to gather his elect.

And it's a difficult topic because we don't know where or how or at what point or what's it gonna look like. What about the passage where he says, like in the days of Noah, one will be working in the field, the other will be taken, one will be left. Well, is he going to judgment or is he going to heaven? Left behind series would say he's going to heaven, right? But he, so there's a lot of speculation.

And that's why we go back to the main focal point of are you ready, are you prepared? Don't be deceived by false teachers, by false prophets. Don't get away from abiding in God, stay abiding. And so if you'll know they're watching the news and my concern is the news is taking them away from God.

They're so worried about all these things and the Trump supporters and protests and all these things and what's happening, be abiding in Christ, be abiding in God. That's the warning, that's the encouragement here. And what we're gonna do tonight is do communion here tonight and also tomorrow morning.

And although the Bible is rich in symbolism, so is communion. And communion is not about ritual, but remembrance. That's the communion.

If we ever get in the habit of it being a ritual, we're in trouble. Because a ritual is just you go through the motions and you just go and go through the motions. That's not what communion is.

Communion is a powerful time of remembrance where we look back, we look ahead, and we look within. I think I heard Greg Laurie say that a while back. And I said, I have to write that down.

That's exactly what it is. We look back, we look ahead, and we look within. So let me just briefly, let's look back, the life of Christ, the bread.

Jesus called himself the bread of life. So when you take the communion, it's not just some little wafer piece of bread. It is actually representing the body of Christ.

Bread nourishes. It's necessary for growth, health, and good condition. So Jesus says, I am the only way, the only truth, the only life.

I am the true bread that comes from heaven. I will nourish you, I will sustain you. So we take that and we remember that.

We also remember the blood that was given. Jesus' blood cleanses us from sin. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

And then we look ahead. This is a wonderful time in communion to look ahead. Are you ready for his return? Something's gonna happen.

Regardless of what view you have, you're not gonna be here for a thousand years. Probably everybody in this room, probably not a hundred years. Or 50, or 40, some of us 30, or 20.

You look ahead what's happening. You remember, and it brings you back. That's why I loved that last chorus that Brant sang on that song.

Nothing but the blood, nothing but the blood. And remembering Jesus. And then we look within.

Communion is a time to look within. Isaiah 55, six and seven. I've read this many times before, and I wanna read it again.

And it's interesting. It's an invitation to those who are thirsty. And I wanna ask you, are you thirsty tonight for God? Because the reason church is boring for many people is they're not thirsty.

They're not hungry for more of God. They're just, oh, I went through with emotions, let me check church off this week. That's not searching and being desperate for God and having a thirst.

Are you ever thirsty? Have you ever went on a long run or jogged and had no water? You're tempted to jump in the aqueduct and drink that. Or whatever you can get, you're so thirsty. That's what, many people can't relate.

They're just, oh, everything's just boring about church. Bible's boring, I'm drifting away from God. I'm not hungry for God.

Well, here's the solution. Seek the Lord while he may be found. That tells me I have a responsibility.

I have to seek God while he may be found. He's not gonna come find me many times. I have to go and seek him because he's not hiding.

It isn't hide and seek. God is an ever-present help. He's right there.

He's waiting for us to take that step to seek him. That's why I always talk about prayer and fasting and reading the Bible and worshiping. That's how you seek him.

You don't seek him by all these other things that people are doing. Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts.

The context there is your wicked thoughts, my wicked thoughts. Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. So those who are thirsty, they seek God.

They set their hearts on God. They don't care what it looks like. They don't care what it's gonna cost them.

They turn from their wicked ways. They remove those wicked thoughts that are coming in and penetrating their heart and deceiving them. And God says, when you call on me, I will hear and I will forgive you and I will pardon you.

So that's what communion is, a time to look within, to look within and say, God, before I take this, before I take these elements, I wanna make sure that my relationship with you is anchored and I'm on good ground, I'm on good soil. Actually, communion can be a very powerful time. I believe healing can take place.

I believe bondages can be broken. I believe addictions can be broken. I believe that marriages can be healed.

If you take a husband and wife who are on the brink of divorce court, and they go and they take communion together, and they open up and they say, I'm sorry, will you forgive me if I repent, if I seek God again, let's take communion, let's ask God, because of the body that was bruised and the blood that was shed, let's ask God to rebuild our marriage. You don't think he'll not answer that prayer? He loves to answer those prayers, but we have to seek with all of our heart and call upon him while he might be found. There's a day coming where he won't be found.

It's called death, flatline, dead man walking. When that all happens, that time to seek God is over, is over. It was just last, it's been a week now, week tomorrow I gave a message at a memorial service for a one-year-old baby girl.

Very difficult, very challenging. And then a week prior, there was a 70-year-old woman that we had a memorial service there for in Leona Valley, and I just saw one to 70. You never know.

You just don't know. And a parent, you're not supposed to bury your children. What do I tell these parents? Well, Romans 8, 28, all things work together.

No, you cry with them and you listen. But there's coming a time where we don't know the day or the hour. We don't even know.

We have no clue. Somehow we think, I'll live for another 50 years. I've got this covered.

And that time of seeking God, that's why the Bible always says now. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the day of redemption.

Now is the day to come back to me. Prodigal son, now is the time to come back. Don't wait, don't wait, because I know many prodigal sons who never come back to the father.

They die in their sin. How many of you guys visit the hospital homes? How many of those people are there because of alcoholism? Half, probably. Look at what happened.

Warning and warning and warning and warning. Come back, come back, come back. Seek me with all of your heart.

Come back. So don't ever, on this point, call upon him while he is near, while he may be found. Today is the day of salvation.

Today is the day of coming back. Many times I talk to addicts, they don't wanna come back just yet. They enjoy that lifestyle until that lifestyle kills them or puts them in the hospital or in jail.

And if you don't turn from that, you're either buried, you're in prison, or you're gonna be committed to asylum because it will destroy you at some point. So I didn't want this to turn all negative and things because it's very positive, but there has to come a point when you call upon the name of the Lord, whether it's salvation, if you truly don't know him, don't wait. Don't say, well, maybe I'll listen to Shane throughout the summer and make a decision.

No, there might not be a throughout the summer. There might not be anything. God says right now, the day of salvation, if you don't know me, turn to me.

If you don't know me, turn to me. Not next week, not tomorrow, not tonight on the way home. Now, during worship, during communion, turn to me with all of your heart, not some of it.

Turn to me now, now, now. It's that convicting, it's that conviction. If you could bring back all the people of all the memorials I've ever spoke at, they would sit here, they would be weeping, telling people, turn to God.

Turn to him now with all of your heart. Don't miss this opportunity. And that's what this context is, now while he is near.

So what you do is you take communion and you pray with your spouse. That's what I would encourage you to do. Or you can pray by yourself.

You can be at the altar. You can be in the back with the prayer team. We're gonna have the prayer team back there with you as well.

Or you can go back to your seat and you just reflect, God, before I partake of this, before I partake of the body that was bruised and broken for me, Jesus Christ who was spit on and beat up for me, he was whipped, he was killed for me. Before I partake of this, God, examine me. Is there anything in me that is not right because I do not want to take this in an unworthy manner? And once the heart is right, you just take of the elements and you pray.

I would encourage you to pray and pray and pray. Not be in a hurry. Pray for family members.

Pray for those who need us. I just got a text today. A good friend I haven't seen in years, I grew up with, is on the verge of suicide and they can't get a hold of him.

I'm trying to text him and call him. And there's so much to pray for. Pray for him.

His name's Kevin. Pray for him during this time. He's drifted so far.

He's into darkness and gothic music and just Facebook posts are dark and destructive. And I'm gonna pray for him tonight. There's prodigal sons.

You guys, you have your own sons, your own kids, probably. Maybe you're a wayward. When was the last time we took some time to pray for them and said, God, save my daughter from alcoholism.

Save my son from drugs. God, you've got to save them. Church, this is not the time to rush through and go home and eat.

This is the time where we should be breaking before Almighty God and praying and not be in a hurry. Is anybody upset if Brant does three or four songs? Let's take time and let's just reflect. Let's just worship.

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